



Village of Skokie Beautification and Improvement Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2023

Commissioners Present: Ross Del Rosario, Vernell Ellison-Smith, George Hubchak, Charles Levine, Frederick Lisiewicz, Edward Potash, Bob Quane (Chair), Rachel Rosenberg, Mitchell Sandler (Vice Chair), Valerie Shuman, Brooke Sprague, Anne VanOsdol

Commissioners Absent: Sherwin Ditlove, Ann Goldshaft, Joseph Hasten, Dalya Horowitz, Bahram Khazni, Joshua Shpayer

Staff Present: Cathy Stevens, Staff Liaison; James Johnson, Trustee Liaison

I. Welcome New Member

Chair Quane called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and welcomed new commission member Ross Del Rosario, who introduced himself.

II. Old Business – Skokie Weed Ordinance

Chair Quane noted that the commission would move up some old business from the previous meeting to the top of the agenda. He summarized information from the January meeting on tweaking the Green Bay weed ordinance and shared that he and Commissioner Lisiewicz hadn't been able to make new updates to their work since the previous meeting. He explained that the plan was for Chair Quane, Commissioner Lisiewicz, and the chairs of both subcommittees to come to an agreement on the language for the new ordinance and pass it along to Liaison Stevens in advance of the next commission meeting. He re-shared the key regulation points of the ordinance. Commissioner Shuman raised a concern about requiring parkway permits as an additional barrier to planting. Vice Chair Sandler suggested the idea of creating a sponsorship program for corners and parkways to maintain plantings and keep them clean. Chair Quane explained that he didn't want to nitpick parts of the ordinance at this meeting, but rather to get approval to tweak it and share it with the village. Liaison Stevens shared that village staff would be meeting on the following Monday to begin work on the ordinance. Vice Chair Sandler said

that the chairs and Commissioner Lisiewicz could make final adjustments by email. The commission agreed to proceed in this manner.

III. Old Business - Website Main Page Updates

Chair Quane shared updates to the website main page incorporating revisions from commission members and explained that an education page would also be passed on to village communications. Commissioner Rosenberg said that the goal was to get these changes forwarded as soon as possible so that the pages were ready when the awards were announced. Liaison Stevens said she would share everything and village staff would consider the best way to design it, and that she couldn't promise the awards page would be a separate page from the main one. Commissioner Shuman suggested pruning text for mobile phone viewing, ensuring that the most important information is easily accessible, suggesting that the web team should be apprised of the commission's priorities. Commissioner Rosenberg said that the priority was to get the information to village communications, who would determine how to best present it, and then follow-up meetings could be held with commission members and village communications to clarify messaging if necessary.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Sandler motioned to approve January 12 meeting minutes, and Commissioner Rosenberg seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

V. Report, Beautification Education Subcommittee: Chair, Rachel Rosenberg

Commissioner Rosenberg shared that the Education Subcommittee (ESC) had scheduled a presentation at the Skokie Public Library on native planting on April 1 at 1pm, and that they were in the process of scheduling another talk for September. Chair Quane said that he and Liaison Stevens were still working on connecting with Lee Hansen at Emily Oaks Nature Center. Liaison Stevens suggested setting up a table at the Skokie Farmer's Market to hand out native plants as another possibility. Commissioner Rosenberg said there was already another person selling native flowers at the farmer's market. It was decided to continue working to coordinate with Emily Oaks.

