



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 – 7:00 PM
Village Hall – 400 Park Ave.,
River Forest, IL

You may submit your written public comments via email in advance of the meeting to: sphyfer@vrf.us

You may listen to the meeting by participating in a Zoom conference call as follows: dial-in number: 312-626-6799 with meeting ID: 815 7019 8136 or by clicking here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81570198136>. If you would like to speak during public comment, please email sphyfer@vrf.us by 4:00 PM on Tuesday, April 12, 2022.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Adoption of Meeting Minutes
4. Commissioner Reports
5. Community Solar and Benchmark Enrollment
 - a. Mark Pruitt (Illinois Power Bureau)
6. Continued Discussion Regarding Draft Single-Use Plastics in Places of Eating Ordinance
7. Discussion and Consideration
 - a. Recommendation to Suspend Tall Grass/Weeds Regulations for Month of May
 - b. Recommendation to Pursue Solar Panel Text Amendment
8. Tree Regulations Research
9. Website Plan
10. Communications
11. Other Business
12. Schedule Next Meeting – May 10, 2022
13. Adjournment

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2022**

A regular meeting of the Village of River Forest Sustainability Commission was held on Tuesday, March 8, 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, Roberts, Student Commissioner Raidt
Absent: Commissioners Clancy, McLean, Student Commissioner Meyer
Also Present: Management Analyst Sara Phyfer

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. ADOPTION OF MEETING MINUTES

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

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Roberts
Absent: Commissioners Clancy, McLean
Nays: None
Motion Passes.

4. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Charrette reported on the February PlanItGreen meeting, highlighting Mayor Thompson's solar corridor in Broadview and D200's new sustainability commission. She stated she has also been invited to be the community member on the DU sustainability committee, noting they are working on similar issues as the Commission. She also reported that Public Works will help cut logs for seating at Lincoln School after they won a grant to create an outdoor learning space.

Chairperson Simon stated he spoke with Commissioner Clancy who reported about the increase in sales of electric school buses in Illinois. He suggested getting in touch with D200 to discuss further since there is no bussing in River Forest.

Ms. Phyfer reported that Staff met with SolSmart last month to discuss the Silver designation and are working through language on the zoning determination letter for resubmittal. She reported that the Village Board accepted the LRS waste hauling proposal without changes and noted the new composting options and HHW and e-waste collections. She stated the Board also heard an update on the Des Plaines River Biking Trail, which is planned to be extended through River Forest to reach the Illinois Prairie Path and Forest Park Transit Center. Ms. Phyfer also stated she spoke with Mindy Agnew from Oak Park about their single-use plastic ordinance, noting that Oak Park's process was postponed due to the pandemic but is now back in the queue.

The Commissioners briefly discussed the Des Plaines River Trail project. In response to a question about funding, Ms. Phyfer stated there will likely be a local match and that the funding allocated in the Capital Improvement Plan is for the Village's Bicycle Plan, which will try to be timed with the construction of the River Trail.

Chairperson Simon announced the Village has received an invitation to attend the SolSmart designation ceremony and stated it includes a tour of Argonne National Laboratory.

Commissioner Charrette shared her concerns about the waste hauling contract, stating the contract does not provide incentives to reduce waste in alignment with commitments made to the PlanItGreen sustainability plan. She noted she shared comments at the Board meeting, and she asked what is the point of signing onto this commitment if the Village is not going to make a concerted effort or have that conversation. She expressed a second concern that there was not much warning to the Commission that this would be discussed by the Board, asking that the Commission be given a head's up. She also expressed concern about the price increases, the inequity of the cost distribution, and asked whether opt-out composting would be in the final contract.

Chairperson Simon stated he appreciated Commissioner Charrette's comments. He apologized that the process for how the Commission was to be involved was not communicated well but that it happened the way it was supposed to in that the Commission was asked to provide their priorities to the Village and that was the end of their participation. He stated the Commission did get some wins, and they will have to be creative in thinking about ways to achieve reduction in waste.

Commissioner Cheng stated that she also appreciated Commissioner Charrette's comments, but that if the Commission failed to link their recommendations to PlanItGreen commitments, that it is on them. She stated she felt good about the proposal, and commented about the Commission's focus on multiple areas.

