

Memorandum

TO: Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commissioners

FROM: _____
Andrew D. DeCanniere, Commissioner, Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission

DATE: June 23, 2022

**SUBJECT: May 24, 2022 Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission (SEAC)
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM in the Council Chambers at Skokie Village Hall

Present: Chairman Jennifer Grossman, Commissioners Christopher Buccola, Andrew DeCanniere, Michael Gershbein, Alma Likic, Jim McNelis, Rick Moskovitz, Emily Okallau, Charlie Saxe, Trustee Liaison Khem Khoeun, Trustee Liaison Ralph Klein, Director of Public Works / Staff Liaison Max Slankard, Assistant to the Director of Public Works / Staff Liaison Elizabeth Zimmerman

Also Present: Matt Brandmeyer, Director of Community Development, Village of Skokie
Josie Neville, Intern, Village of Skokie
Ted Redmond, Co-Founder, paleBLUEdot LLC

I. Approval of the April meeting minutes

Minutes from the April 26, 2022 meeting of the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission were unanimously approved.

II. Old Business

a. 30th Annual Chicago River Day — May 14th

Commissioner McNelis noted that he participated in a Chicago River Day event, which took place in Skokie between Dempster & Main. The event was pretty well attended. Lots of different materials were found/collected, such as glass, metal and plastic. Staff Liaison Slankard stated he attended a Chicago River Day event as well. He said that there was a Washington University alumni group that participated, as well as a group of students from the Northwestern University Kellogg MBA program. He went on to note that there were lots of small scraps and microplastics.

Commissioner McNelis stated that much of the trash seems to accumulate near the bridges (e.g. the bridges at Dempster and Main), between the fence and the river.

b. CUB Solar Forum Update — Charlie

Commissioner Saxe said he will attempt to follow up with Skokie Public Library to secure a room in which to hold the CUB Solar Forum. Goal is to hopefully hold an in person CUB Solar event. He wants to try and get something set up, so they have the ability to publicize the event enough in advance that there will be time for people to take advantage of the program.

c. Solid Waste Intern

Staff Liaison Zimmerman introduced the Village of Skokie's Solid Waste/Recycling Intern, Josie Neville. She went on to say that though she has been with the Village for only the last two days, she has already written about five articles for the Village's print newsletter, *NewSkokie*, and has really hit the ground running. We will be talking about this year's marketing calendar at the end of the meeting. We are waiting for door hangers and, as soon as those arrive, Ms. Neville will be out in the alleys, looking at each cart, offering advice as to how homeowners can recycle better.

Ms. Neville then proceeded to introduce herself to the Commission. She stated that she just finished her undergrad degree at Loyola University, majoring in Environmental Conservation and Restoration. She will be returning to Loyola University for her Master's of Environmental Science in Sustainability. She is not quite done with her education, but she is happy to be working in Skokie, and interning for the summer, applying the things that were discussed in the classroom to real life. She also spoke about the work she has done with Loyola University's Office of Sustainability.

d. Speaker: Matt Brandmeyer, Director of Community Development

i. Comp Plan update

Matt Brandmeyer was in attendance to continue our discussion from the March 2022 SEAC meeting.

He asked if Commissioners had the opportunity to look over the chapter that was included with tonight's meeting invitation. This continues the discussion from March, where he was proposing to incorporate the objectives and programs from the 2016 - 2021 Environmental Sustainability Plan into the Comprehensive Plan. Being that this would be a sort of initial step before we adopt the new Environmental Sustainability Plan early next year. This is something that probably should have been done after the current Environmental Sustainability Plan was adopted or approved back in 2016. So, we are playing catch-up, and there is a lot of dated stuff included. He said that he thinks that, overall, the Village has progressed in our thinking about these things. So, it doesn't do everything we hope or intend to do. It's just an initial step, and things will hopefully grow as we adopt our new Environmental Sustainability Plan.

He said he thinks that staff will then need to come back and amend the Comprehensive Plan yet again. Therefore, he provides a bit of an explanation, and also includes some of the steps that the Village has taken over the last several years. However, it is basically what he presented to the Commission this past March. He tried to summarize or paraphrase each of the introductory paragraphs in each section, and then there are the items that pertain to land use and development. This is just an outgrowth of what we discussed, and he is happy to answer any questions. Overall, he is asking for our recommendation to the Plan Commission. They would then schedule a public hearing, and move forward with the adoption of this chapter amendment.

Commissioner Okallau said that one of the things that she had noticed, and she is a little biased as someone who works in the environmental field, but there is not a lot of urgency in the way it is worded.

Mr. Brandmeyer stated that this is actually summarized / taken from the 2016 - 2021 Environmental Sustainability Plan itself.

