

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Sustainability Commission was held on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue – River Forest, IL.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Co-Chairs Charrette and Lennon, Commissioners Veazie, Hayley, Mezzatesta, Kadlec, and Avalos, Student Commissioner Stierwalt

Absent: None

Also Present: Management Analyst Seth Jansen

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jansen noted written public comment was received and copies were provided for the Commissions. Scott McAdam of McAdam Landscaping submitted a letter on the proposed leaf blower ordinance. Mark Kelty of Kelty Lawn Care and Robert Mahon of Mahon Landscaping jointly submitted a letter on the proposed leaf blower ordinance.

Selena Herrera of Herrera's Landscaping spoke about their experience using electric leaf blowers in Oak Park during the summer months this year. Co-Chair Lennon asked for further elaboration on difficulty faced. Ms. Herrera specifically cited the cost of the batteries, the battery life, and the charging time to recharge batteries. She specifically cited the impact on the quality of work, being unable to fully clean properties while trying to preserve battery life.

Rob McAdam of McAdam Landscaping emphasized the cost between gas and battery-operated equipment and cited short battery life and the need for backup batteries and charging systems needed in trailers and trucks. Mr. McAdam feels the landscape companies were singled out in Oak Park through the focus on leaf blowers rather than all types of equipment. Mr. McAdam cited other actions landscaping companies take to be green. Co-Chair Lennon inquired about the timeline for operating costs recouping the upfront costs through lower maintenance and fuel costs. Mr. McAdam said larger equipment takes longer to payback but for blowers it is mostly fuel cost since gas-powered blower maintenance is typically minimal. Co-Chair Lennon asked about McAdam's experience in Oak Park this year. Mr. McAdam said they were initially unaware of the ordinance until they were cited. He stated they purchased several hand blowers with backup batteries totally approximately \$6000. He indicated that hand blowers are sufficient for smaller things but lack the power and capability needed for larger work like fall leaf clean up. Mr. McAdam states that the equipment often needs to be dedicated to Oak Park because of the ordinance and that crews often need to switch equipment depending on who is working in Oak Park. Co-Chair Lennon

asked what Mr. McAdam views as a potential timeline for transition to all electric leaf blowers or electric equipment generally. Mr. McAdam stated it was difficult to anticipate given the cost needed to transition and waiting for more efficient batteries to be developed. Co-Chair Charrette asked about interest in group purchasing for potential discounts; Mr. McAdam indicated they generally receive good prices because of the amount they need to purchase but indicated it would be beneficial. Commissioner Hayley asked if the costs of the newer equipment has been passed to customers; Mr. McAdam indicated it has not occurred yet because its been relatively small scale but thought it may be needed in the future.

Ms. Herrera wished to make further comment indicated the need to plan for any potential changes and that increased costs to recoup costs could result in losing customers. She stated one of her largest concerns is the time it takes to perform debris clean up at each home with the limited power of the battery blowers.

Co-Chair Lennon inquired about the Green Landscape Technology working group being a part of the Cross Community Climate Collaborative (C4).

3. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Mezzatesta made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Veazie to approve the meeting minutes from August 13, 2024, with typo corrections indicated by Co-Chair Charrette.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chairs Charrette and Lennon, Commissioners Veazie, Hayley, Mezzatesta, Kadlec, and Avalos

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

4. CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED LEAF BLOWER ORDINANCE

Mr. Jansen outlined the updated draft copy, including the “whereas” provisions of the ordinance, and that the draft ordinance language text had been shared via mail and email with all landscape contractors licensed in the Village. Commissioner Mezzatesta stated that she still believes it will be a burden on landscape companies and that we should examine the full cost of a policy before adopting it. Co-Chair Charrette outlined the incentive provision to the contractors present, including an area on the website highlighting those who only use electric leaf blowers. Commissioner Veazie asked for clarification about which sections apply to whom in the draft language; Mr. Jansen stated that the rebate would apply to landscape contractors but that the seasonal ban would apply universally. The Commission discussed how the survey could be used to gauge resident feedback on the issue prior to making a decision.