5. DISCUSSION REGARDING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN PLACES OF EATING ORDINANCE (DRAFT)

Ms. Phyfer stated the draft ordinance was shared with the Village's health inspector, who did not have any concerns with it. The Commission discussed this item and the necessity of some

items in the definition of single-use foodware. It was noted the ordinance is based on what Chicago had done. Ms. Phyfer noted Staff would invite affected businesses to a future Commission meeting to offer their input. The Commission also discussed whether university cafeterias should be called out in the ordinance. In response to a question about waivers, Ms. Phyfer stated there is no legal requirement to include parameters around the waiver process but that it could be included. The Commission also discussed the timeline for this process, the possibility of including plastic bags as part of the ordinance, and having conversations with the restaurant community to educate them on and encourage the use of recyclables.

The Commission agreed to invite the affected businesses to the April 12 meeting. Chairperson Simon and Commissioner Veazie volunteered to summarize key findings of the scientific articles for the ordinance.

6. DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMUNITY SOLAR AND BENCHMARK ENROLLMENT

Commissioner Cheng commented about the enrollment statistics and suggested aiming for a percent of eligible households enrolled. The Commissioners discussed their experiences signing up and asked that a representative from MCSquared attend a meeting to discuss the program. In discussing other ways to increase enrollment, the Commissioners asked to add the program to the New Resident page on the website, to enroll non-residential accounts, as well as to continue communicating the program.

7. DISCUSSION REGARDING CEJA

Commissioner Charrette commented the summary included in the packet is a resource for understanding CEJA. Chairperson Simon stated his understanding is that there are a lot of agencies still working through the legislation.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

The Commission discussed the communications calendar and content options.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairperson Simon asked that the meetings be paperless going forward. It was noted agendas would still be printed for attendees. Commissioner Charrette reported about the Community Gardens, noting that all 31 gardens were taken within 48 hours.

10. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – APRIL 12, 2022

The Commission reached a consensus to hold its next meeting Tuesday, April 12, 2022.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Charrette made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cheng, to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 PM.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairperson Simon, Commissioners Charrette, Cheng, Veazie, Roberts

Absent: Commissioners Clancy, McLean

Nays: None

Motion Passes.

Sara Phyfer, Secretary



Village of River Forest
Public Works and Development Services
400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 8, 2022

To: Sustainability Commission

From: Sara Phyfer, Management Analyst

Subj: Opt-In Single Use Plastic Ordinance

At the March 8, 2022 Sustainability Commission meeting, the Commission continued discussion of a proposed ordinance that would require places for eating only hand out single-use plastics for take-out and delivery orders at the customer's request, meaning customers would "opt-in" to receive them. The Commission requested to include plastic bags as part of the definition of single-use items. It is Staff's recommendation to separate out plastic bags as its own "opt-in" ordinance so that it applies more broadly across businesses in the Village rather than the narrower focus of food establishments. The draft ordinance for consideration now includes language (in red) charging the Commission with studying plastic bags.

Remaining Tasks

Commissioners are also asked to summarize the key findings (in the highlighted section of the ordinance) from the scientific studies that were identified, located in the [Dropbox link](#). This language can be finalized after the Commission has heard public input, but should be included for the Village Board's consideration of the ordinance.

The definition of "food establishment" in [Section 6-5-1](#) of the Village Code includes businesses like a gas station convenience store, Jewel, and River Forest Kitchen because they are either retail food stores or cook, prepare and combine food. If the Commission wants to focus applicability of the ordinance on certain types of food establishments, a list of those that are included and excluded should be prepared. A list of active businesses that would be affected under the ordinance as currently written is attached for your consideration.

Once Commissioners are comfortable with the draft, a meeting date can be set to hear public input. Staff will notify affected businesses through a direct mailing, inviting them to provide input for the Commission's consideration. Staff will also provide public notice via the Village's communication channels.