Commissioner Okallau then stated that it seems that there is then an opportunity to make it a little bit more current in terms of the language.

Mr. Brandmeyer said he believes that is what we should do with our new plan. He said that he hopes the new plan provides that sense of urgency, and that it gets into other areas when it comes to land use and development.

Commissioner McNelis stated he appreciates Mr. Brandmeyer putting the document together. He went on to say that since we will have to live with this until the new Environmental Sustainability Plan is adopted, he has a suggested edit. On page two of the document, he said that it should talk about the Air Quality Index (AQI) with respect to both pollutants and also Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Mr. Brandmeyer reiterated that this, too, is verbatim from the existing Environmental Sustainability Plan.

Additional discussion ensued.

Commissioner McNelis stated that he thinks that this is a good start in terms of getting this new chapter included in the Comprehensive Plan. The new Sustainability Plan will come out later this fall, so we are only looking at a matter of a few months where this version is in place. He said that he thinks that the main thing, at this point, is getting something into the Comprehensive Plan so that it is an official part of the planning process. When the new plan comes out, we can keep in mind how we would want to incorporate that into the Comprehensive Plan chapter. We would rewrite the chapter based on the new plan, incorporating much of this.

Commissioner Saxe stated he thinks that this is an accurate representation of the 2016 - 2021 Environmental Sustainability Plan. There are some things that are not in there, but this is not quoting from the plan directly. It does a good job of summarizing.

Chairman Grossman asked what happens next with this chapter. Mr. Brandmeyer stated that if we recommend approval tonight, it will go to the Plan Commission for a public hearing, to amend the Comprehensive Plan by incorporating this chapter. They will review and then provide a recommendation to the Village Board. It will then go to the Village Board, and will be introduced at a first reading as a new ordinance to amend the Comprehensive Plan. This would be followed by a second and final reading thereafter. There will be two meetings before the Village Board at which this would be enacted. He estimates that it will probably be August before this is done. He believes that is what he originally said, in terms of when we may expect this process to be complete.

- III. Action Item: Vote to approve updates to the Village of Skokie Comp Plan Chapter 5.5 Environment. If approved, updates sent to Plan Commission for review

Commissioners voted to approve the updates to the Village of Skokie Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Brandmeyer went on to note that his last day with the Village of Skokie will be Friday.

- IV. New Business

- a. Speaker: Ted Redmond, Co-Founder of paleBLUEdot

- i. Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) overview and review of data to date

Ted Redmond, Co-Founder of paleBLUEdot, introduced himself to the Commission and proceeded to deliver a presentation regarding the Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) update. The presentation provided a project overview, a look at the planning process, and what will be done to engage the community in the process, followed by a Q&A session. He also stated that he wanted to give us all a more detailed review of the foundational documents than was presented in the meeting earlier in the day.

He stated he's an architect and urban planner. He practiced traditional architecture for years, but switched what he was doing, and for the last eight years he has been focusing on climate and sustainability and renewable energy planning. That is all they do. paleBLUEdot is a smaller practice, but they have done over 50 relevant community-scale sustainability, energy, climate plans in 23 states. This evening he will be talking about the sustainability plan, which we should be familiar with,

given that Skokie has one. It will be an overarching presentation, touching upon multiple sectors. They anticipate that this plan will specifically address climate mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation being reducing GHG emissions, and adaptation being adapting to those impacts. They anticipate covering a broad range of sectors. Preliminarily they have identified some, which will be able to change as we work our way through the plan. Some sections may ultimately be combined together, and we may decide that some should really be their own sections. There are nine sectors identified: Buildings & Energy, Transportation, Waste Management, Land Use, Ecosystems and Open Space, Water, Wastewater, Public Health and Wellness, Sustainable Economy, and Food Systems.

Ultimately, three core products will be produced. The first is the Plan itself, which will be a document (e.g. a PDF), the second will be an implementation matrix (it will have all of the same strategies and actions in it, but will expand out with more information, including things like who might preliminarily be lead on an action, and who else might be involved in an action, as well as potential resources that could be applied in the community, and will provide opportunities for monitoring along the way) and, last but not least, there will be a database of potential policies, ordinances or programs that relate to the plan (examples that come from other communities around the country).

In terms of the schedule, they are looking at having a draft plan for available public review in September through the beginning of November, and then a final plan in November, aiming to try and get it out the door before the holidays. There are a number of meetings planned, including for the Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) team itself (there are about seven meetings scheduled in total). They are currently anticipating two meetings in front of the SEAC (tonight, and then as we near having a draft plan to share with the Commission, which provides an opportunity for Commissioners to provide review comments before it is finalized), community meetings, and presentations that will be made to the Village Board / Trustees.