VI. Report: Beautification New Initiatives Subcommittee: Valerie Shuman

Commissioner Shuman shared that at the next meeting of the New Initiatives Subcommittee (NISC), they would go through the Environmental Sustainability Plan items pertaining to the Beautification Commission. Commissioner Shuman suggested looking at the tree canopy plan. Chair Quane re-capped the previous meeting's discussion on the tree canopy plan. He added that the commission needed to start thinking about Arbor Day, and that perhaps the NISC could give thought to that. Liaison Stevens said she would appreciate that if the group discussed Arbor Day to make sure there was communication with her before barreling ahead and doing stuff. She reminded everyone that the event would be held on Friday, April, the 28th at 10am at

Elizabeth Meyer School, and added that she had connected with the principal there. The commission members would just need to come and support it. Commissioner Shuman asked if there was a program in mind to help the tree planting goal happen. Liaison Stevens said that she would share information on that during her report. Chair Quane said that it would be nice to make the event a larger deal this year than in years past, and the commission or NISC would continue to work on that.

VII. No Mow May Initiative, Bob Quane & Vernell Ellison-Smith

Chair Quane shared the history of No Mow May. Chair Ellison-Smith presented benefits and potential concerns related to the event. She explained the primary benefit was to help pollinators and lawns thrive during the early spring. She said that Glenview had started a similar program the previous year with a March 1 sign-up. Participating residents would pick up signs explaining their participation in the event. Chair Quane asked if there was a motion to move forward a recommendation for Skokie implementing some version of a No Mow May program, with dates and level of participation as well as lawn length to be determined. Commissioner Levine motioned to move a recommendation forward, and Vice Chair Sandler seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

VIII. Awards Program Recognition Event, General Discussion

Chair Quane shared an invitation that would be sent to the Beautification Awards winners with an RSVP deadline. He asked whether invitations were typically followed up with calls or emails to those who did not respond and Liaison Stevens no. She explained that most invitees responded, and some who didn't would still show up. Chair Quane expressed the hope that a more formal invitation would encourage a higher response rate. Commissioner Shuman asked if any time at the ceremony would be devoted to sharing information about the updates to the awards. Chair Quane thought this would be the perfect opportunity to do that. It was determined that a 2-minute update would be provided by Commissioner Shuman. Vice Chair Sandler said that the village board likely would not add it to the meeting minutes but that it could be done, and suggested that a bullet point handout should be given to the winners regarding the updates. Liaison Stevens suggested going through all of the names rather than just those present since there were fewer winners this year and that would ensure no one was left out.

Vice Chair Sandler said that he would have name badges, so upon arrival commission members should pick theirs up from him. It was requested that everyone be there at least 15 minutes before the start, and anyone helping to set up the reception should arrive by 7:30 PM at the latest. Chair Quane suggested getting a nice backdrop for photos behind the podium. Liaison Stevens expressed skepticism at the amount of room within chambers for a backdrop. Chair Quane said he thought it should fit. Chair Quane said there should also be a poster featuring the awards logo for when attendees entered the multi-purpose room. Liaison Stevens asked for help delivering framed certificates to non-attendees and several commissioners volunteered to help.

IX. Report by Cathy Stevens, Staff Liaison

Liaison Stevens reported on what the village is doing for sustainability and what the commission's role is in it. She explained that she just wanted to make sure that no one was duplicating effort. She said that under tree planting and increased canopy, her goal was to plant no less than 200 trees in the spring. She shared that she was working on a new species list and planting plan, and would be checking in with the commission for support. Chair Quane asked how different 200 was from past efforts. Liaison Stevens said that in the last several years, she had planted only 100 or 150 trees in spring. She explained that these were all public trees. Commissioner Shuman asked if that meant the village had to convince 200 people to water trees. Liaison Stevens responded yes, and that there was already stuff in place for that. She said she has a letter she gives to people with reasons why the trees are beneficial and how to care for them, etc. The eight-year plan would be to have the commission members as a core volunteer group helping out with small tree care, hanging door hangers, etc.

Liaison Stevens said that the Beautification and Improvement Committee was specifically mentioned in Skokie's Environmental Sustainability Plan in an item on updating the awards to incorporate native plants, which the commission has already done. The other action item in which the commission is specifically named is on educating and incentivizing property owners to plant native.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Chair Quane and seconded by Commissioner Shuman.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Meeting minutes submitted by Brooke Sprague.