

**MINUTES**  
**Sustainability Committee**  
**April 19, 2023**  
**Municipal Complex, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 19, 2023 at Crystal Lake City Hall.

**2. Roll Call/Attendance**

Present were the following committee members: Steve Platt, Amy Olson, Carol Elkins, Jen Oliver, Emilie Hoffman, Lisa McLaughlin, Terry Dieckhoff, and Simon Gibson. Members of the public in attendance were Vetia Hill, Elevate Community Resource Coordinator, Kurt Reckamp, Crystal Lake Park District, Zak Dolezal, Cecilia Carman, Annette Parent, Kelli Boeckmann, and Assistant City Manager Nick Hammonds.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Approval of the Minutes from March 15, 2023**

Amy Olson moved to approve the minutes from the March 15, 2023 meeting. Simon Gibson seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

**5. Guest Speaker: Vetia Hill, Elevate**

Lisa McLaughlin introduced the first guest speaker, Vetia Hill, her co-worker at Elevate. Vetia Hill welcomed herself to the Committee, stating that she is the Community Resource Director for Elevate, where she focuses on educating people on opportunities to save energy costs. Vetia Hill discussed the programs offered by Elevate, including energy assessments, water efficiency analyses, and solar programs. She discussed the options for the public to participate in solar power even if they do not have solar panels.

Vetia Hill discussed the smart grid, including electric and gas, where people can find ways to save money on energy. She stated the importance of homes getting energy assessments. Home energy assessments are free services where people find ways to improve energy efficiency, save money on energy, and access rebates. Vetia Hill also discussed the water affordability program. This is a program that helps communities with fewer financial resources to become more water efficient.

Steve Platt stated that the smart grid programs at Elevate seem similar to the Citizen's Utility Board (CUB). Lisa McLaughlin stated that Elevate partners with the CUB. She further stated that Elevate will go to groups and events and provide information regarding energy audits and assessments. Steve Platt mentioned that anyone who pays for an audit can keep the receipt and use it for tax write-off purposes. Simon Gibson stated the importance of performing assessments before and after you do any work on your home. Lisa McLaughlin agreed and stated that she had an assessment performed at her home and received many options to reduce energy use and enhance sustainability.

Vetia Hill discussed the CUB and how every person's electric and gas bill includes a percentage that goes towards energy efficiency programs. She stated that CUB is one of the programs that receives

funding from ComEd and other utility companies. She also stated that Elevate manages the hourly pricing program, where they are paid by ComEd to run the program.

Lisa McLaughlin gave a brief background of her role at Elevate and how the organization's mission is to fight climate change in a socially equitable manner. Vetia Hill stated that they are a go-to for the utility companies and their programs funded by grants and the utility companies. The intention is that they want to bring information and provide resources to communities that need resources.

#### **6. Guest Speaker: Zak Dolezal and the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County**

Zak Dolezal and members of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County, including Cecilia Carman, Kelli Boeckmann, and Annette Parent, attended the meeting to discuss their compost program for local restaurants and businesses. Zak Dolezal stated that they are looking for ways to encourage more businesses to join in on the program and are hoping to gain insights and assistance from the Committee.

Zak Dolezal discussed the progression and goals of the program. It started with the Defenders' goal of reducing methane in the atmosphere by addressing food waste. They are hoping to make it easier for restaurants to access composting options. The Defenders have worked with local schools to try to get the program moving faster, and they are working on discounts and incentives to get more businesses involved. Zak Dolezal stated that they currently have four participating businesses.

Zak Dolezal discussed their goal of educating and providing composting for commercial and residential properties. He stated that Eco-Products provides the sustainable containers and Waste Not performs the collection service. Cecilia Carman stated discussed success stories in other towns, such as Oak Park and Fayetteville, Arkansas, that implemented composting. She also stated that there are grants available for municipalities to begin or improve composting programs. In addition, Cecilia Carman discussed the program Seven Generations Ahead, which is providing a waste audit for Crystal Lake schools. The kids run the program and the school gets to see how much food they wasting and find ways to improve waste outcomes through packaging guidance and composting.

Simon Gibson inquired if any size business can join the composting program. Zak Dolezal stated that the program is available for any company, and each company pays for each bin depending on their needs. Zak Dolezal further stated that composting is easier than recycling in many respects, and it is a matter of businesses buying in and taking the steps to dispose of food waste properly.

