



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, September 13 – 7:00 PM

A regular meeting of the River Forest Sustainability Commission was held on Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was conducted in the Second Floor Conference Room at the River Forest Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Ave., River Forest.

**Call to Order/Roll Call**

All present except for Chair Brennan. Commissioner Moller will Chair the meeting in Chair Brennan's absence.

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

Commissioner Moller has started a meeting and events calendar for September and October 2018. The calendar will be updated for next few months and included as an attachment to the Commission's agenda each month. The calendar will include substantive meetings that Commission members are attending, it will also track time commitment of members. For example, the calendar includes upcoming talk the Commission Moller is attending at Brookdale.

**Commissioner Reports on Meetings**

Commissioner Moller attended the recent Illinois Recycling Task Force meeting. The Task Force met to discuss coming up with recycling standards because of contamination issues and the request for haulers to start tagging bins. The Task Force is also pushing for clearer communication of what does not get recycled. There has been an increase in needles and sharps being put into recycling bins and it is a real problem. Commission Moller will also be incorporating some guidelines for Village recycling on to website. Next meeting in October.

Commissioner Basney will be meeting with Senator Harmon next week to discuss local and community pesticide issues, the status of the Farm Bill and local negative impact of the Senate proposed bill that includes pesticide pre-emption provision. Since this meeting will also be with Peggy McGrath, Commission Basney will also be discussing will also be following up on whether the Village should consider a non-binding resolution like Oak Park and Evanston calling up on the Illinois General Assembly to

amend the Pesticide Act to remove the section which preempts municipal and county regulation of the use of pesticides.

Commissioner Crothers met with residents with respect to request for feedback on the Community Gardens. She plans to discuss details further in Community Garden and Native Planting Project portion of meeting.

Separately, Commissioners Basney and Crothers will be attending the Village Board of Trustees Meeting on Monday September 17<sup>th</sup> to be available for comment regarding the Commission's recommendation, if approved at tonight's meeting, that the Trustees and Village President sign-on to a letter to be sent to Chairmen of House and Senate Committees on Agriculture to oppose a provision in the House Farm bill that would preempt local pesticide protections.

Commissioner Basney read excerpts from an email that summarizes the pre-emption issue and the call to action from various pesticide protection groups including Beyond Pesticides.

***A motion to vote was made by Commissioner Crothers "to recommend that the Village Board of Trustees send a letter to the Chairmen of Agriculture Committees in opposition to the pre-emption provision."***

***All Commissioner approved the motion.***

Commission Chen reported that District 90 Green for Good efforts are underway, including the activities of student sustainability clubs at each of the schools. Stipends have been provided for teacher sponsors at each of the 3 schools and the groups are currently scheduling a meeting with the Administration to communicate their initiatives.

Commissioner Simon attended the recent MMC subcommittee meeting on the proposed community solar purchasing program. Simon noted that solar projects are complicated and community projects have not happened yet as they are a huge challenge for developers where there is currently massive oversupply and poor profit margins. There are many projects proposed. MMC is playing with the idea of a clearinghouse concept where MMC approaches developers, negotiates with developers and puts together a very compelling program to attract participants. Simon noted that if the Village did a community solar purchasing program independently, it would need to hire attorney, consultants, are restrictions naturally exist as one participant is not able to oversubscribe to a project (i.e. unable to own more than 40% of any one project). As an alternative, a low-cost option is being considered to offer residents clean renewable energy and offer this through a cooperative type arrangement through the MMC. Benefits of this would be economies of scale and this would lower rates for residents. There is a follow up meeting on Tuesday and more to come. MMC members are in support of this. This could be very beneficial to a community like River Forest is the cooperative can set terms and negotiate on behalf of member groups. Commissioner Moller asked if there is a timeline and Commissioner Simon replied "definitely not imminent as ComEd has not yet selected projects. Simon thought that we are talking 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019 about something

coming to fruition. It is a very exciting initiative as there would be serious buying power and all caucus communities would be able to participate. However, it remains theoretical and needs more legs before we can start figuring out position and recommendation to the Board. Mark Pruit, Energy Consultant for MMC would take the lead on this.