In terms of the planning process itself, there is an Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) team. Some who are part of the SEAC are also on the ESP team. They will be organizing into sub-teams. Everyone on the team will have the ability to provide feedback/input on all of the sectors.

Vulnerability Assessment has just been completed. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Forecast is still pending, as additional data is being collected. There will be a "Business as Usual" projection, illustrating where things will stand if we did nothing. They also put a Groundcover Survey and Renewable Energy Potential Study together. All of these various documents are to be summarized into the Sustainability Baseline Assessment, with some preliminary suggested strategic goals by each sector. This document is primarily produced because they want to give the planning team a place to start, and they want to give the Village a place to start with some potential goals that could be explored, rather

than starting off with a blank piece of paper. Mr. Redmond went on to say they find that people engage more rapidly by being able to express what they like or dislike, and being able to make some suggestions.

He went on to talk about how paleBLUEdot has also put together a team webpage, which Commissioners should feel free to access. It really is about communicating with the planning team, as well as with Commissioners. It is not a public website. While they are not trying to hide anything, there are documents that the team will be working on collaboratively. Therefore, the website is password protected. This way, people who are not on the team won't accidentally delete things, and other issues will not arise. That said, everything that comes out of this process will be public.

In terms of the community engagement process, there will be two phases. As far as the first phase is concerned, the intention is to be as open-ended as possible. They are looking for people's feelings and input. There are community engagement meetings, there's an online survey that has been established, and there is the ability for community members (or anyone) to do a "Listening Session," where they can have a conversation with their neighbors, community group members, etc. This is supported through a tool that they call "Meeting-in-a-Box." This consists of a Facilitator's Guide, some infographics, and some specific questions that paleBLUEdot suggests are talked about during these sessions, as well as a way to send the responses to questions back to them. Additionally, there is public information campaign content, which consists of a Social Media Toolkit and flyers, which help to get the word out.

Second round of community engagement will focus on meetings and survey. That will be oriented around obtaining input from the Draft Plan itself. Prior to finalizing the Plan, we will have the opportunity to see what people think about the Plan.

In terms of the survey, they are aiming to get as much input as possible by the beginning of July. The reason for this is this way they are able to take what they're hearing, summarize it, and package it, and can give it to the Planning Team, because that's the perfect timing for them to be able to internalize that in the process.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that she thinks that the way in which we really will get people to participate in / submit surveys is by getting Commissioners to share it. For instance, we can share it on our personal social media. She said that, thus far, the Village has publicized the Environmental Sustainability Plan Update Survey via *SkokieNews* (the Village's electronic newsletter), Facebook, and the SEAC webpage. It is also on the Village's homepage, and there was a QR code that links to the survey at the Festival of Cultures.

She stated that there's a goal of 500 surveys.

Mr. Redmond said that there are two other ideas that they've seen communities use in the past, which have proven to be effective. One was paid posts through social media. It's not that expensive, and can kind of provide a boost. The other is that some turned it into a competition, where they tell people to enter a survey by a certain date and they can be entered into a drawing for some sort of prize (such as a gift certificate to a restaurant).

Commissioner Okallau said that she brought it up at the last meeting, but what about the issue of people who speak different languages? How will that be accommodated? Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that Mr. Redmond was great about it, and he came up with a solution for that. When you go to the website, it has been translated into five languages, and then from there, you can change to any language.

Commissioner Okallau then went on to inquire about social media posts and our ability to translate those.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said the Facebook post itself is in English. However, the link brings you to the website where all of the various language options are available.

Further discussion ensued.

Commissioner DeCanniere inquired as to whether at least some of the planned community meetings will be remote or hybrid, so that people who either cannot attend in person, or who would be uncomfortable attending an in person meeting, could still participate. He said he just finds providing fully remote or hybrid options to be important, particularly given that the transmission rates have been on the rise in many communities throughout the Chicagoland metropolitan area.

Mr. Redmond stated that they are prepared to switch from remote to in person, or vice versa. For anything that is in person, he said they could also probably figure out a way to stream via Zoom as well.

Commissioner Gotkin stated that we were once tasked with taking a look at other communities' Sustainability Plans. She said that of all the plans, Appleton, Wisconsin, has what she feels is the most amazing plan in terms of accountability. It seems that what is being proposed here is very similar. She said that, for instance, she loves that there are a certain number of trees that the Village will be told to plant. That way, the Village can go back and say "We met 50 percent of our goal for this year," and that sort of thing. This is very similar to what Appleton did. They set a goal of converting all of their streetlights to LEDs, and every year they reported how many streetlights they converted. She feels this

is something that was missing from the 2016 - 2021 Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan. So, she's so excited that this next version of the Plan will be able to provide that sort of very specific guidance to the Village.

Mr. Redmond said that not everything can be all that easily quantified, but they do try to quantify as much as is possible.

