

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Citizens' Environmental Commission  
April 7, 2022

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on April 7, 2022, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Steve Honeywell called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**A. Roll Call**

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak, and the following members of the CEC were present: Chair Steve Honeywell, Rachel Farrell, Julie Jesmer, Clare Kron, Kyle Moore, and Council Liaison Barb Larson. Not present were Commissioner Nick Newman, Ex-Officio Members Dakota Burke, Matt Emken, Sarah Fox and Mike Holland.

Also present was Management Analyst Scott Zak.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

MOTION

Ms. Kron motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Farrell.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**C. Public Comment**

John McBride of Sycamore told the Commission that trash is a big problem in Sycamore. Mr. McBride said the Trash Squirrels group, which collects litter in DeKalb, has good support from the City and is a well-run organization. He said he is observing the group while deciding if a similar group or city commission should be created in Sycamore.

Commissioner Newman joined the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

Ms. Kron noted the Trash Squirrels formed from bottom up as an organization and was not created by the City.

The discussion turned to trash which blows off trucks traveling to the landfill. Mr. McBride said the DeKalb County Sheriff's Office has written tickets but may need to partner with Kane County and suggested that a solid cover over the trash load may work better than netting.

Chair Honeywell offered to help Mr. McBride create a similar environmental commission in Sycamore.

## **D. Approval of Minutes**

### **1. Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of March 3, 2022**

#### **MOTION**

Ms. Jesmer motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Kron.

#### **VOTE**

The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

## **E. Commission Reports**

### **1. DeKalb County Health Department**

With Ex-Officio Member Burke absent, Chair Honeywell read Ms. Burke's report. The DeKalb County Health Department will hold textile/clothing, electronics and aerosol product collections on June 25 and September 24 and a household hazardous waste collection on June 4. All collections will be at the DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport from 9 a.m. to noon.

The Health Department has published its annual solid waste report. It shows 19 percent of waste was diverted from the landfill in 2021, a slight decrease from the previous year. The rural recycling sites in Genoa and Somonauk have been renewed, while a goal for 2022 is to create a rural recycling site for DeKalb, ideally near the NIU campus/apartment area. The report will be published on the County's website.

### **2. DeKalb Park District**

With Ex-Officio Member Emken absent, Chair Honeywell read Mr. Emken's report. The Park District will be teaming up with NIU, the City, the Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District and the Trash Squirrels as part of the communitywide clean-up on April 22. Work on a landscape project at the Ellwood Museum is expected to begin by the end of the month and will include rain and butterfly gardens.

Volunteers are being sought to weed the flower beds at parks. Commissioners discussed the parks at which they would like to volunteer. Ms. Farrell and Ms. Jesmer volunteered for Oakland Park, Ms. Kron and Mr. Moore volunteered for Overlook Pointe and Mr. Honeywell and Mr. Newman volunteered for Mason-Larson Park. Chair Honeywell will distribute a schedule next month.

### **3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District**

With Ex-Officio Member Holland absent, no report was given.

### **4. Northern Illinois University**

With Ex-Officio Member Fox absent, Chair Honeywell read Ms. Fox's report. Ms. Fox discussed the idea of extending Metra to DeKalb with the Law School, and there was interest. She suggested the University may be a good place to start the initiative. Chair Honeywell agreed, noting the University may already have information. Alderwoman Larson said bringing the issue

to the City Council could give it some weight, and that the Commission should stress the economic development potential.

## **5. City Staff Liaison**

Mr. Zak reported Public Works is recycling items ahead of the demolition of the Hunter Hillcrest shopping center. 352 solar panels have been installed at Sisler's Ice, another 324 are being installed at Pen's Point Market and Kohl's is expected to do a solar project this summer. The AMC Theatre has added four electrical vehicle charging stations, and there is a plan to reuse the vacant St. Mary's Hospital building by renovating it into an apartment building. Mr. Zak also shared a photo of new signs discouraging litter that have been posted downtown. Ms. Jesmer suggested putting up signs with penalty for littering. Alderwoman Larson said enforcement of the fine would be challenging given the more serious crime the Police Department is addressing. Commissioners said the sign could still be a deterrent. Mr. Zak will check what the littering fines are in the City. Ms. Kron asked for an update on a resident who had concerns about the brightness of a nearby sign. Mr. Zak will check with the Building and Code Department.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Park District and flower beds**

Nothing further was discussed here.