John Anderson discussed the upcoming Chicago Avenue project with green infrastructure. Native plants and rain garden going in in the Spring. John has a list of all of the plants going in. Part of the project is bump outs at various intersections to help with crosswalks and leave a bigger parkway. Storm water will go into rain gardens. Stone underneath the rain garden, native plants soak up rain water. Less water in the sewer, less back up. Commissioner Chen suggested that this is highlighted in website.

### **Preemption in the Farm Bill and Landscaper/Chemical Spray Permits**

Per John Anderson's recent discussions with the Building department, there is a process in place now for Landscaper/Chemical Spray Permits. We are waiting for all businesses to be compiled on a list and checking to see if permitted in Village. Commissioner Crothers has a list that she compiles and will continue to provide to John. When businesses re-up for license, they will need to provide substantiation of a state license to spray chemicals. Commission Crothers also proposed consolidating separate lists of licensed contractors to one list for easier tracking. The Building Department would also be notifying existing businesses that are permitted about the new permitting process. John Anderson clarified that some contractors are not permitted for chemical spraying and that there is a requirement if you are applying pesticides or apply chemicals, you need to have a state license. The Building Department reissues licenses on a calendar year basis in January.

### **Green Block Parties and Deep Roots Gardens**

Commission Crothers discussed Village Green Block Party activity. It was noted that there are 9 green block parties on the schedule for this weekend and 1 non-green block party.

86% green this season, 28 block parties are permitted and 24 are green. It was note that there are only 5 sort it out stations available for the block parties and additional will need to be lent out or paper signage can be attached to existing neighborhood bins.

Commissioner Moller will provide Commissioner Chen with email that includes the paper signage. The sort it our stations are first come, first serve so first 5 will get them and last 4 will not have sort it out stations. There are existing signs that can be used for 4 without sort it out stations and participants can attach these to their bins. Commissioner Crothers noted that 4 of the green block parties this weekend will be installing gardens and that this is the second consecutive weekend of doing 4. A total of 13 pollinator gardens have been installed this season. The pollinator gardens are unable to be planted too close to parkway trees, so some have not come about. However, the season goal was 6 new gardens, so the program has been a tremendous success. John Anderson asked Commissioner Crothers if she can send to him all applicable addresses and pictures of the gardens.



An update was made on the Deep Roots Gardens Project. Commissioner Crothers showed some pictures of the new pollinator gardens. Pictures from past events are included with the letter in response to application so everyone sees what they look like. Whoever is organizing the block gets the pictures. Pictures on website actual and no longer concept pictures. Positive feedback from participants about how the gardens are looking. Commissioner Simon commented that neighbors on his block were apprehensive at first but very delighted with results.

Commissioner Cheng asked if we can get some press on this.

To date, 5 of 6 inspiration gardens have been awarded and or/installed, including the Temple in River Forest, Trailside Museum, and residents.

The Green Block Parties and Deep Roots Gardens Project have been great so far. Each Green Block Party has a sort it out station and many have gardens. The cost for the gardens was mostly funded from a grant awarded from the Big Idea contest. Each garden cost is \$100+, not including labor. David Murphy will be paid for labor time. These projects make sense to continue next year but will need to investigate funding/grant money for next year. Commissioner Crothers and David Murphy will do a review meeting and debrief about next season. Deep Roots may apply again next year for Big Idea Grant

Commissioner Crothers also commented that there haven't been many new pledges made as part of the "Healthy Lawn, Healthy Family" initiative and that some have fallen off. A bigger push may be needed to extend to new participants.

### **PlanItGreen Update**

Commissioner Cheng noted that the next meeting is Tuesday. The main update is that the Commission has invited Gary Cuneen, who is guiding PlanItGreen's solar initiative to its October meeting. The big question is how we can mutually support each other's goals. How can the Village obtain similar grants as Oak Park? Commissioner Cheng suggested that we need to start with a Foundational understanding of PlanItGreen's goals and objectives, its interaction with the Community Foundation and that their actual workplan needs to be reviewed.

