

Memorandum

TO: Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commissioners

FROM: Kaylee Aleksic, Village of Skokie Forestry Intern

DATE: June 16th, 2023

SUBJECT: May 30th, 2023 Sustainable Advisory Commission (SEAC) Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM in conference room D/E at Skokie Village Hall.

Present: Ch. Jenny Grossman, Lisa Gotkin, Emily Okallu, Chris Buccola, Bob Render, Michael Gershbein, Jim McNelis, Alma Likic, Rick Moskovitz. Staff: Max Slankard, Liz Zimmerman, Kaylee Aleksic. Trustee Khem Khoeun.

Absent: Oliva Mahoney, Andrew DeCanniere, Charlie Saxe

I. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting on April 25th, 2023 were approved by the commission. Vice Chair McNelis and Commissioner Gershbein seconded the motion.

II. Old Business

a. Library Seminars

Commissioner Saxe reported that the previous seminar on geothermal had about 20 people in attendance and 12 online participants. There seemed to be a lot of genuine interest from the attendees at the seminar. The next seminar will be about recycling and composting.

b. Plan Commission Drive Through Agenda Items

Staff liaison Zimmerman touched base on the plan commission and reported that many items are moving forward to the task force and subcommittees. Currently, they are researching the tree planting metrics for the village, looking into requiring recycling and composting, and acknowledging the difficulty in the village zoning changes. There are no drive throughs in downtown currently due to zoning reasons.

c. Status of Gas Leaf Blower Code Changes

Staff liaison Zimmerman stated that the subcommittee is needed for enforcement of the code change in the legal department and property standards.

d. Status of Sustainability Coordinator Position

Staff liaison Slankard reported on the hiring status of the sustainability coordinator position. Many applications have been received, but there is no final count on them yet. Both liaison Slankard and Zimmerman will begin reviewing the applications this week. Many of the applicants have been verbally reviewed and the hiring process is beginning to move quickly. Liaison Slankard reported that he was pleased with the diversity of applicants that were received and is satisfied with how the process is moving along.

III. New Business

a. Compost Update and Changes to Program

Staff liaison Zimmerman spoke on the program changes and answered questions from other commissioners. The transfer stations have updated their rules on what can be accepted. We are currently working with the composting facility on this matter, so at the moment, we are hesitant to change any of the messaging at the transfer stations. Liaison Zimmerman explained in more detail which items can get composted, but mentioned the program is on hold until more information is received from the compost facility. More changes to the program may come in the near future. Currently, there are three compost drop off sites. Central Park is doing extremely well, and the next one to open will be at Weber Center.

Commissioner Gotkin brought up that the Memorial Day holiday likely meant that there were full totes at the composting sites. Extra totes for holidays should be considered.

Commissioner Moskovitz asked liaison Zimmerman how people are composting? Is there a special compostable bag that must be used? Commissioner Gotkin followed up and asked if paper bags may be used. The answer for that is to be determined as changes to the compost program come about.

Other topics discussed include what makes people participate in the compost program and how much contamination usually occurs at each of the sites. Liaison Zimmerman and Commissioner Okallau mention that many people are excited about the program and it's a big first step for many who would not be able to do this at home. It was asked which site sees the highest level of contamination and liaison Zimmerman reported that it is the Hamlin site.

Liaison Slankard reported on the transition to 1x per week refuse pickup. Overall, it has gone as well as can be expected, but more research is needed to identify the direct cause and effect. The overall tonnage of refuse has gone down since the transition to 1x per week pickup. It was also reported that we have 120 residents who have requested a second refuse tote due to the transition, but the village has implemented a 60-day moratorium to encourage people to participate in our recycling and composting programs.

Commissioner Moskovitz asked a question about how the refuse from home improvement projects is accommodated and if there has been a decline in building permit

activity. The exact answer is unknown, but liaison Zimmerman reported that we are still waiting on our recycling data to tell us more.

Commissioner Okallau asked how much tonnage of refuse is down percentage wise and it was reported that we are down 10% from last May. Liaison Slankard mentioned that refuse crews often report overflows 5x a year on holidays. There was 14% more refuse tonnage this past Memorial Day week than on a normal Monday. The refuse crew is continuing to monitor this as there is some concern over pile up since the 1x per week transition. Overall, liaison Slankard thinks the transition has gone very well. Discussion ensued over amount of public engagement with the recycling program and who should get a 2nd refuse tote. Additionally, the commission expressed curiosity over the upcoming g recycling data and would like to discuss it when available.

b. USDA Forestry Grant Application

Staff liaison Zimmerman spoke on this topic. The grant identified 37% of the village as disadvantaged in terms of low tree canopy and this was primarily located in the lower income neighborhoods of the village. The issue was often land use; areas close to industrial sites and large amount of private property tended to have less tree canopy. The grant would help match planting free trees on private property with a matching tree elsewhere in the village. Commissioner Okallau asked how many trees we would get and liaison Zimmerman answered around 150 over 5 years.

c. Staff Demo of Hybrid Sweeper

Staff liaison Slankard explained how the electric sweepers work. The village looked into getting these in order to reduce fuel usage because they could reduce that by up to 25%. Commissioner Okallau mentioned that these sweepers were a no go in Evanston because of the maintenance costs and the big batteries they have.

d. Updates on Plan from Commissioners

Vice Chair McNelis reported on the energy subgroup's energy efficiency award categories and asked for feedback from the commission. Discussion ensued on the best way to nominate and award people for their energy efficiency contributions. There seemed to be some confusion on the water and energy efficiency award and discussion ensued on how to clarify that.

Next, the commission discussed some other recognition awards from beautification to the business task force. A timeline was set for the end of the year on the energy subgroup's efficiency awards.

Commission Chair Grossman mentioned a meeting with a volunteer named Ivy, in which liaison Zimmerman and commissioner Render were also present at. Ivy is a retiree volunteer who created a local campaign on getting businesses to stop using single use items. Discussion ensued about the meeting and what is not realistic about eliminating all single use items.

e. Future Recycling Presentation Topics

Commissioner Render offered to present, and asked for potential topics to research for the presentation. Discussion ensued amongst the commissioners and some ideas were the mechanisms behind recycling sorting at facilities, why plastic bags cannot be recycled at said sorting facility, economic cost vs benefits on recycled items, areas that need recycling regulations, and the environmental impacts of plastic bag bans like the one in Evanston.

IV. Other Business

None to report.

V. Public Comment

None to report.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on June 27th, 2023, at 7pm in the Conference Room D/E at Skokie Village Hall.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.