

MINUTES
Sustainability Committee
March 15, 2023
Municipal Complex, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at Crystal Lake City Hall.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Present were the following committee members: Steve Platt, Amy Olson, Carol Elkins, Cordell Crane, and Terry Dieckhoff. Members of the public in attendance were Sarah Michehl, The Land Conservancy's Community Ecologist, and Assistant City Manager Nick Hammonds.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of the Minutes from February 15, 2023

Cordell Crane moved to approve the minutes from the February 15, 2023 meeting. Carol Elkins seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

5. Conservation At Home Program: Guest Speaker Sarah Michehl

Sarah Michehl, Community Ecologist with The Land Conservancy (TLC), provided a presentation on TLC's Conservation at Home Program. She stated that TLC's goal is to spark ideas on the framework to help the Sustainability Committee in assisting residents with residential native gardens. She discussed the Land Trust where TLC helps to preserve and care for land with a conservational or sustainable value. TLC conducts fundraising to purchase precious lands by assisting residents with obtaining easements on their properties.

Sarah Michehl discussed TLC's conservation strategies and goals. TLC currently owns about 965 acres of land, which are made up mostly of smaller parcels. Cordell Crane inquired if easements are universal or if they are different for each property. Sarah Michehl stated that each easement is different depending on the property and the request of the property owner. She further stated that TLC's responsibility is to protect easements in perpetuity. TLC will assist residents with filing the necessary paperwork with the County to record the easements. Cordell Crane asked if the easements must serve a specific conservation need. Sarah Michehl stated that TLC has a section on their website containing details about the conservation easements.

Sarah Michehl discussed the Conservation at Home program promoted by TLC. She stated that the program was started by the Conservation Foundation to promote the planting and maintenance of native plants on private property. Sarah Michehl further stated that the Conservation at Home program is all based on each individual property owner's goals. Each homeowner receives a yard sign showing their participation in the program.

Sarah Michehl stated that there are over 300 participants total, with 55 in Crystal Lake. TLC provides ongoing counseling and serves as a resource for homeowners partaking in the program. She stated that there is no limit on the size of the property in order to participate. Cordell Crane asked if any farmland

is participating, specifically to help prevent run-off from farmland through natural barriers with native plants. Sarah Michehl stated that there are grant funds available through the state for farms. She discussed the smaller farms in the county that have installed pollinator strips, which would prevent run-off from the properties.

Steve Platt inquired about the amount of farmland in Crystal Lake. Nick Hammonds stated that there is farmland mostly located on the northwest side of town. Sarah Michehl stated that TLC wants to work with everyone, from farms, to townhomes, to houses, to businesses. Cordell Crane asked if TLC has worked with any businesses along Congress Parkway. Sarah Michehl stated that everything depends on who contacts TLC to participate. She provided a breakdown of TLC's Conservation at Work program, which operates similar to the Conservation at Home program. She stated that there are price packages for small companies (less than ten people) and larger companies (more than ten).

Sarah Michehl discussed TLC's 5,000 acres challenge. TLC is trying to get to 5,000 acres of properties with Oaks Trees. The program intends to control invasive species and plant and protect natives. Sarah Michehl also discussed TLC's native plant sale. She said TLC is looking for a partner, specifically one that has indoor space that can hold enough plants and event attendees. Sarah Michehl inquired for the Committee to provide any helpful contacts that could host the event. Steve Platt suggested Nunda Township as a potential facility with large enough capacity, and he mentioned that Nunda has signed the Mayor's Monarch Pledge.

Amy Olson inquired about the length of the plant sale. Sarah stated that the event runs about five days, including setup and breakdown. She stated that they have had to limit the amount of people because of limited facility space. Sarah Michehl discussed the organizations that have partnered with TLC, including Algonquin, Woodstock, and Trout Valley.

6. Bike With Your Neighbor Event: Sunday, June 11, 2023

Nick Hammonds stated that the event date is set for the Bike With Your Neighbor event. Kurt Reckamp from the Park District will visit the Committee at an upcoming meeting to finalize the event plans.

7. 2023 Goals: Greenest Region Compact Review

Amy Olson stated that the GRC has a lot of information, and it would be good for the Committee to know what has already been completed or achieved. Carol Elkins suggested that the Committee use the Mayor's Monarch Pledge as a guide post for goals, since there is considerable overlap between the GRC and the Pledge action items.

8. 2023 Chairperson Selection

Nick Hammonds discussed the need for the Committee to select a Chairperson. He outlined the duties of the Chairperson to lead the group during meetings. The Committee will provide a recommendation at the April meeting and select a new Chairperson.

9. Open Discussion

Amy Olson inquired about no-mow-May, and whether there has been support in Crystal Lake. Carol Elkins stated that the focus is mainly to refrain from using fertilizer in May, and to show the

cost/benefit of maintaining a turf lawn compared to maintaining a property with natives. The importance is communicate the benefits to the public to reduce turf lawn and increase natives.

Amy Olson stated that she was impressed with the Committee's discussion last month regarding takeout containers. Steve Platt discussed one of the Green Business Designation applicants who listed in their application that they are switching away from Styrofoam take out containers. Nick Hammonds stated that Zak Dolezal confirmed he is available to attend the April 19th Sustainability Committee meeting. Carol Elkins stated that the City should commit to no more Styrofoam, even for single use cups within City Hall.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

11. Adjourn

There being no further business, Cordell Crane moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. Amy Olson seconded the motion. On voice vote, all voted aye. Motion passed.