Emilie Hoffman stated that the Committee could add joining the program as a requirement or field in the Green Business Designation program. Steve Platt inquired if Committee members could go to businesses to promote the program. Zak Dolezal provided business cards for Committee members to provide and he said he has flyers that can be handed out. Steve Platt then asked what are the barriers preventing more businesses from joining. Zak Dolezal stated that cost is the issue. Getting businesses to sign on is difficult in the current climate, and restaurants do not want to pay any more money. He stated that finding any way to incentive businesses to join would be helpful.

Amy Olson inquired if the Defenders have contacted hospitals to join the program. She stated that the employees at hospitals provide food to patients and the employees are responsible for disposing of the food. They would be a good starting point to educate about proper composting. Cecilia Carman stated

that they went to hospitals and had very little luck getting them to sign on. Lisa McLaughlin discussed ways for the Committee to help the Defenders. Promoting at local events would help. Emilie Hoffman stated that the Committee could see if a compost bin can be placed for the Johnny Appleseed festival. Cecilia Carman stated that the Defenders have been putting a lot of information out on social media. Zak Dolezal stated that they could go door to door, but they are looking for more efficient ways to get others involved.

Jen Oliver asked about the cost to join the program. Zak Dolezal stated that one bin starts at \$20 per week and increases to \$30 per week. He stated that his trash hauler previously provided compost, but has since moved away from providing the service. Lisa McLaughlin asked if the Defenders have contacted any restaurant associations. Zak Dolezal stated that the Green Restaurant Association has been helpful.

Cecilia Carman discussed a new program offered in Elgin that operates similar to a book drop-off at a library. For \$5 you can drop off compostable materials in a bin on the street, and hauler regularly comes to empty the bins. The Committee discussed additional organizations that may be able to assist the Defenders with their program, including the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, the McHenry County Economic Development Council, and local Townships.

Zak Dolezal and the Defenders thanked the Committee for their time and assistance. They will plan to attend a future Sustainability Committee meeting to continue partnering together and provides updates on their progress.

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

Kurt Reckamp attended the meeting to discuss the upcoming BWYN. The Park District will work on having the Chief of Police attend with his motorcycle to perform the send off for bike riders. Each participant will receive an ice cream card at the beginning of the event to redeem at the Main Beach office. The Committee confirmed that the plan for the event will be to start at noon, provide ice cream tickets, and maps. Then the bike riders will be on their own to complete a route of their choosing. Emilie Hoffman asked if the Mayor would attend the event. Nick Hammonds confirmed that a notice will be provided for the Mayor or Council Members to attend.

**8. Downtown Crystal Lake Garden Party: May 6, 2023**

The Committee discussed their availability to attend the garden party on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Carol Elkins stated that she is available in the morning from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Lisa McLaughlin stated that she may attend in the morning. Jen Oliver will be out of town. Terry Dieckhoff stated that he can attend from noon to 2:00 p.m. Steve Platt stated that he is mostly available all day, and he can go around to local businesses to help promote the compost program. Emilie Hoffman stated that she is available in the afternoon as well. Amy Olson was not confirmed on her schedule at this time, but she will be at the BWYN in June.

**9. 2023 Goals: Greenest Region Compact Review**

The Committee discussed the Defenders' program and how the Committee could put a bigger focus on recycling and composting. The Committee agreed to add this as a focus of their goals.

**10. Open Discussion**

The Committee agreed to invite a local student to the May meeting. The student contacted the Committee about efforts to improve composting and sustainability at a local school, and can provide insight into the efforts and process. The Committee inquired about contacting District 155 to see if they have environmental clubs.

Amy Olson inquired if the Committee would agree to hold the meetings at 6:30 p.m. instead of 7:00 p.m. After a brief discussion, the Committee all voted aye to changing the meeting time to 6:30 p.m. going forward.

Terry Dieckhoof and members of the Committee inquired if name tags could be provided for the members. This would help at Committee meetings and when members are attending local events. Nick Hammonds stated that he would bring this request to City staff for evaluation.

**11. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

**12. Adjourn**

There being no further business, Amy Olson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Carol Elkins seconded the motion. On voice vote, all voted aye. Motion passed.