Commissioner DeCanniere stated that to follow up on what Commissioner Gotkin said a moment ago, he was thinking that (once the new Environmental Sustainability Plan is adopted) it would be a good idea for us to have some sort of interactive tool (e.g. a dashboard) on the Village website which would be accessible to the public. This tool/webpage could be updated as we go along and, through this, the public could track our progress. They could see how close we are to any given objective, or see which objectives have already been reached, and could follow along in a more real-time, interactive way.

Mr. Redmond said that is a good idea. He said that another community that they are working with has asked them to create a dashboard site, which will do two things. As progress happens, that information will be uploaded/available. Additionally, it will have an Action Toolkit. So, there is an opportunity for people to get into the system, sign up, and then start taking actions themselves. For people who may not know what they can do, it will give them specific actions they can take. That system will also give them a way to communicate. The Village will get information back when people take various "challenges." It will tell them that they have these users in such-and-such part of the community that are taking these specific actions. So, they can do a quarterly energy challenge, or there can be a contest to see which neighborhood will be the neighborhood that reduces household energy consumption the most, and the like.

Commissioner DeCanniere said that sounds like a great way to enhance community buy-in, the importance of which cannot be overstated when you're trying to do things like this.

Commissioner McNelis asked whether, when it comes to the vulnerable population demographic data, one part of the deliverables consists of gathering data locally.

Mr. Redmond stated that the data that they have is Skokie-specific. It is data from the United States Census, but it is Skokie-specific, census tract by census tract.

b. 2022/2023 SEAC E-News and Facebook Calendar

Staff Liaison Zimmerman asked if anyone has any suggestions for the marketing calendar, or whether there are any changes.

Commissioner DeCanniere stated that he is aware that he discussed the issue with Staff Liaison Zimmerman a while ago, but he thinks that we should add something about PFAS chemicals to the rotation. PFAS chemicals have presented an issue for a long while and, if anything, only continue to present more and more of a concern — not only for our community, or for communities in our area, but nationwide and internationally. Therefore, we may want to think about adding something that encourages people to be more conscious of the products that they are purchasing, so that they are not putting more of those chemicals out into the world. He said that he also thinks the piece should address the issue of GenX chemicals and PFBS, which can pose very similar health and safety hazards.

Commissioner Gershbein noted that he doesn't see anything on the calendar that would encourage residents to bring reusable bags to the grocery store or Farmers' Market.

Commissioner McNelis suggested that something could be sent out in the springtime about lawn products (e.g. chemical versus organic).

Staff Liaison Zimmerman asked if there is anything that we feel could be eliminated from the calendar, because we need space.

Staff Liaison Slankard spoke about how the Village has a lawn care contractor who is proposing to use robotic lawn mowers for some large area turf mowing. They are working with Risk Management and with the Corporation Counsel's Office to make sure they cannot find any issues with doing this. Some of the staff went out and visited this operation to see how it works in person. The lawn mowers are similar to the robotic vacuums that many people have in their homes. These are electric, battery-powered mowers that have their own remote deployable charging device. Units are GPS-equipped and insured.

Additional discussion ensued.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that, currently, these items are shared via Instagram, Facebook and E-News weekly.

Chairman Grossman stated that this could still be modified. Staff Liaison Zimmerman agreed, noting that we aren't voting on it, but that Ms. Neville has already started working on these posts. She is doing all of these posts in advance. Therefore, it is helpful if there is feedback right now.

c. Farmers' Market — volunteers to promote Sustainability Plan Survey

Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that, at the time of the last SEAC meeting, we were not sure for how long the survey would run. There will be about four or five Farmers' Market days while the survey is ongoing. If there is any interest on the part of the Commission for Commissioners to be there, they are looking for volunteers. She said that she doesn't even know if we need a table, because there are some foam board flyers with the QR code on them. Commissioners could be walking around the Farmers' Market or, if so desired, we could have a table. She said she would need to know about one week in advance, so that she knows for which weeks Commissioners are volunteering.

Chairman Grossman asked if, in the event that no Commissioners are volunteering at the Farmers' Market on a given day, we could still have the posters up. Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that we could have the posters up, even if Commissioners are not present. However, she noted that they had posters up at the Festival of Cultures and that did not seem to work at all. Therefore, she does not think that it will be particularly effective.

Additional discussion ensued.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that the great thing about the paleBLUEdot survey is that they've done such a great job making it a learning tool about environmental sustainability. Just getting people to take the survey is essentially getting the word out. She said that she thinks that is a huge benefit of the survey in and of itself.

V. Public Comments

A public comment was received via email from Skokie resident Jan Beladi, advocating for a ban on single-use plastics.

VI. Next Meeting

Based upon the expected availability of Commission members, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 28, 2022.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:02 PM.