

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Sustainability Commission was held on Tuesday, June 11, 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 Simon and Charrette, Commissioners Lennon, Mezzatesta, and Veazie (arriving at 7:03), Student Commissioners Avalos and Stierwalt (arriving at 7:05)

Absent: Commissioner Hayley

Also Present: Management Analyst Seth Jansen

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Resident Larry Raymond questioned what data would support a potential gas-powered leaf blower ban. He stated that he viewed the proposed ordinance as an overreach of the Village's authority.

Robert Mahon of Mahon's Landscaping discussed the potential cost of replacing gas-powered leaf blowers with battery powered leaf blowers, citing an average cost of \$2500 per blower and \$600 per battery. He noted that most packs require two batteries and can only last approximately 45 minutes at full power, which would require additional back up batteries. Mr. Mahon further cited the need for batteries to cool after charging and be stored in an area that is generally cooler than their equipment trailers are during most days. He stated that this will impact service and the cost would likely be pushed onto the residents. Mr. Mahon raised the potential hazards of batteries being used while in the rain, which he cited as something not often done by residents but is done by contractors due to their workload. Mr. Mahon noted that the noise issue is a difference of approximately 20 decibels. Mr. Mahon stated that he believes the Commission and the Village should wait for the battery technology to catch up with regards to both power and battery life.

Victor with BW Landscaping indicated his company stopped working in Evanston when they first passed their gas-powered leaf blower ban. He shared that his company recently had two blowers and trimmers stolen from a trailer; he said the cost of replacing gas powered items is about \$600 per piece of equipment where it would be \$2500 for replacing battery powered versions of the same equipment. He further stated the largest issue is that battery powered blowers are not efficient for large jobs, often needing more than 6 hours of battery power for a day of work. He indicated that his company will need to increase prices for their Oak Park operations. He indicated a 45-minute battery life for a homeowner may be sufficient but not for a company that operates longer hours.

Mark Kelty of Kelty Lawn Care raised concerns about other businesses still using gas-powered leaf blowers and claimed that the ordinance only applies to landscape contractors; Mr. Jansen stated any ordinance would apply to all residents and businesses. David Beacom of Majestic Gardens Landscape claimed that the exhaust from a gas-powered leaf blower is not a hazard to the workers because the exhaust faces away from the person operating it and does not blow at them. Mr. Kelty further stated that wearing ear protection for a leaf-blower operator is a greater safety concern than any potential hearing loss, as they can then not hear any potentially approaching cars if they are in the street.

Co-Chair Charrette asked those in attendance if they could continue to share their thoughts on how this can be made to work going forward, as well as any available information that they may have for the Commission better understand their concerns. Mr. Jansen indicated that they all had his email address and could send him any information, or they could fill out the survey sent to contractors. The contractors present inquired about any potential timeframe, and Mr. Jansen indicated July would be the earliest Commission vote and the Board would not act until after the Commission took action.

3. PROPOSED LEAF BLOWER ORDINANCE DISCUSSION

Student Commissioner Stierwalt noted that the concerns with regards to efficiency and cost raised by the Commissioners was valid, and that the Commission should carefully consider the language before moving forward. Student Commissioner Avalos indicated that an incentivized approach may be more effective than a ban. Commissioner Mezzatesta stated that the Commission should look into the effects this has had in places like Evanston that have already implemented such bans. Co-Chair Charrette inquired about responses from the larger landscaping companies; Mr. Jansen indicated that a representative from McAdam Landscaping had been at a separate meeting the previous week and shared a number of the same concerns with regards to cost and power of the batteries and the issues faced with regarding them. Mr. Jansen additionally noted that only one contractor responded that they would be able to easily make the transition from gas-powered to electric. Co-Chair Charrette indicated that she would reach out to staff at the Park District of Oak Park to get them to share how they were able to transition to electric-powered landscaping equipment. Commissioner Charrette inquired how residents/customers would feel about costs going up in order for contractors to be able to comply with this requirement.

Mr. Jansen had inquired about the potential of a public survey, as one resident had inquired about having one for residents to provide their own feedback. Mr. Jansen solicited feedback from the Commission for a potential survey. Commissioner Veazie indicated that all impacts, including the impact on the businesses and the environmental and noise factors, should all be considered. Commissioner Veazie also noted that a potential transition should be anticipated, and regulations should be implemented in a feasible way. The Commission discussed the advancements of battery technology and that increases in power and battery life should be anticipated going forward, given the amount of research and development that are being pushed into it. The Commission discussed that it is important the landscape contractors be able to provide feedback but that some form of electrification will be going forward regardless of what the Village does. The Commission briefly discussed the

possibility of forming a bulk purchasing cooperative for landscape contractors to help lower costs.

Co-Chair Simon stated that much of what the Commission has done in the past has been in a collaborative manner with stakeholders and that this should be the same going forward. The Commission stated they would continue to gather more information, seek further stakeholder input, and continue to discuss this item at future meetings. Mr. Jansen stated he would look further into a potential grant the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus was seeking to fund the replacement of gas-powered lawn equipment. Commissioner Lennon inquired about ways to highlight any form of green certification or all electric equipment as part of the landscaper license. Commission Charrette discussed changing the fees for those who convert to electric leaf blowers or electric equipment.

4. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Mezzatesta made a motion, seconded by Co-Chair Charrette to approve the meeting minutes from May 14, 2024, with typo corrections identified by the Commissioners.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chairs Simon and Charrette, Commissioners Lennon, Mezzatesta, and Veazie

Absent: Commissioner Hayley

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

5. ELECTRIC AGGREGATION CONTRACT EXTENSION

Mr. Jansen outlined the memorandum prepared for the Commission and the details of the aggregation term extension. Mr. Jansen provided information regarding enrollment into the program. The Commission discussed the extension. Commissioner Lennon inquired about those who have already opted out and requested robust communications from the Village explaining that there is not increased rate cost to residents. Co-Chair Charrette raised concerns about the adverse effects of those who consume the most during peak hours are being left on the ComEd plan, allowing MC2 to afford to provide the Renewable Energy Credits for other uses, but making it harder for ComEd to reach their required renewable energy source requirements. Co-Chair Charrette questioned the lack of civic contribution after the first contract extension. Commissioner Veazie noted Co-Chair Charrette is bringing attention to an important issue but reflected on the work that was done to initially get the program up and running. The Commission discussed ways to promote clean energy generally, including building up the community solar program. Commissioner Lennon inquired about whether those enrolled would continue to remain enrolled and if those who had previously opted out would receive another notice; Mr. Jansen indicated every resident enrolled in the program would receive a renewal notice and those who had opted out would not receive any notice.

Commissioner Lennon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mezzatesta to recommend that the Village Board approve an ordinance extending the term of the Master Power Supply Agreement with MC Squared Energy Services, LLC for an additional 24 months.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chair Simon, Commissioners Lennon, Mezzatesta, and Veazie

Nays: Co-Chair Charrette

Absent: Commissioner Hayley

Motion Passes.

6. TREE ORDINANCE UPDATE

Mr. Jansen discussed the grant the Village received through the Morton Arboretum to assist with treatment of Emerald Ash Borer and explained that a condition of the grant was to update the Village's tree ordinance. The Commission inquired about the ability of the public works crew to handle any new requirements in the ordinance. Mr. Jansen explained that the Superintendent of Operations for the Public Works staff is a certified arborist and helped draft the ordinance and also explained there are 3 other certified arborists on staff. The Commission also discussed the number of Ash trees, how much the grant was for, and potential for treatment of Dutch Elm disease as well.

Co-Chair Charrette made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Lennon to recommend the Village Board adopt an ordinance updating the Trees and Shrubs Chapter of the Village Code to comply with requirements of the Morton Arboretum grant process.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chairs Simon and Charrette, Commissioners Lennon, Mezzatesta, and Veazie

Absent: Commissioner Hayley

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

7. COMPOST CART COST SPLITTING

Mr. Jansen summarized discussion from the previous meetings and the potential steps needed to implement compost cart cost splitting and the steps going forward to implement the program. Commissioner Veazie inquired how the program would work for LRS operations and for Village operations, and Mr. Jansen described how the billing would be done through the Village side. The Commission discussed how the potential for lower costs could grow the number of compost subscribers. The Commission stated that notification would be required to residents in instances where the household they share the compost cart were to move or cancel their share. The Commission raised questions to Mr. Jansen regarding how the compost program is generally implemented, and Mr. Jansen explained how various aspects of the program work with regards to billing cycles and changing cart sizes. Co-Chair Charrette indicated she would like the motion to acknowledge that the

Commission and the Village are working to an opt-out program and feel that this is an important step to continue to grow the opt-in program with the eventual goal of switching to an opt-out program when the participation rate is closer to 50%. Co-Chair Charrette inquired as to whether the Village could partner with the school district to have the schools serve as additional food scrap drop off locations at certain times of year. Commissioner Lennon indicated that, while he is supportive of the concept of cost splitting, he believes the goal should be to reduce overall waste rather than increase curbside composting.

Commissioner Mezzatesta made a motion, seconded by Co-Chair Simon to recommend that the Village implement a program to allow for two households to split the cost of one compost cart to increase participation in the Village composting program in order to gain support for opt-out composting.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chairs Simon and Charrette, Commissioners Mezzatesta and Veazie

Nays: Commissioner Lennon

Absent: Commissioner Hayley

Motion Passes.

8. UIC CLIMATE ACTION PLANS REVIEW

Mr. Jansen and Co-Chairs Charrette Simon indicated that more time would be dedicated at the next month's meeting to focus on the recommendations from the Climate Action Plans with a focus on identifying (a) what the Village has already implemented, (b) what can be quickly implemented, and (c) what can be incorporated into Village operations. Commissioner Lennon indicated that the focus on Village operations should include ways to incorporate sustainability aspects into all Village operation decision making.

9. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jansen outlined the plan to use recycled newsletter articles for forthcoming weekly newsletter articles where possible. Commissioner Mezzatesta indicated she would continue to send some draft articles that can be used at any point in the coming weeks or months.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jansen indicated that Concordia University had reached out inquiring about composting information and indicating that they are creating a pollinator garden on campus. Mr. Jansen indicated that he shared some information with them, and Co-Chair Charrette requested that this be shared with Commissioner Hayley.

Commissioner Charrette discussed Oak Park's forthcoming EV charging fee and planned expansion of EV Charging Stations. Mr. Jansen outlined the grant submitted to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and how implementation is dependent upon award of that grant with regards to the scope of Village EV charging expansion. The Commission noted that further discussion on charging station fees would be warranted should the grant be awarded.

11. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – JULY 9, 2024

The Commission reached a consensus to hold its next meeting Tuesday, July 9, 2024.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Charrette made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Veazie, to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 PM.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Co-Chairs Simon and Charrette, Commissioners Lennon, Mezzatesta, and Veazie

Absent: Commissioner Hayley

Nays: None

Motion Passes.



Seth Jansen, Secretary