Attachments:

Draft Ordinance

Active Food Establishment Businesses

ORDINANCE NO. ____

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE RIVER FOREST VILLAGE CODE
REGARDING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN PLACES OF EATING**

WHEREAS, the Village of River Forest (“Village”), is a non-home rule unit of local government as provided by Article VII, Section 7 of the Illinois Constitution of 1970; and

WHEREAS, the Village’s Comprehensive Plan declares that “[e]nvironmental sustainability is a multi-faceted principle that aims to reduce negative impacts on the environment and preserve natural resources to ensure quality of life for future generations. Often sought through dedicated initiatives, sustainability informs every component of a municipality by emphasizing that we are conscious of how we affect the world around us;” and

WHEREAS, single-use foodware, meaning items designed and intended for only one usage before being discarded, including forks, spoons, sporks, knives, chopsticks, other eating utensils, stirrers, drink stoppers, splash sticks, cocktail sticks, toothpicks, napkins, wet-wipes, cup sleeves, beverage trays, disposable plates, and condiment packets, but excluding straws, beverage lids, or items used to contain or package food or beverages for delivery or take-out orders, unnecessarily distributed in the Village generates a significant amount of waste; and

WHEREAS, [recite key findings from scientific / government studies regarding problems associated with single-use plastics from places of eating]; and

WHEREAS, the Village’s Sustainability Commission considered the regulation of single-use foodware set forth in this Ordinance at several meetings, on March __, 2022, April __, 2022 and _____ __, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the Sustainability Commission sought input from Village business owners potentially affected by the regulation of single-use foodware set forth in this Ordinance, and the business owners were invited to share their comments and attend a Sustainability Commission meeting to voice their opinions; and

WHEREAS, after considering a variety of materials available to it, including the scientific studies set forth above, the Sustainability Commission recommended that the President and Board of Trustees regulate single-use foodware as proposed in this Ordinance in order to better protect the public’s health, safety and welfare, by reducing waste occurring from the distribution of single-use foodware except when allowed by this Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the Village has the authority to “regulate the places where and the manner in which any beverage or food for human consumption is sold,” pursuant to 65 ILCS 5/11-20-2; and

WHEREAS, the Village has the obligation to “regulate and inspect retail food establishments in the municipality” in accordance with local ordinances and regulations, pursuant to 65 ILCS 5/11-20-16(a); and

WHEREAS, the Village has the authority to “define, prevent and abate nuisances,” pursuant to 65 ILCS 5/11-60-2; and

WHEREAS, the Village has determined that limiting the distribution of single-use foodware in the Village would reduce the amount of waste generated by single-use foodware, thereby reducing the environmental impact from such waste; and

WHEREAS, the President and Board of Trustees of the Village have determined that limiting the distribution of single-use foodware is a reasonable and necessary regulation of places where beverage or food for human consumption are sold; and

WHEREAS, the President and Board of Trustees of the Village finds and declares that the unnecessary distribution of single-use foodware is a nuisance and a significant detriment to the public’s health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, in order to best serve the public’s health, safety and welfare, the President and Board of Trustees of the Village desire to make certain amendments to the Village of River Forest Village Code (“Village Code”) regarding the use of single-use plastics in places of eating, as set forth below;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of River Forest, Cook County, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1: Incorporation. That the recitals above shall be and are hereby incorporated in this Section 1 as if restated herein.

SECTION 2: Amendment. That the Village Code is hereby amended as follows, with additions underlined:

Amendment One:

Section 6-5-1 of the Village Code, titled “Definitions,” is amended as follows by adding the following definitions:

“ * * *

SELF-SERVICE STATION: An area dedicated to customers taking away single-use foodware and condiments.

* * *

SINGLE-USE FOODWARE: Any eating utensil or other item to be used as part of food or beverage service that is designed and intended by the manufacturer for only one usage before being discarded, including forks, spoons, sporks, knives, chopsticks, other eating utensils, stirrers, drink stoppers, splash sticks, cocktail sticks, toothpicks, napkins, wet-wipes, cup sleeves, beverage trays, disposable plates, and condiment packets. "Single-use foodware" does not include straws, beverage lids, or items used to contain or package food or beverages for delivery or take-out orders.