In addition, one of the key questions is understanding the funding stream. PlanItGreen is funded by the OPRF Community Foundation. Does the Village also contribute to the Community Foundation? John Anderson thinks no. The Community Foundation has community wide goals, the Village has goals and we need to find common goals or points of interaction.

PlanItGreen has a Solar Consultant and wants introductions to Village congregations to see if any want to participate in solar projects. Currently efforts are underway to put enough critical mass together for form group for community solar. But currently, parallel

conversations are going on with respect to solar initiatives. If there is anything that the Commission would like Gary to discuss, members should let Commissioner Cheng know.

In summary, Gary Cuneen in Oct can share with us how best we can collaborate.

### **Tree Tour Project with Morton Arboretum Expert**

Commissioner Basney introduced the idea of a Village Tree Walking Tour that was discussed during a recent gathering with Oak Park's Environmental and Energy Commission. Basney has already spoken with Emily Okallau, Community Trees Project Coordinator at the Morton Arboretum, about leading the tour. The first year would be a walking tour and the vision is a tour can be created that can be biked through the Village as a tourist event. A tour would need to be created with trees that have already been inventoried. The Village has already mapped many trees in a database [on website at Public Works/Forestry/Tree Location Map]. There is interest from the Commission in this event. Commissioner Basney hypothetically liked the idea of scheduling the first tour on Arbor Day morning in the Spring to tie in to the group meeting at the tree planning event at a local school. Commissioner Simon then took us all on a website tour of the tree database.

### **Community Garden and Native Planting Project**

Commissioner Crothers discussed the Village's community plots/gardens. There was a complaint from neighbor that she did not know that this garden was going in and it appears that there was a discrepancy in timing of communication from Park District to neighbors about the plantings going in. Some of the concerns regarding the community garden at the Pumping Station is why do certain individuals have rights the use this property as well as issue with the height and size of the sign. The sign itself notes that this is a community garden but do not trespass or vandalize gardens. Mark in Public Works turned around the sign quickly. The sign is very tall so there have been some complaints. May install a smaller sign. The garden plots do not impact sledding in the winter as the land is public and multipurpose. A silver bench installed for those with disabilities to garden. Some have commented that the current bench would be replaced with a nice park bench. Complaints that spigot as free water for participants but actually spigot is on auto system and gets turned off at night. Commissioners Crothers and Moller met with neighbors and would rectify any significant issues including assisting in more transparency in communication from the Park District. Except for some complaints from neighbors and some valid issues that come up, this initiative has been a huge success with lots of community collaboration. There was a great end of season harvest event with some Trustees and Park District Board members in attendance.

Other updates included that native plants will be installed on sledding hill at Keystone and space by butterfly mural. Hawthorne and Franklin is another spot that is being considered. Mary Masella has been working very hard and has designed plantings and a plan. There is still the ability to take pictures in front of the butterfly. The design does



not harm this. A few hundred dollars for plants. A question was brought up about who would maintain the native plant gardens. They would most likely be planted in the Fall.

### **Mid-Year Review of SC Goals – Waste**

Commission Moller presented a mid-year review of goals regarding waste and she stated that she has run the numbers. There has been a push for more composting sign-up. There are 249 subscribers for composting. The goal is 10% of Village households or 270. Moller commented that some statistics on waste reduction can be misleading. For example, Oak Park includes leaves and special collections in diversion statistics.

This year, River Forest has had a big jump in organics and has added recycling and electronics extravaganza events.

Moller cautioned that waste numbers overall continue to rise. Recycling tons have dropped off a bit. There has been lots of changes in recycling and we are doing ok, but it is hard to change habits. We are average, it's an educational thing. Need to push composting. Education on how to dispose properly of hard items. Moller said that she will continue to talk to Roy Strom on how we can make recycling cleaner, tag carts and stressed that we shouldn't focus only on diversion but more on education. Composting and overall reduction in waste are the things to concentrate on. Commissioner Cheng noted that she wants to understand 50% diversion rate goal better. Moller commended that you segregate waste into organics, compost, recycling and landfill. How much of this is not going to landfill is considered the diversion rate. Historically the diversion rate is 33%-37% but overall waste levels continue to increase.

