

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Sustainability Commission was held on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 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 7:03p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Clancy, McLean, Student Commissioner Meyer

Absent: Commissioner Roberts, Student Commissioner Raidt

Also Present: Management Analyst Sara Phyfer, Mark Pruitt (Illinois Power Bureau)

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Charrette made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cheng, to approve the March 8, 2022 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Cheng requested revisions to her comments, and Commissioner McLean asked that DU be written out for Dominican University.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Clancy, McLean

Absent: Commissioner Roberts

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

4. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Charrette reported that she attended PlanItGreen and the Dominican University sustainability meeting, noting there will be a showing of the film *The Ground Between Us* there during Earth Week. She also commented about the waste contract discussion at the Village Board meeting in regards to the composting program.

In response to a question about the program, Ms. Phyfer stated all existing composting subscribers will have their rates lowered and Staff will reach out to notify them of the new cart sizes.

Commissioner Cheng thanked Staff and the Village Board for weaving sustainability into the new waste contract, and she expressed her excitement about hazardous waste and e-waste being included, as well as additional composting sizes. She commented about the process related to the contract and acknowledged that while there is a lot going on, that if the Commission had known about some provisions related to waste, they could have perhaps settled those items prior to the Board meeting. She stated that for future process, the Commission should keep the annual review of the compost program on their radar, as well as review the LRS reports in relation to the waste reduction goals.

Student Commissioner Meyer stated that while she was not able to attend the OPRF sustainability meeting but that a draft was presented to the Board. She also asked about the outcome of the Village Board's meeting.

Trustee Gillis stated the vote was postponed so the Board could draft new language to address their concerns regarding the threshold for opt-in composting and the provision about unlimited waste removal day.

Ms. Phyfer stated an email was sent to curbside composting customers to sign up for compost delivery. She also asked what information the Commission needs related to parkway tree plantings and removals to track the Village's carbon inventory.

5. COMMUNITY SOLAR AND BENCHMARK ENROLLMENT

Mr. Pruitt commended the Commission and Staff for getting the program launched. In response to a question from Commissioner Cheng about enrollment, Mr. Pruitt explained the nuances of the program as it relates to state statutes and noted the Commission's role as it relates to marketing. He stated River Forest is on the front end of the customer acquisition and engagement side and that when communities lead, residents respond favorably. He stated the Village's 2.6% response rate is high due to the Village sponsoring the program. He suggested finding additional channels of outreach and repeated the message as ways to boost enrollment. Mr. Pruitt further explained MCSquared's role in moving customers through the process, administering billing and ongoing customer care, but noting it is ultimately the Village's program. He stated that in June, ComEd will begin providing net billing, which is anticipated to reduce dropout due to autopay billing concerns.

Commissioner Cheng's inquired about River Forest's conversion rate and about a realistic goal for the number of subscribers.

Mr. Pruitt stated MCSquared could pin down what they hear about customer feedback. He also suggested inviting people to a Zoom session Q&A for those who have not completed enrollment. He stated there are no specific goals for Illinois Power Bureau but thought 20% may be a good benchmark as compared to opt-in municipal aggregation. He also explained their procurement process and suggested including a community goal as part of the marketing to residents.

In response to a question from Chairperson Simon about best practices in other communities, Mr. Pruitt stated those with the highest conversion and response rates repeat the direct mailing and push the message through communication channels. He commented about other opportunities as well, such as having a QR code on a sticker for businesses that have signed up for the program.

The Commission discussed the various ways residents can receive electricity and how to resonate with residents.

In response to a question from Commissioner Charrette about signing up municipal accounts, Mr. Pruitt explained that the program allows for small and commercial accounts and there are very few accounts that fit that profile and are not on franchise agreements. He noted some municipalities have moved accounts to infrastructure maintenance fees, which would allow accounts otherwise ineligible to participate in community solar. He also explained that in June, the utility is to provide bill credits to all accounts regardless of size on an equalized basis, which would allow communities to put community solar on existing retail supply accounts.

In response to a follow up question from Commissioner Charrette, Mr. Pruitt stated the credits might not match up to consumption due to the seasonality of the farm's electricity generation, noting that the annual consumption should match the annual output.

Mr. Pruitt emphasized the program is the Village's, noting the process is not seamless, which is partially due to regulation, and he expressed hope that would improve over time.

Commissioner Cheng suggested offering on the MCSquared website a brief explanation of the forms subscribers would be signing.

There was also a brief discussion about why a residence might not be eligible for the program.

6. CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING DRAFT SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN PLACES OF EATING ORDINANCE

Ms. Phyfer stated the Commission has a revised ordinance for their consideration. She reported she spoke with the Village attorney about including plastic bags in the definition and that her recommendation is to separate that out because the Village could adopt an opt-in plastic bag ordinance that would apply more broadly across all Village businesses rather than the narrower focus of food establishments. She noted the challenge about including plastic bags would be if, for example, one customer at Walgreens was purchasing a food item they would have to opt-in to the plastic bag, but the next purchasing a non-food item such as a magazine would not.