### **2. Windblown trash from garbage collection**

Chair Honeywell said trash blowing from garbage containers is a problem. Ms. Farrell said LRS is upgrading their lids, and Chair Honeywell said the Commission may want to look into the issue when the garbage contract comes up for renewal.

Ms. Jesmer asked if dumpsters can be emptied more regularly. Mr. Zak shared overflowing dumpsters are already against code and the Building and Code Department writes citations for violations. Alderwoman Larson said the effectiveness of the citations is limited since some property owners see the fine as a cost of doing business.

### **3. September STEM Café event**

Chair Honeywell said the event will be on climate change in our backyard. The speaker has not yet been selected. Ms. Jesmer said Joyce Martin, who has greatly reduced her carbon load, would make an interesting speaker. Ms. Kron notes STEM Café speakers are required to be NIU professors.

## **G. Old Business**

### **1. Sustainability plan updates and ideas**

Chair Honeywell said a survey that has been posted online by Professor Schuller's students has received 42 responses. A link to the survey will be provided for the Commission's use. The students will compile the results by April 22 before meeting with Chair Honeywell on May 3. Even after the student's work is complete, the survey will remain active. Ms. Kron asked if Courtney Gallaher's students will be able to help with writing the plan in the fall. Chair Honeywell will check on that.

## **2. Future 2022 CEC presentations—May 19<sup>th</sup> event on trees**

It was shared that the presentation on planting native trees will be at 7 p.m May 19 at the DeKalb Public Library.

## **3. Next articles for Daily Chronicle**

Mr. Moore will be doing the next article on native trees. Mr. Newman will prepare an article for June on the proper disposal of grease. He noted there have been several sewer backups caused by pouring grease down the drain and grease can leak into the storm sewers, hurting wildlife.

## **4. Bees/information from Dan Kenney**

Ms. Kron shared that Dan Kenney does not have time to help create a community beehive but provided contact information for someone who can help. Chair Honeywell will contact that person.

## **5. Earth Day event**

Chair Honeywell recommended Commission members sign up individually for the communitywide clean-up on April 22. Ms. Jesmer shared that 36 people have signed up for the Trash Squirrel's April 9 clean-up.

## **6. Monarch festival?**

Chair Honeywell said Mr. Emken had a good idea to combine the Monarch Festival with Movies in the Park, Fourth of July or Music at the Mansion. Ms. Kron said there would not be enough time at the movie, and Mr. Newman said monarchs would be in the area on the Fourth of July. Commissioners discussed the need to find a business to supply milkweed plants and creation of an informational flyer to be distributed with the milkweed plants. Alderwoman Larson suggested publishing a series of monarch events in the Commission's June article in case people miss the Fourth of July activities. Chair Honeywell said the online backpacks for grade school students and a news release could help with promotion. Alderwoman Larson suggested having a table at the annual barn tour since it is attended by a lot of children.

## **7. Updates on other issues**

Ms. Kron shared she is meeting with Mayor Cohen Barnes on April 8 to discuss a strategy for banning plastic bags countywide.

Chair Honeywell said Keagan Reynolds has been given information on possibly becoming the Commission's seventh member. Chair Honeywell also shared there is interest by some people to increase the setbacks required for solar farms as a way of preventing the construction of more of them and that the DeKalb County Planning and Zoning Commission will be taking the issue up

at their next meeting. Alderwoman Larson suggested the Commission may want to research putting solar panels on large buildings.

## **H. Announcements**

### **1. New announcements**

No information was shared here.

### **2. Next meeting: May 5, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.**

## **I. Adjournment**

MOTION

Mr. Newman motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Moore.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on May 5, 2022.