

MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
Citizens' Environmental Commission
July 1, 2021

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on July 1, 2021 in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Clare Kron called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak, and the following members of the CEC were present: Chair Clare Kron, Vice Chair Steve Honeywell, Kyle Moore, Nick Newman and Rachel Farrell. Not present were: Adrian Lopez and Sharon Skala.

Also present were Ex-officio member Matt Emken and Management Analyst Scott Zak.

B. Approval of Agenda

Chair Kron requested a motion to approve the agenda.

MOTION

Mr. Newman moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Honeywell.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. Public Comment

Phillip Hendrickson, owner of Fun in Store on East Lincoln Highway and an organizer and supporter of the Trash Squirrels, spoke about an idea for Welsh Park, which he described as a very popular but littered park. He suggested creating a station with a roll of bags and trash pickers, so people visiting the park could help pick up litter. Since Welsh Park is under the DeKalb Park District's jurisdiction, Chair Kron said the Commission would defer to the Park District Board; although, she said the Commission supports the idea.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of June 3, 2021

Chair Kron requested approval of the minutes.

MOTION

Mr. Honeywell motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Newman.

VOTE

The minutes with a few minor changes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

E. Commission Reports

1. DeKalb County Health Department

With Emily Sitkie's appointment not yet approved, no report was given.

2. DeKalb Park District

Ex-Officio Member Mat Emken said Encap reported the Park District's pollinator projects in Hopkins and Rotary Park are progressing properly, and the District is busy preparing for Fourth of July.

3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District

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

4. Northern Illinois University

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

5. City Staff Liaison

Management Analyst Zak shared that the City Council has approved the Upper South Branch Kishwaukee River Watershed Plan, which can now be used to solicit grants. There is no word yet on whether the City's grant application to ComEd for a second electric vehicle charging station will be approved. Five trash cans have been added in the Annie Glidden North neighborhood next to the bus stops in the area. While City Manager Bill Nicklas could not attend the Commission's meeting as previously discussed because of a conflict, Mr. Zak said the role of the Commission is clearer after conversations with the City Manager and Chair Kron and Vice-Chair Honeywell's meeting with Mayor Cohen Barnes. Chair Kron added that the City Manager and Mayor are always welcomed to attend.

F. New Business

1. Report on meeting with Mayor Barnes

Chair Kron and Mr. Honeywell shared highlights of their meeting with Mayor Barnes.

Regarding new building, Mayor Barnes suggested the Commission create a one-page list of best practices for sustainable building. Mr. Honeywell said Mayor Barnes suggested the Commission have discussions with the DeKalb School Board since the School District receives about 60 percent of property tax revenues. Mr. Honeywell said School Board President Sarah Moses is willing to discuss tax credits for buildings who use sustainable methods, such as a permeable parking lot. He added that Moses is interested in moving the School District to solar power, and suggested the Commission support that idea regardless of whether the tax credit happens.

Chair Kron shared with Mayor Barnes that the Commission was planning to do a public presentation on revising the sustainability plan where input would be accepted. The Mayor approved of that approach.

Chair Kron said Mayor Barnes is interested in promoting solar-energy use and anything that will better the City while improving its economic outlook, which will provide funding for initiatives.

Mr. Honeywell shared that the Mayor wants the Commission to focus on items that they can likely win. Mr. Honeywell said that while he agrees with that, there are also other items worth pursuing that could take a long time or that are worth addressing even if they do not result in wins. Chair Kron said the Mayor agreed with that but also feels the Commission needs to show its value by making accomplishments. Mr. Honeywell said the Commission needs to look at what is worth pursuing even if it will not result in a win while at the same time, pursuing ideas that can likely be accomplished.

Chair Kron said the most important thing she learned from the meeting was that the Mayor and aldermen would support an idea even if it is not supported by an uninformed public, so long as the idea is supported by research. Chair Kron added that the Commission is limited since it cannot push for a proposal's approval and cannot address issues outside the City's purview; however, Mr. Honeywell noted the Commission can educate the public, and he noted he will contact the Chronicle about doing more articles.