*

*

*"

Amendment Two:

Section 6-5-2.Q. of the Village Code, titled "Single-Use Foodware," is added as follows:

"1. Requirements. In connection with any delivery or take-out order of food or beverage, a food establishment may only provide single-use foodware upon request from the customer or at a self-service station. Food establishments shall provide options for customers to affirmatively request single-use foodware when ordering food and beverages for delivery or take-out across all ordering or point of sale platforms, including internet enabled applications, digital platforms, phone orders, and in-person ordering. The Village Administrator is authorized to establish, by rule, a standard sign for use by food establishments in connection with this Subsection.

2. Exceptions. This Section shall not apply to:

a. Single-use foodware necessary to address safety concerns, such as lids, drink stoppers, beverage trays and cup sleeves for beverages served at an average temperature in excess of 170 degrees Fahrenheit;

b. A food vending machine, as defined in Section 6-6-1 of the Village Code;

c. Any single-use foodware that is prepackaged with or attached to any food or beverage products by the manufacturer prior to receipt by the food establishment;

d. Any charitable food establishment;

e. Single-use foodware provided in connection with any food or beverage order fulfilled at a drive-through facility; and

f. A food establishment granted a waiver by the Village Administrator. Any waiver granted by the Village Administrator shall be reported, in writing, to the Village President and Board of Trustees."

SECTION 3: Further Study of Single-Use Plastic Bags. That the Sustainability Commission shall study the use of single-use plastic bags in the Village and make recommendations to the President and Board of Trustees regarding regulations on such bags as a way to further protect the public's health, safety and welfare.

SECTION 4: Continuing Effect. That all parts of the Village Code not amended herein shall remain in effect.

SECTION 5: Severability. That if any Section, paragraph or provision of this Ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such Section, paragraph or provision shall not affect any of the remaining provisions of this Ordinance.

SECTION 6: Repeal. That all ordinances, resolutions, motions or parts thereof in conflict with this Ordinance shall be and the same are hereby repealed.

SECTION 7: Effectiveness. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon its passage and approval according to law.

PASSED this ____ day of _____, 2022 by the Village President and Board of Trustees pursuant to a roll call vote as follows:

AYES: _____

NAYS: _____

ABSENT: _____

APPROVED by me this ____ day of _____, 2022.

Catherine Adduci, Village President

ATTEST:

