

CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

Approved 10/15/14

MINUTES

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

August 20, 2014, 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Establishment of a Quorum.

Chairman Dan Beebe called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call found Commissioners Dan Beebe, Bob Blaus, John Symowicz, and Mike Ferguson present.

Also in attendance were Assistant Director of Public Works Tim Wilcox, West Chicago Resident Marilyn Kroll, and Guests from People Made Visible, Inc. (PMV) Sara Phalen, PMV Executive Director and Nick Fuller, PMV Garden Committee Chair.

2. Approval of Minutes.

A. Environmental Commission Minutes of May 21, 2014.

Commissioner Blaus made a motion seconded by Commissioner Symowicz to approve the Meeting Minutes of May 21, 2014 as corrected. Voting Yea: Commissioners Beebe, Blaus, Symowicz and Ferguson. Voting Nay: 0.

3. Public Participation/Presentations

People Made Visible – Presenting ideas for a community Garden Network

Sara Phalen handed out an outline of her presentation and began with a brief history of their group's involvement with a community garden. Since 2010 PMV has collaborated with St. Michael's United Church of Christ, located on West Washington at Sherman Street, to maintain a nine to twelve plot community garden on church property across the street on the north side of West Washington. Plots are sized for individuals and groups, one the group plots was planted and maintained by the West Chicago Public Library Youth Council.

PMV is non-profit and sponsors for their garden include Ball Seed who provided dirt and the West Chicago Park District who donated rain barrels. PMV members also donated their time, bricks, materials, the use of machines, and a structure to gather water into rain barrels to use in the gardens.

Sara indicated PMV is part of the committee for the Healthy West Chicago Initiative. PMV members feel this connection will help them establish the community garden network they are envisioning for West Chicago. They are looking to get commitments from interested groups, churches, and other organizations in the next two months and finalizing sometime in January 2015. Sara invited the Environmental Commission to be a part of the network and to help to compile resources and help organize the network.

Sara indicated that PMV would also like to work with the Commission to develop a native planting plan for City owned properties. The plan would include replacing turf grass with plants native to the area with characteristics that would require less frequent maintenance than the existing turf grass.

Nick Fuller indicated he would still be willing to help establish a test planting area somewhere in the City at no cost or commitment, other than the City providing maintenance in the form of mowing. Nick is a former member of the Environmental Commission and this was one of the projects he was working to establish before he left the Commission.

The goal of native planting for City owned properties is to reduce cost, conserve natural resources, and reduce carbon emissions by reducing the frequency of mowing. It would also bring native plants back to these areas. The plan would probably require additional monitoring of the parcels by City staff and a contractor willing to work with this type of maintenance program.

Some discussion ensued after the presentation on various related and some unrelated topics. Including County Sponsored programs such as FORWARD (Fighting Obesity Reaching healthy Weight Among Residents of DuPage), information on starting community gardens, Ball Seeds community garden for employees, and possible grant opportunities. It was suggested that PMV join the Environmental Commissions booth at the next Blooming Fest to reach out to the public.

Sara thanked the group for allowing her to attend and left the meeting, Nick stayed for the remainder of the meeting.

Marilyn Kroll announced she had something for public participation and explained how she had petitioned the West Chicago Public Library to provide a service to people with disabilities where they would not have to take the elevator in order to use a computer. She said because of this the library now offers to bring a laptop computer to the first floor for her to use. She asked if there was something the Environmental Commission could do to make the citizens of West Chicago happy. Chairman Beebe responded with a brief history and summary of some accomplishments of the Environmental Commission. The commission was established as advisory to the City Council and when first formed only met when a need or request was presented. The current (all-volunteer) Commission is very progressive, and chose to meet each month to take a more proactive role in environmental issues and concerns. Accomplishments mentioned included the annual Holiday Light Recycling Program, Paper Shredding Event, past recycling extravaganzas held, the sale and promotion of rain barrels, and implementation of nine of twelve (unsolicited)

recommendations for addition to the City's latest Solid Waste and Recycling Contract with Groot.

This led to a discussion on multi-family recycling and the pilot program with Flood Brothers in another community, the Commissions involvement with looking into this for West Chicago, and concluded with a recap of what is currently being worked on and discussed at Environmental Commission meetings.

4. Review and Discuss Commission Priority List.

A. Current.

LEED

Commissioner Zimmermann was not in attendance so this topic was only briefly discussed. It was mentioned some good progress is being made and there has been some discussion with the Green Building Council.

Dark skies

Commissioner Ferguson indicated he is still waiting for Homer Glen to provide a copy of their new proposed ordinance pertaining to lighting. Chairman Beebe asked if we should move forward using the previous ordinance as a guide. Commissioner Ferguson indicated he would like to take advantage of what the new ordinance might present. He will ask them again for a copy. Chairman Beebe mentioned there would probably still be new questions and discussion no matter what the commission ultimately presents to Infrastructure Committee. He also suggested in looking at Campton Hills' new ordinance on this subject.

Community Gardens

Commissioner Barron was not in attendance however this topic was the subject of Sara Phalen's presentation. There was some additional discussion on the topic and Nick talked briefly about 600 acres of agricultural land owned by the Forest Preserve and question of what it could be used for.

Shredding Event

The members were in agreement to change the hours of the June 6, 2015 event to 9:00 AM to Noon instead of 1:00 PM due to the drop in number of participants bring paper to have shred after 12:00 PM during the previous two events.

Blooming Fest

Chairman Beebe is looking for someone to lead in the planning of next year's activities for the Commission's involvement with the event.

Holiday Light Recycling

It is time to get started planning and making contacts for this year's program. Commissioner Blaus will contact the organizations for drop off containers to be placed. Tim Wilcox will contact Elgin recycling to ensure their involvement, and Groot for providing the use of the recycling bins for placement.

Cooking Oil Recycling

Since Winfield Township Highway Department will be collecting cooking oil and grease at their garage, there is no need to host this at City Hall this year.

Electronics Recycling

Commissioner Blaus indicated Creative Recycling pulled out of this since there is no longer funding. The commission will continue to promote Groot's Saturday electronics recycling for West Chicago residents as well as Sims Recycling Solutions weekly collection during business hours.

B. New Additions

There were no New Additions.

5. Other Business

Commissioner Blaus handed out an Illinois Food Scrap Coalition (IFSC) flyer for information and also briefly talked about an issue involving children and toxins at schools. He said there is an article on the SCARCE website he would try to forward.

Commissioner Blaus also asked about the possibility of the City negotiating a contract for residents for the purpose of helping them remove dead (Ash) trees from their property. This led to a discussion on code enforcement and the growing number of dead Ash trees on private property.

6. Adjournment

At 8:28 PM Commissioner Blaus made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Ferguson seconded. All were in agreement and said aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Wilcox, Assistant Director of Public Works, Environmental Commission Liaison