Co-Chair Lennon asked about the C4 work on green landscape technology; Mr. Jansen provided a quick overview of what work the group had done so far. Co-Chair Lennon

inquired about potentially joining on to what other communities are doing on the topic or if there is a general consensus for communities to forward.

Ms. Herrera provided further comment in support of limiting the noise level and number of leaf blowers used at one site. Co-Chair Charrette indicated the Commission is open to any further suggestions and would provide plenty of notice to any impacted businesses.

5. CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY SURVEY

Mr. Jansen outlined the draft version of the survey and that the test survey was sent to everyone. Mr. Jansen indicated that he had initially made it one question per page to make the branching questions operate. Commissioner Mezzatesta indicated the edits she made to make the branching of questions possible based on different response or categories. Commissioner Mezzatesta discussed the flow and the logic for the survey. Mr. Jansen discussed some of the smaller changes he made to the wording and layout and that his biggest concern was too many pages.

The Commission discussed different edits and ways to reword the questions and answer options to various survey questions. Mr. Jansen indicated ways he would consolidate the survey into a smaller number of pages with multiple questions on each. The Commissioners suggested indicating the anticipated length of the survey at the beginning and including a progress bar in the survey.

6. SOLSMART DISCUSSION

Mr. Jansen outlined the memo on SolSmart and the designation levels and required action items. Mr. Jansen indicated, that when leveling up, Village permitting and inspection staff would likely need to re-complete the training that was completed to achieve Silver designation. Co-Chair Lennon indicated what was needed of the Commission to go forward. Co-Chair Charrette inquired about what is feasible or achievable from a Village administrative perspective. Mr. Jansen outlined the needed items to achieve Gold and Platinum designation and that most changes needed would be from a permitting perspective and a needed zoning change. Co-Chair Charrette stated that administrative feedback would be preferred to start before pushing for any changes that would be onerous to implement. Co-Chair Lennon stated that actions should be undertaken based on what is most optimal and beneficial, which in this case is to encourage people to put more solar on their homes. The Commission discussed the best ways to implement solar policies and what policies suggested by SolSmart would be most beneficial. Commissioner Veazie discussed looking into the fee waiver policies in the permitting and inspection section as potential ways to encourage more rooftop solar.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jansen outlined the IEPA EV charging grant that the Village received and what the rough timeframe is moving forward. Commissioner Hayley inquired about partnering with businesses in River Forest to create economies of scale to purchase EV chargers at a

potentially reduced price. Co-Chair Lennon asked if it was possible to do a group buy through the Village and Co-Chair Charrette asked if the Village could use its purchasing power to assist other institutions in the Village with purchasing EV chargers.

Mr. Jansen noted he would have a memo and some background information regarding the forestry recommendations from the UIC Climate Action Plans. Co-Chair Lennon requested feedback from the Village arborists on the feasibility of each.

Commissioner Avalos inquired about potentially partnering with the Library for a sustainability event. Commissioner Mezzatesta stated she had not had time since the last meeting but was still looking into it.

Commissioner Mezzatesta discussed some of the challenges her condominium building is facing in order to comply with the requirements of the state Electric Vehicle Charging Act and suggested the Village look into renting out overnight parking spaces with charging stations.

Co-Chair Charrette stated she could submit a draft for the next monthly newsletter on going solar. Co-Chair Charrette attended the recent EV Readiness Cohort at Argonne National Lab and shared the innovations she saw regarding EV.

8. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – OCTOBER 8, 2024

The Commission reached a consensus to hold its next meeting Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Charrette made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Veazie, to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 PM.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chairs Charrette and Lennon, Commissioners Veazie, Hayley, Mezzatesta, Kadlec, and Avalos

Absent: None

Nays: None

Motion Passes.



Seth Jansen, Secretary