

SKOKIE BEAUTIFICATION MEETING MINUTES

March 2, 2023

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Skokie Village Hall

Commissioners Present: Vernell Ellison-Smith, Chuck Levine, Frederick Lisiewicz, Edward Potash, Rachel Rosenberg, Mitchell Sandler, Ross Del Rosario, Robert Quane, Elizabeth Zimmerman, Lauren Grodnicki, Valerie Shuman, Dalya Horowitz.

Commissioners Absent: Sherwin Ditlove, Ann Goldshaft (LOA), Bahram Khazni (LOA), Joseph Hasten, George Hubchak, Brooke Sprague.

Staff Present: Cathy Stevens

Staff Absent: James Johnson

I. Approval of February 2, 2023, Minutes

Mitchell Sandler said the meeting minutes should be briefer and more general. Chuck Levine made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for February 2, 2023. Mitch seconded the motion; The commission voted to approve the meeting minutes.

II. April Events, Bob Quane

Rachel Rosenberg said that the Native Plants Program on April 1 could be promoted on the Beautification website. Bob Quane brought up the topic of the Beautification Awards Program. Bob mentioned that Ann Goldshaft had resigned from the commission. Cathy Stevens said the Skokie Village Board Meeting (started at 7:30 p.m. (before the awards program). Bob Quane went over the rough draft of the Awards Night Program. Mitch said that awards would be given out in alphabetical order. Mitch asked Chuck if he would give out the certificates and Chuck agreed. Cathy suggested white and green as colors on awards brochures; no one on the commission objected to the colors for the brochure. Mitch said that the commission needed to get a box of decaffeinated coffee as well as a box of regular coffee for the refreshments. Rachel requested that all paper goods be recyclable. Bob said he would put out a sign-up sheet to find out who will be there for the events such as the Beautification Awards Program and Arbor Day Observance. Rachel suggested a coupon be given out to awards winners for purchase of a plant. Cathy said there was a native plant sale on April 23, 2023 [corrected to April 22, 2023].

III. Report: Beautification Education Sub Committee: Chair, Rachel Rosenberg

Rachel said there should be a message for Skokie: Hold off on mowing but be flexible with the treatment of lawns. Rachel said there were no pollinators in a pesticide-ridden lawn. Rachel said that Skokie residents should not be afraid to tell their landscapers that the landscapers do not need to visit their homes at certain times. Rachel said there should be more discussion of the grass being mowed. The topic should involve a much larger conversation. Rachel said the grass should be mowed very early in May.

IV. Report: Beautification New Initiatives Sub Committee, Chair, Valerie Shuman

V. No Mow May. Response to Public Works Messaging, Bob Quane

Bob asked Elizabeth Zimmerman of Public Works to speak. Liz said that she was one hundred percent for anything that was good for pollinators. There was a lot of pressure to treat ash trees from the Emerald Ash Borer. She wanted the commission to think about the consequences of “no mowing in May”. Liz said she reached out to the University of Minnesota Extension to find out the longevity of “no mowing”. The study by the Extension had problems. The study said that grass should be mowed after May. Liz said that “no mow may” was a “catchy” slogan. Benefits of it were getting residents to move to the next level. Vernell Ellison-Smith said that a team was needed to hand out flyers [explaining the program for improving lawns]. Liz said the Village Board would drag its feet on the project; they would not be actively giving out citations. The [Minnesota] Extension had sent Liz a video [on lawn care]. Liz said she would try to get the video for the commission members. CIAC would be a liaison to the Beautification Commission.

VI. Report by Cathy Stevens, Staff Liaison

Cathy said there were some very low ground plants for planting on the parkway. People would need to walk all over the parkway to get to the utilities. Cathy said that only the top three winners [of the Beautification Awards] were getting yard signs.

Rachel proposed that people be given a free plant just for coming out. Mitchell said that milkweed was very difficult to grow from seeds. Bob mentioned that the Board discussion was shifting back to discussing native plants. Cathy said she could help with spring planting, but it was difficult.

Bob said that when the board considers or adopts a new program or initiative, Board members should take ownership and not necessarily rely on our staff liaison for the planning and implementation. He would like to see people in the community join the board members for the fall planting. Brooke suggested the board should make the fall planting a bigger event so the spring planting in 2024 would be really big.

Cathy said a nice banner put on the Fourth of July Parade Float would be a nice thing.

Rachel made a motion to forward the budget request wish list to the Village. Dalya Horowitz said the commission should make a motion to forward the budget request to the Village. The commission approved the request.

VII. Report by James Johnson, Trustee Liaison

VIII. Old Business

Bob said they had talked about the possibility of customer safety vests for board members. It would easily identify the board member as working for the Beautification Commission when they make rounds looking for beautification award candidates. They were \$11 each. Bob said that everyone should go to the Beautification Website; there was a lot of content put out by a lot of people.

Liz said the commission would need to make two amendments for parkways and weeds. The height on the parkways for native plantings should be 8 to 12 inches. Liz said they were strongly encouraging the most flexibility possible for parkways.

IX. New Business

X. Adjournment

Dalya made a motion to adjourn. Mitch seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was passed by the commission. The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.