2. Discussion with Dan Kenney: Community beehives

Chair Kron shared that Mayor Barnes did not want the Commission spending much time on preparing a beekeeping ordinance since he believes it is not a City priority and not unlikely to be rejected, and instead, suggested exploring a community apiary with DeKalb County Community Gardens. Community Gardens Executive Director Dan Kenney, who was in attendance, noted his organization does not own any property and suggested the apiaries be placed at the City-owned Dresser Gardens. He also raised the idea of a nonprofit cooperative like the Chicago Honey Club, which keeps bees and uses the profits from honey to support the organization, and teaching children how to keep bees and market the honey as a business skill. Kenney recommended pursuing the co-op route. The Commission agreed, and Kenney said he would bring back more information after talking with possible interested parties.

Revisiting an earlier conversation from item F-1, Mr. Kenney said the Commission has a history of passing difficult items, including the indoor smoking ban. He also said the Soil and Water Conservation District is supposed to do Natural Resources Inventories (NRI) before large projects, but they are not being required by the City. He said the builders can pay for the NRI, which identify possible issues but cannot stop a project. Chair Kron suggested an article on NRIs, and Mr. Newman noted industries sometimes restore land elsewhere after they build a project. Mr. Zak objected to the idea of an article, noting the Mayor has made economic development a focus. Chair Kron said the article would state the law and the benefits to the land and would not make demands of the City Council.

3. Report on meeting with 350Kishwaukee

Chair Kron requested a motion to join Kishwaukee350 as a co-sponsor for an electric vehicle presentation in August

MOTION

Chair Kron made the motion, seconded by Mr. Newman.

Mr. Moore agreed to assist Kishwaukee350 with the presentation.

Ms. Farrell suggested attending the Mayors' Summit Conference, and Mr. Newman said he would be interested in attending.

Chair Kron said Kishwaukee350 is working on a Greenhouse Gas Inventory and said the City's electrical use in 2018 is still needed. Mr Zak reported that only two months of data is available because the City switched financial software that year. About \$90,000 was paid to ComEd in November and December of that year.

4. Trash trappers

Chair Kron had shared an article on devices that trap garbage in rivers and asked if the City would be interested; however, it was noted that the Army Corps of Engineers, and not the City, controls the Kishwaukee River. Mr. Honeywell pointed out that grants paid for the trash trappers described in the article and suggested the Commission research grants for its initiatives. Mr. Newman said he would look for grants for the Commission, and Chair Kron added that the Commission has the ability to raise funds and decide how they will be used.

G. Old Business

1. Letter to the City Council

Chair Kron read a draft of a letter to the City Council asking that developers are given recommendations for best practices related to sustainable building. Mr. Honeywell said it needs to be clear that builders will not be presented with a list of demands but rather a list of suggestions. The letter will be sent to Commissioners to send back with revisions along with best practices that should be included in the list of recommendations.

2. Adopt-A-Park

Commissioners are maintaining their adopted gardens.

3. Next article for Daily Chronicle

Mr. Newman is writing the next article on sustainable home landscaping. The Trash Squirrels are the planned topic for September, and it was suggested Mr. Moore write on his experiences with community gardening in October.

4. Light intrusion

Chair Kron said she continues researching light intrusion.

5. Recommendation for CEC member

Mr. Honeywell said he will ask Trash Squirrels members if they are interested in becoming a commissioner.

6. Other updates on previously discussed items

Mr. Newman said the NIU Environmental Studies Department has agreed to help promote the Commission's presentations. Mr. Honeywell is preparing September's presentation on beekeeping, and suggested community calendars as another promotional avenue.

Mr. Zak noted a vote had not yet been taken on co-sponsoring an EV presentation with Kishwaukee350.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Kron will be presenting to the Kishwaukee Kiwanis on July 22. The sustainability presentation will be in October or November.

H. Announcements

1. New announcements

Chair Kron shared she will not be attending the August meeting, so it will be led by Mr. Honeywell.

2. Next meeting: August 5, 4:00 p.m.

I. Adjournment

MOTION

Chair Kron motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Honeywell.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on August 5, 2021.