

MINUTES
Sustainability Committee
May 17, 2023
Municipal Complex, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 17, 2023 at Crystal Lake City Hall.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Present were the following committee members: Steve Platt, Amy Olson, Carol Elkins, Terry Dieckhoff, and Simon Gibson. Members of the public in attendance were Vignesh Tiruvannamalai, Management Analyst Josh Allain, and Assistant City Manager Nick Hammonds.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of the Minutes from April 19, 2023

Amy Olson moved to approve the minutes from the April 19, 2023 meeting. Carol Elkins seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

5. Guest Speaker: Vignesh Tiruvannamalai

The Committee welcomed guest speaker Vignesh to discuss the efforts he has taken at his local school to improve sustainability. He stated that he identified many areas in his school's operations that could become more sustainable, including the use of composting bins for the lunch room, water conservation practices, education about proper recycling, and getting more recycling bins in the school. He researched low cost options to help address these issues.

Vignesh discussed how he contacted his school council, worked with staff and custodians, and worked with students to educate and gain buy-in to adopt green practices. He created flyers and presentations to provide education on sustainable practices. He also created a map for his school to show the placement of recycling and composting bins. In addition, he created a program for recycling markers and ink cartridges for free. Vignesh also worked with his local food pantry to start food composting. Vignesh discussed numerous awards he has received for his efforts, including a clean water award and an award from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA).

Simon Gibson discussed the importance of communication as a low cost option to conduct outreach. He asked if Vignesh experienced any barriers or push back, and how he overcame those barriers. Vignesh stated that there was initial push back to change. He stated that by demonstrating the impact of sustainable efforts, and how easy they can be, helped him to gain buy-in from his residence hall community. He noticed an immediate change in recycling behaviors once the education materials were provided.

Steve Platt asked if Vignesh has benchmarked the successes of his programs in any scientific units. Vignesh stated that he has to a degree, but he has not completed a full analysis yet. He estimated that the school saved over 800 gallons of recyclable material every week in the residence hall, and 300

pounds of food waste in one day at the food pantry. He also stated that he estimates the efforts contributed to reducing 100 pounds of methane production from the composted food waste.

Amy Olson discussed the lifestyle skills class that Vignesh created, and she asked if he has promoted the use of an aerator on faucets to conserve water. Vignesh stated he had heard about the product, He further discussed his communication efforts through social media, and the Committee's posts on Facebook to promote sustainability. Steve Platt and Amy Olson stated that the Committee could benefit from a post by Vignesh to support and promote his efforts.

Carol Elkins gave praise to Vignesh for efforts in education the youth. Steve Platt asked if Vignesh has seen a higher level interest from the people his age. Vignesh stated that his age group has been very receptive. But, there were still some people who did not engage and needed more direction to pick up the habits.

Carol Elkins asked Vignesh about his plans after high school. Vignesh stated that he plans to study environmental science and sustainability in college. He has had an interest in sustainable from a young age. Simon Gibson stated that he hopes other students become ambassadors for sustainability, a train the trainers approach to getting more people to change their behaviors. This sentiment was echoed by the Committee as the Committee agrees that getting the youth to adopt sustainable behaviors will help their parents to do the same.

Steve Platt asked the Committee about different approaches to make it easier for people to properly recycle. Carol Elkins stated that, 30 years ago, there was no recycling, and people picked it up pretty quickly. Simon Gibson stated that people would feel good about recycling, but the larger issue is to get people not to buy items that are not sustainable, compostable or recyclable. Carol Elkins stated that that is a fundamental issue, since the individual buyer cannot change how a product is packaged, such as food items in a grocery store coming in plastic packaging. Terry Dieckhoff stated that it comes down to habits and education. Terry discussed his experience with the baggers at the grocery store and how he often has to tell them not to use so many plastic bags.

The Committee thanked Vignesh for his time and invited him to attend a future Sustainability Committee meeting.

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

Nick Hammonds inquired the Committee for their availability for the BWYN event in June. Amy Olson and Steve Platt stated they will be there. Simon Gibson, Carol Elkins, and Terry Dieckhoff could not attend.

7. 2023 Goals: Greenest Region Compact / Mayor's Monarch Pledge

Amy Olson discussed a recycling facility for 'hard to recycle' materials in Cook County. Carol Elkins discussed the options available at the townships and the Styrofoam recycling facility in Algonquin. Terry Dieckhoff discussed how there are various locations to drop off various items, but there is not really a 'one-stop shop' to bring all items.

Steve Platt discussed the use of coal tar sealant for driveway sealing. Terry Dieckhoff stated that preventing its use in the watershed would be beneficial. Carol Elkins stated that finding a link for the

Committee to share with an article or Facebook post would help to educate residents. Steve Platt stated that the materials sold at the local store are typically fine, but the door-to-door companies with the trailer are likely not using sustainable materials.

Carol Elkins reviewed the action items for the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. The Committee discussed the upcoming plans to add plantings at the City Hall rain garden. The Committee also discussed how to contact local gardening clubs. Carol Elkins stated that she has some contacts she could reference, Amy Olson stated that she has some contacts for local gardening groups as well. Carol Elkins discussed a butterfly event on August 13th being held by the Park District at Main Beach. Amy Olson discussed increased signage for the Park District's pollinator pockets, and the possibility of having uniform signage at the pollinator pockets and the City's rain gardens.

8. Open Discussion

Nick Hammonds made an announcement to the Committee that Josh Allain will be taking over as the staff liaison for the Committee. Nick Hammonds thanked the Committee for their efforts over the past five years, and how the impact made on the Community by the Committee is important work to make the world more sustainable.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, Amy Olson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. Carol Elkins seconded the motion. On voice vote, all voted aye. Motion passed.