

CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

Approved with changes 09/16/20

MINUTES

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

August 19, 2020, 7:00 P.M.

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

Chairman Beebe called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Roll call found Commissioner Dan Beebe present at City Hall. Commissioners Bob Blaus, Bethany Brown, Joe Cavataio, and Kris Zimmermann were present via Zoom internet connection.

Also in attendance via Zoom internet connection were Josh Molnar, Municipal Manager, and Jordon Berkley, Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Operator from Groot, Inc., and Kay McKeen, Founder and Executive Director of School and Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education (SCARCE). Assistant Director of Public Works, Tim Wilcox was present at City Hall.

Chairman Beebe read the following statement: "Mayor Pineda has determined that in-person meetings are not practical and prudent".

2. Approval of Minutes.

- A. **Environmental Commission Minutes of July 15, 2020. Commissioner Blaus made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cavataio to approve the meeting minutes of July 15, 2020 with changes.**

Voting Yea: Commissioner Beebe, Blaus, Brown, Cavataio, and Zimmermann.

Voting Nay: zero.

Changes made in section 1 were to correct punctuation and the word Commissioners before Bob Blaus and Bethany Brown to read Commissioner.

3. Public Participation/Presentations.

None.

4. Items For Consent

None

5. Review and discuss Commission Priority List.

- A. **Review current priority list**

Contaminated Material in Residential Recycling

Josh Molnar and Jordon Berkley from Groot, Inc. and Kay McKeen from SCARCE were invited to be part of a discussion, share ideas, and answer questions about contaminated material in residential recycling and how to correct the contamination through education in West Chicago.

Mr. Berkley indicated that due to space constraints they are not able to separate materials collected by individual communities so they do not know what the contamination level is for individual communities. He indicated one MRF in particular receives over 500 tons of material each day. As an industry standard overall they are currently at a 25 to 30 percent contamination.

Groot is working on improving their website, moving away from descriptive recycling fliers to a picture based approach of what can and cannot be recycled to help educate residents. They have developed an app available as a free download, which provides useful information including a waste wizard designed to aid residents by indicating what to do with a particular item in question. Since this is new to their company, they are constantly updating and tweaking it to make it better. Once finalized they plan to increase their promotion of the app. It was suggested Groot work with the City Marketing and Communications Coordinator to help promote all of their new developments.

Mr. Molnar indicated that reducing the amount of contamination in residential recycling is a high priority for Groot. Since late 2017, they have faced many new challenges finding a market for recyclables since buyers are more selective and looking for high quality materials. What had value to Groot before now has become a processing/disposal cost. In West Chicago, about 80 percent of the residents chose the smaller less expensive 35-gallon cart for waste disposal. Not having a large enough cart for trash could lead to residents simply throwing excess trash into their recycling cart.

Ms. McKeen spoke about community recycling education programs she has been involved with, low attendance at some events, problems associated with recycling education including language barriers and constantly changing information about what can and cannot be recycled. She also shared ideas she has to boost proper recycling awareness through school projects, and class assignments where students create videos designed to get the word out to parents, friends, and family members. Playing those videos at public places or other locations throughout the City was discussed as well.

Other related topics discussed included: people placing used masks, latex gloves, and syringes in their recycling containers, and the potential hazards it creates for sanitation workers, syringe collection site expansion, syringe collection programs, and getting pharmacies and medical clinics involved in the process.

Curbside organic food waste and yard waste recycling was discussed. Lack of promoting food waste recycling, when and how to promote the service, limited items accepted, and differences in what food items are accepted in different communities. The best time to start advertising for the landscape/food scrap cart option is believed to be in the months just prior to May 1 when landscape materials are collected.

Groot is willing to work with the City on a joint effort or program to educate residents. Ms. McKeen said she would assist in any way she can.

Holiday Light Recycling

Chairman Beebe said that the dates for collection were set. Holiday light recycling is part of the new contract with Groot so if Elgin Recycling does not offer removal of collected lights, Groot would be

able/required to provide the service. Mr. Wilcox indicated he would discuss the program with the City Administrator to make sure we can move forward with the collection program for this season.

Adopt a Highway

The cleanup was completed on Saturday July 18, 2020 and it was a very hot day. There were a number of bags collected, although not a large amount of litter, there was an abundance of facemasks and disposable gloves collected (more than plastic shopping bags). Commissioner Brown added that it was a ~~total~~ *totally* different type of litter as there were less fast food wrappers, straws, lids, and cups collected.

Paper Shredding Event

The August 1, 2020 event had record participation and pounds of paper collected (310 cars and 20,100 pounds of paper). Traffic was backed up on Main Street and at times on Route 59 due to the event. Both trucks were full before the scheduled end time so many cars had to be turned away. For future shredding events, the group will discuss/consider a better location to handle traffic and possibly reducing the number of boxes people can bring to keep the line of cars moving. It was pointed out that due to COVID-19 ours was one of the first shredding events in the area; it was also well advertised so likely many participants were not West Chicago residents. We may not have this kind of turnout next year if more communities in the area hold their own shredding event.

B. Discuss new additions to priority list

None.

6. Other Business

Commissioner Blaus suggested someone reach out to the Police Department to find out what company they use to collect prescription drugs and to see if sharps collection was a service they can provide and if so, would the City be able to add sharps collection at the Police Station in addition to prescription drug collection.

Chairman Beebe suggested that someone ask Rosemary Mackey, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, if she could release a message indicating that facemasks, disposable gloves, and face shields are not recyclable and should be disposed of properly in their trash container.

There was a brief discussion proposing a joint recycling art event with the Cultural Arts Commission, similar to the butterfly painting and display project they did jointly with the Garden Club.

7. Adjournment

At 8:17 P.M., Commissioner Blaus made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Wilcox, Assistant Director of Public Works