Commissioner Charrette suggested including language about food prepared on site. Ms. Phyfer stated a list of affected businesses is included in the packet, and that if the Commission

would like to establish a list of business types to include or exclude, the Village attorney could draft language to implement that.

Chairperson Simon stated right now the ordinance does not include plastic bags. He commented he agreed with this approach, noting that there could be an opportunity to implement an opt-in plastic bag ordinance across the Village, which is what the Commission ultimately wants. Ms. Phyfer clarified the plastic bag ordinance would be in a similar vein, and not a ban or tax. Commissioner Cheng stated she also agreed with this approach.

In response to a question from Commissioner McLean, Chairperson Simon clarified that a customer would need to request utensils and that every affected business would have to conform to this ordinance.

In response to a question from Commissioner Charrette, Ms. Phyfer stated the ordinance would be enforced the same way as other ordinances and follow the Village's adjudication procedures.

In response to a question from Commission McLean about a plastic bag ban, Ms. Phyfer stated the Village is a non-home rule community, which limits the Village's authority to implement a ban or tax on plastic bags.

Ms. Phyfer stated the next steps are to invite businesses for their input and to summarize the key findings. The Commission reached a consensus to invite businesses to the May meeting.

In response to a question from Commissioner Veazie, Ms. Phyfer noted Staff would mail letters directly to the businesses and communicate the meeting via the Village's communication channels.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION

a. RECOMMENDATION TO SUSPEND TALL GRASS/WEEDS REGULATIONS FOR MONTH OF MAY

Commissioner Charrette stated this a request that came out of the Community Wildlife Habitat Team at Roosevelt. She reviewed the initiative, which is to address the decline in bees and pollinators. She stated in order to promote this, the Village would have to suspend the ordinance.

The Commission discussed this item and were supportive of the initiative. Commissioners noted it was unlikely much grass would reach 8" anyhow and that commercial properties did not need to be included. Ms. Phyfer stated the Village's code enforcement officer did not have any concerns about this and the Village attorney provided guidance on how the Board could implement a moratorium.

Commissioner Charrette made a motion, seconded by Chairperson Simon, to make a recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees to suspend enforcement of weeds and grass height regulations for residential properties during the month of May.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Clancy, McLean

Absent: Commissioner Roberts

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

b. RECOMMENDATION TO PURSUE SOLAR PANEL TEXT AMENDMENT

Ms. Phyfer stated the Village has enough points for silver but is unable to obtain the designation without using the term “accessory use.” She explained this would require amending the Village’s zoning code as it relates to solar panel systems, which can be done through the text amendment process. She noted the options to move forward with that process.

Chairperson Simon stated his preference is to handle this as a standalone text amendment, and Commissioner Charrette concurred, suggesting they do what is needed for SolSmart and have a bigger discussion regarding solar as part of the overhaul.

Chairperson Simon noted he would like to see battery storage included as well.

Commissioner Veazie stated this would also check a box for the gold designation as well, noting this is the bigger hurdle. He also stated CEJA contains directives about implementing best practices related to zoning and if possible, the Village should try to sync its efforts with that guidance.

Commissioner Veazie made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cheng, Motion to make a recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees to proceed with a text amendment related to solar panel systems.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Clancy, McLean

Absent: Commissioner Roberts

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

8. TREE REGULATIONS RESEARCH

Trustee Gillis stated she is representing a resident who is advocating for stronger tree regulations. She reviewed the resident’s concern related to her neighbor wanting to trim her oak tree, whose canopy hangs over their swimming pool. She noted oak trees should only be trimmed in the winter to prevent spreading oak wilt and the lack of education about what trees do for us. She noted Washington DC’s heritage tree regulations and stated the

Commission could investigate what other municipalities are doing and put forth a recommendation to strengthen protection of trees.

The Commission discussed this item and was supportive of the project. Chairperson Simon stated part of this process would be seeing what other municipalities have done in this regard.

Ms. Phyfer stated she would need to have some discussions with the administration and the Village attorney to see what would be an option from a regulatory standpoint, but that there is certainly an educational opportunity here.

Commissioners Cheng and Charrette volunteered to work on this with the resident.

9. WEBSITE PLAN

Commissioner Cheng stated this item could be postponed to the next meeting, noting the goal is to make the website more organized.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

The Commission discussed the communications calendar and content options.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

12. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – MAY 10, 2022

The Commission reached a consensus to hold its next meeting Tuesday, May 10, 2022.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Cheng made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Veazie, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 PM.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Clancy, McLean

Absent: Commissioner Roberts

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

Sara Phyfer, Secretary