Commissioner Crothers asked the following questions:

What is the goal? Have everyone reduce their waste? Have less landfill?

What are thoughts on increasing compost? There is so much food waste. How do we move the numbers? Offer compost cart or shared bins to every single household in River Forest?

Commissioner Moller stressed the importance of more opportunities for folks to recycle hard to dispose of items, promotion of recycling events and promotion of reusable items. It is also important to use and communicate helpful metrics. Moller suggested more education about single use plastics and that there are events on this topic at the library.

Commissioner Moller will share numbers with the other Commission members.

### **Upcoming Events:**

*Concordia Homecoming and Carnival 10/6/18*

Commissioner Chen noted that she has ordered 3 sort it out bins for the Football game and has had conversations with a Professor and Organizer. Curbside compost carts will also be available. There will be volunteers at the bins. What about Concordia students?

*Makin' Tracks 5K Run 9/15/18*

This is a Park District event and they will put out bins. Fenwick and Concordia students are expected to volunteer.

*Dominican Beekeeper Workshop 10/20/18*

Commissioner Basney coordinating logistics with Professor Ellen McManus at Dominican. Commission will assist with promoting the event by preparing a flyer and general educational outreach.

*Symposium at Dominican 9/25/18*

This is a panel discussion that will include Commissioners Crothers and Moller. Waste and pesticides, perhaps native planting all to be on the agenda.

*Recycling Extravaganza at the Green Fair 9/25/18*


**Schedule Next Meeting – Tuesday October 9, 2018 – 7:00pm**

**Adjournment**

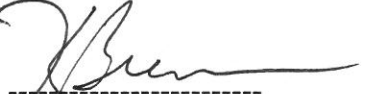
Meeting adjourned at 8:53pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

*Signature Line*

  
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John Anderson, Secretary

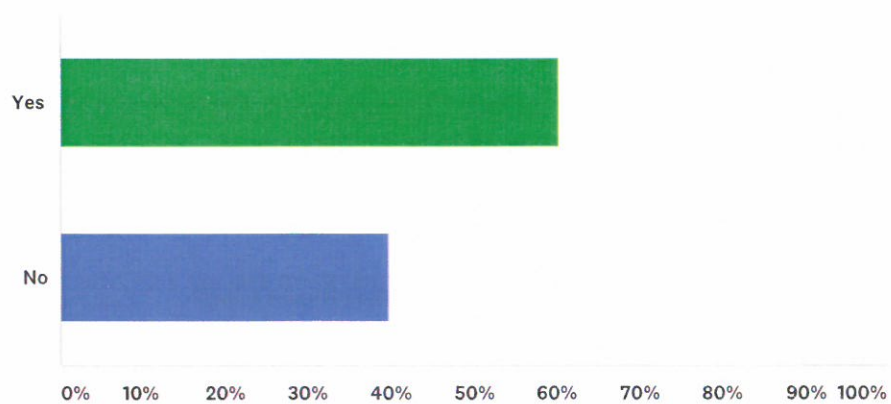
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Kathleen Brennan, Chairman  
Sustainability Commission

Date: 11/14/18

Q1 Did you know that the Village of River Forest approved a Sustainability Commission in 2017? The Commission advises the Village Board on sustainable practices to conserve natural resources, protect the environment, and enhance resident health.

Answered: 181 Skipped: 0



**ANSWER CHOICES**

**RESPONSES**

Yes	60.22%	109
No	39.78%	72
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>181</b>

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	How come we don't have community gardens? a fitness path for elders? an indoor pool for year round fitness...really care for the trees inthe parkway	5/9/2018 4:24 AM
2	Now I know -- thank you!	4/24/2018 9:24 AM