

MINUTES
Sustainability Committee
April 21, 2021
Municipal Complex, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at City Hall in Crystal Lake.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Present were the following committee members: Lisa Janezic, Sam Zurawski, Emilie Hoffman, Terry Dieckhoff, and Nicky Strahl. Members of the public in attendance were Dean Farr and Assistant to the City Manager Nick Hammonds.

3. Public Comment

Dean Farr presented information regarding agricultural practices and cover crops. Dean discussed the presentation made by Scott Kuykendall, Water Resource Specialist for McHenry County, which focused on municipal water supply. Dean then discussed cover crops, an overview of the farming process, and why cover crops are good for the environment. Dean displayed pictures of areas in McHenry County that have started cover crops, and he reviewed potential areas where cover crops and rain gardens would be beneficial for water retention.

Dean Farr stated that there are three challenges for cover crops. The first challenge is to convince farmers to buy in to the concept and to take action in implementing a cover crop. Dean stated that a cover crop typically takes up to five years to fully take hold and provide the intended benefits. The second challenge is to fund a cover crop. Dean stated that the initial costs for a cover crop may discourage a farmer from taking on the project. However, over time, as a cover crop fully takes hold, there will be less maintenance and less fertilizer needed for crops. Dean stated that there are programs operated by the State of Illinois to assist with funding for cover crops. Farmers would expect to see the results within three years. The third challenge is finding somebody who can install the cover crops. Dean discussed how many farmers need technical support to properly install cover crops. Additionally, weather patterns can impede the success of a cover crop, since wet weather is needed for the seeds to grow and take hold.

Dean Farr discussed the benefits of cover crops, which includes reduced erosion, sequestering carbon, and helping plants to pull in nitrogen. He stated that wildlife also benefits from cover crops and animals are attracted to natural protection from the crops. Lisa Janezic inquired if Dean knew how many acres of farmland are in McHenry County. He stated that he did not know the acreage, but that 60 percent of McHenry County is considered rural.

Dean Farr discussed concerns about water runoff and erosion, both for farms and at local residences. He stated that bioswales and retention ponds are important to absorbing water. Dean completed his presentation and discussed how to proceed with promoting cover crops and rain gardens. Dean asked if Public Works would have more information and could assist with the endeavor. Nick Hammonds stated that he would follow up with Mike Magnuson, Director of Public Works, since the City is currently working on establishing rain gardens in select areas in the City.

Emilie Hoffman discussed the possibility of the City hosting an open house or public forum to educate the public about rain gardens, cover crops, and pollinators. Terry Dieckhoff stated that Countryside Flower Shop usually sets up public information booths to educate people. Lisa Janezic asked if McHenry County College (MCC) does a similar expo or public forum. Terry Dieckhoff stated that the Wildflower Propagation people would be interested in talking about the topic. Nicky Strahl stated that going to select areas to highlight progress on rain gardens, or even hosting an event at Three Oaks, would help to show people how it looks and why it is beneficial to the environment.

Emilie Hoffman discussed a post on social media or the City's website to showcase residents that have rain gardens and pollinator gardens at their homes. This would give people an opportunity to see real-life examples of how they look and the benefits in their neighborhood. Nicky Strahl discussed how it may be beneficial to start by showcasing what the City has done, for example the natural areas maintenance and wildflowers at Three Oaks. Sam Zurawski stated that a workshop or expo could be held at Three Oaks. Nicky Strahl stated that holding an annual event will help to educate the public, and that it takes a few years to establish an event and reach a wider audience.

Dean Farr stated that cover crops, rain gardens, and the importance of municipal water supply are both rural and urban issues that people need to be mindful of. Dean Farr offered his time to help if there are ways to promote cover crops and rain gardens in the City.

4. Approval of the Minutes from March 17, 2021

Sam Zurawski moved to approve the minutes from the March 17, 2021 meeting as amended. Nicky Strahl seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

5. Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Nick Hammonds discussed the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, which was submitted by the City in March. The pledge is a commitment by the City to promote and preserve monarch butterfly habitat in the City. Nick Hammonds stated that the City was contacted the Downtown Crystal Lake Association regarding a planned butterfly event on May 8th. The Downtown Association asked if the Sustainability Committee is interested in setting up a table at the event to promote the monarch program. Sam Zurawski stated that she would be interested in attending from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Dean Farr also stated that he is interested in attending. Nick Hammonds stated that he will send out additional information for the Committee.

6. Bike With Your Neighbor: Tentative June 13, 2021

Nick Hammonds provided the timeline for the BWYN event in June and discussed the prizes for the raffle. Emilie Hoffman stated that bike lights were a popular item in 2019, and we could also add plants or other sustainable prizes such as items from Marvin's toy store. Sam Zurawski proposed compost bin kits, native seeds or a coupon from a nursery as prizes. Terry Dieckhoff stated that a lot of kids will be at the event and there should be some kid friendly prizes. Sam Zurawski asked about potential donations from the Park District such as first choice for seating at a Park District event.

7. Better Bin App

Sam Zurawski stated that her work has monthly innovation meetings and they had a sustainability focused meeting in April. She discussed an app that was presented which will allow a person to scan the bar code of an item and the app will tell you how to properly recycle or dispose of the item. Sam

Zurawski stated that the app is fairly new and is from a company based on Wausau, Wisconsin. She said that the app will provide recycling or disposal facilities that are in your area. Sam stated that she will reach out to join a webinar or demo of the product to gather more information.

8. National Water Conservation Challenge

Nicky Strahl discussed the National Mayor's Water Conservation Challenge, which is a pledge by residents in towns across the country to conserve water. Nicky Strahl discussed the concerns regarding increased water consumption with increases in population and the impact on infrastructure this has. The program asks for Mayors to pledge support, but the program is also individual focused since it asks for residents to accept the pledge. Lisa Janezic reviewed the My Water Pledge website, which states that the program is a friendly competition between cities to be more water conscious. The Committee members each agreed that they support the program and would like Mayor Haleblan to consider taking the pledge.

The Committee discussed having a Facebook post go out on April 22nd regarding the water pledge. The 22nd is Earth Day and would be a good fit for a water conservation message. Nick Hammonds stated that he will inquire if a post can go out tomorrow.

9. Greenest Region Compact (GRC): Green Business Designation Program

Nick Hammonds stated that the Committee's Green Business program is currently in review. Nick stated that he will have more information regarding the status of the program in May.

10. Open Discussion

Nick Hammonds provided an update regarding the approval of an electric vehicle charging station and a bike rack for the McHenry County bike share program. Nick Hammonds thanked the Committee for their efforts and highlighted how the Committee's efforts help to improve sustainability in the City.

Emilie Hoffman discussed the butterfly event scheduled for May 8th. The event includes arts and crafts, painting chairs which will be displayed at Main Beach, and painting butterflies that go on display for the event. The Committee discussed how they could promote the BWYN event and hand out pollinator seeds at the butterfly event.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

12. Adjourn

There being no further business, Nicky Strahl moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Lisa Janezic seconded the motion. On voice vote, all voted aye. Motion passed.