

MINUTES
Sustainability Committee
July 20, 2022
Municipal Complex, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. on Wednesday, July 20, 2022 at City Hall in Crystal Lake.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Present were the following committee members: Terry Dieckhoff, Carol Elkins, Emilie Hoffman, Cordell Crane, and Nicky Strahl. Members of the public in attendance were Nancy Gonsiorek, Stephen Platt, Aaron Dorman, and Assistant City Manager Nick Hammonds.

3. Public Comment

Nancy Gonsiorek attended the meeting to provide an update regarding the Crystal Lake rain garden projects and the assistance provided by the Wildflower Preservation and Propagation Commission (WPPC). She discussed the local school projects led by the WPPC, as well as the WPPC's involvement with the City's rain garden projects. Nancy stated that the WPPC began assisting the City with volunteer work in 2010 and started with the rain garden in front of City Hall.

She stated that the WPPC was involved with the swale at Brink Street and Grant Street, and has been assisting with planting natives at the new Pine and Oriole rain garden. The goal for Pine and Oriole is to cultivate the native plants and to create a walking area with signage that highlights the variety of plants and the WPPC's involvement with the project. In total, the WPPC has donated over 400 plants for the new rain garden.

Nancy discussed the WPPC's stewardship and volunteer roles, and she stated that finding volunteers is always a difficulty since they have a limited amount of master gardeners that assist with the mentoring program. Steve Platt inquired if the students at MCC would be able to provide volunteer assistance. Nicky Strahl stated that the larger rain garden projects require engineering design, which is usually completed by a professional firm, and then maintenance and stewardship to monitor the rain garden after installation.

Nancy stated that have three planters is ideal, because too many people working in a small area becomes counterproductive. The WPPC would benefit from having more volunteers to assist with stewardship. She stated that offering credentialing for younger volunteers would help in their careers. Nancy inquired if the City has an established volunteer coordinator. Nick Hammonds stated that there is no single volunteer coordinator at this time, but volunteers are sought on a project specific basis as needed.

Cordell Crane inquired if there are any locations at Veteran Acres where rain gardens and natives have been installed. Nancy stated that there are multiple areas within the park where natives have been planted, including the Nature Center. Cordell Crane also asked about the ideal size and location for a rain garden. Nancy stated that rain gardens can be installed in just about any location, citing the areas on roadways between medians as an example. Nicky Strahl stated that farm fields used to have more

native plants lining the outside of the fields, but this is not prevalent any more. Nancy stated that this is a sign of the use of chemical weed killers.

Nancy invited the Committee members and public guests to visit her home where she has been cultivating an expanding native garden. Carol Elkins explained that, much like Nancy's own home, the WPPC works to guide people to start their own rain garden on a small scale, and then homeowners can continue to expand the garden on their own. She explained the importance of creating a system of places for pollinators to have a safe habitat. Meaning that having numerous small gardens throughout town is still beneficial to pollinator habitat.

Cordell Crane inquired about how the WPPC is funded. Nancy stated that the annual plant sale is a larger driver of the funds needed for the organization. The WPPC is volunteer based, so their overhead is pretty low. They offer discounts for mentors and mentees to help promote their mentor program and give back to the participants.

Emilie Hoffman inquired about the next nature walk. Terry Dieckhoff stated that he believed the next walk is this upcoming weekend, July 23 and 24. Nancy stated that their walk dates are listed on the WPPC website at www.wppc.org.

Emilie Hoffman stated that she developed a plan to install a native garden in between her sidewalk and the roadway, but was denied. Nancy discussed the swale at Brink Street and Grant Street, but that this area may be between the parking lot and the sidewalk, not in the right of way. Cordell Crane stated presenting a plan for businesses to install native plants in front of or around their businesses would help to expand on the native areas in the City.

Carol Elkins discussed how the Committee could have a part in promoting and expanding on access for planting native gardens, specifically near the roadways. This would be similar to the MCDOT roadside habitat efforts. Cordell Crane stated that creating a plan that includes the financial impacts and benefits, in addition to the environmental benefits, would help to give the public a full picture of the necessity of native gardens. Carol Elkins added that including information about the harm from sod, mowing, and weed killer applications would be important to include.

Steve Platt discussed his own rain garden at his home. Carol Elkins reminded the group that the cut-off date for the WPPC mentor program is August 1st.

Terry Dieckhoff discussed the success with his native garden. He stated that he started small, and planted in a low area where water accumulated. He said that the garden requires minimal weeding and maintenance now that it is fully grown.

Nancy thanked everyone for their time and reminded anyone interested to view her native garden at her home.

4. Approval of the Minutes from June 15, 2022

Carol Elkins moved to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2022 meeting. Cordell Crane seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

5. Elgin Grant Program

Nick Hammonds discussed the research he has gathered regarding the Elgin community grant program. More information is needed for how the program is funded and the details of the application. Emilie Hoffman suggested that the program could incorporate guidelines for planting in the right of way. The item will continue for discussion at future meetings.

6. Emergency Preparedness and Climate Change

Cordell Crane discussed the emergency preparedness information posted on the City website. He stated that the information is useful, and the Committee can create a small flyer to highlight specific items of interest. Cordell will submit a list of higher priority items to promote on a flyer for Nick Hammonds to compile.

7. Open Discussion

The Committee discussed the upcoming cycle for the next Green Business Designation award season. Emilie Hoffman stated that having the warded businesses from the 2021-22 program send in a photo of the business owners with their awarded sticker and including the pictures in the newsletter would be a great way to highlight the program. She stated that including information about what each business did specifically to win would promote the program and each business.

Steve Platt discussed the upcoming Best Management Practices (BMP) session led by Scott Kuykendall on August 8th. Steve Platt stated that he will share information with Nick Hammonds to provide to the Committee.

Carol Elkins discussed the tree planting list for the City. Currently, there are still invasive species on the tree list available on the City website. She stated that having the Public Works Department update the list to remove invasive species is important. Nick Hammonds stated that he will follow up to make sure the current tree planting list is updated with only natives on non-invasive species.

Emilie Hoffman stated that the Committee should focus on providing new games and information at the Johnny Appleseed Festival, such as promoting the Brink Street swale, which is located near the event booth. She stated that having interactive games would draw in more people, since the event is geared toward families and younger kids. Terry Dieckhoff suggested a bingo game as a possible option.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 17, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

9. Adjourn

There being no further business, Cordell Crane moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. Nicky Strahl seconded the motion. On voice vote, all voted aye. Motion passed.