Jonathan Keller, Village Clerk

Business Name	DBA	Description	Lot Address
754 Harlem Inc.	Mobile Gas Station	Gas Station / Convenience Store	754 HARLEM AVE
7-Eleven # 23852E	7-Eleven	Convenience Store	1140 HARLEM AVE
AFC Sushi @ Jewel Oco #3223	AFC Sushi #3223	Sushi @ Jewel	7525 LAKE ST
Asiana Cuisine Enterprises	ACE Sushi @ Fresh Thyme 108	Sushi station at Fresh Thyme	7501 NORTH AVE
Believers International LLC		Catering, delivery, retail products	349 ASHLAND AVE
Bertollis Pizza		Pizza	7970 OAK AVE
Bond Drug Company of Illinois	Walgreens #3076	Retail pharmacy	7251 LAKE ST
Boon Box Bakery		Fresh ingredient baking kit company	349 ASHLAND AVE
Boston Market Corporation (#575)	Boston Market #575	Restaurant	7211 LAKE ST
Capri Italian Foods		Deli & Grocer	7325 NORTH AV
Carby Eats		Prepared meals (RF Kitchen)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Cathy's Ultimate Soul Food & Catering		Catering - RF Kitchen	349 ASHLAND AVE
Celebrations by Us		Catering (River Forest Kitchen)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Franks Deli		Deli & Convenience Store	7971 LAKE ST
Highland Park CVS LLC	CVS Pharmacy #3889	Pharmacy Food & Convenience Items	7929 NORTH AVE
Jewel Food Store #3223	Jewel Food Store #3223	Grocery Store	7525 LAKE ST
Jewel Food Stores	Oscos Drug #3223	Retail pharmacy/food/vending	7525 LAKE ST
Jilly's Jerky Snacks LLC		Beef jerky snacks (RF Kitchen)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Joy Milk Tea LLC		wholesale beverages (River Forest Kitchen)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Karavites Restaurant 6749 - McDonalds	McDonald's	Restaurant	624 HARLEM AVE
Karl's Craft Soup		Artisan food / soup (River Forest Kitchen)	349 ASHLAND AVE
La Parrallita Mexican Food		Restaurant	7225 NORTH AVE
Meze Table		Catering - RF Kitchen	349 ASHLAND AVE
New Rose Catering		Catering (RFK)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Noodles & Company	Noodles & Company	Restaurant	7215 LAKE ST
Opportunity Knocks		Catering / pickles - RFK	349 ASHLAND AVE
Panera LLC / Panera Bread #788	Panera Bread #788	Restaurant	7349 LAKE ST
Popify LLC		Ice pops / Mobile sales (bicycle)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Quest Food Management Services	Quest - Dominican Main Dining Room	Food Service @ Dominican	7900 DIVISION ST
Quest Food Management Services	Quest - Cyber Cafe at Dominican	Food Service @ Dominican	7900 DIVISION ST
RDK Ventures Inc	Circle K #4706790	Gas station / convenience store	7201 NORTH AVE
River Forest Chocolates LLC		Chocolate Shop	7769 LAKE ST
River Forest Kitchen LLC		Commercial kitchen	349 ASHLAND AVE
Sodexo America	Concordia Crossroads Dining Room (Main)	Food Service @ Concordia	7400 AUGUSTA ST
Sodexo America	Concordia Library Cafe	Food Service @ Concordia	7400 AUGUSTA ST
Sodexo America LLC	Sodexo @ Starbucks - Concordia Univ	Cafe	7400 AUGUSTA ST
Sodexo America LLC	Sodexo @ Big Cat Grille - Concordia Univ	Restaurant	7400 AUGUSTA ST
Sodexo America LLC	Sodexo @ Subway - Concordia University	Restaurant	7400 AUGUSTA ST
Srikrishna Catering Inc.		Caters private events @ Dominican University	
Starbucks at Jewel Store #3223	Starbucks	Cafe (in Jewel)	7525 LAKE ST
Sunny Bakes	Out of Nuetral LLC	Baked goods (RF kitchen)	349 ASHLAND AVE
Sushi Avenue Inc.	Sushi Aveune at Whole Foods	Sushi station at Whole Foods	7245 LAKE ST
Table and Lain		Virtual Cooking Classes	7577 LAKE ST
The Kitchenette Project		Private Chef Catering	349 ASHLAND AVE
Whole Foods Market Group	Whole Foods Market	Grocery store	7245 LAKE ST
Yolk-Oak Park/River Forest	XPHMA Inc	Restaurant	7301 North Ave
Zazi Natural Foods LLC		Artisanal Food	349 ASHLAND AVE



Village of River Forest
Public Works and Development Services
400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 8, 2022

To: Sustainability Commission

From: Sara Phyfer, Management Analyst

Subj: Suspension of Tall Grass and Weeds Regulations for the Month of May

Commissioner Charrette has requested that the Commission consider making a recommendation to the Village Board to support “No Mow May,” which would suspend enforcement related to tall grass and weeds for the month of May. The Village has two sections of code that govern weeds and grass height.

Section 6-8-2 of the Village Code contemplates weeds as a nuisance and states:

L. Weeds: To permit weeds or other underbrush which have grown to a height of eight inches or more. It shall be unlawful for any person who owns or controls any premises to suffer or permit the growth of weeds or underbrush to eight inches or more thereon, and he shall cut or cause the same to be cut within five days after being notified so to do by the health officer.

It shall further be unlawful for any person to permit the growth upon any premises of any noxious weeds such as jimson, burdock, ragweed, thistles, cockleburrs and other like weeds.

If such person shall fail to cut such weeds or underbrush within five days after such notice, the health officer shall notify the director of public works of such default, and said director of public works shall cut same at once, at the expense of the owner.

Section 10-24-6 of the Village Code contemplates landscaping maintenance and states:

All property owners shall be responsible for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of all required landscape materials.

A. Grass shall be maintained at a height not in excess of eight inches.

B. All required landscape materials shall be maintained in good condition so as to present a healthy, neat and orderly appearance, shall be replaced when dead or dying, and shall be kept free of refuse and debris.

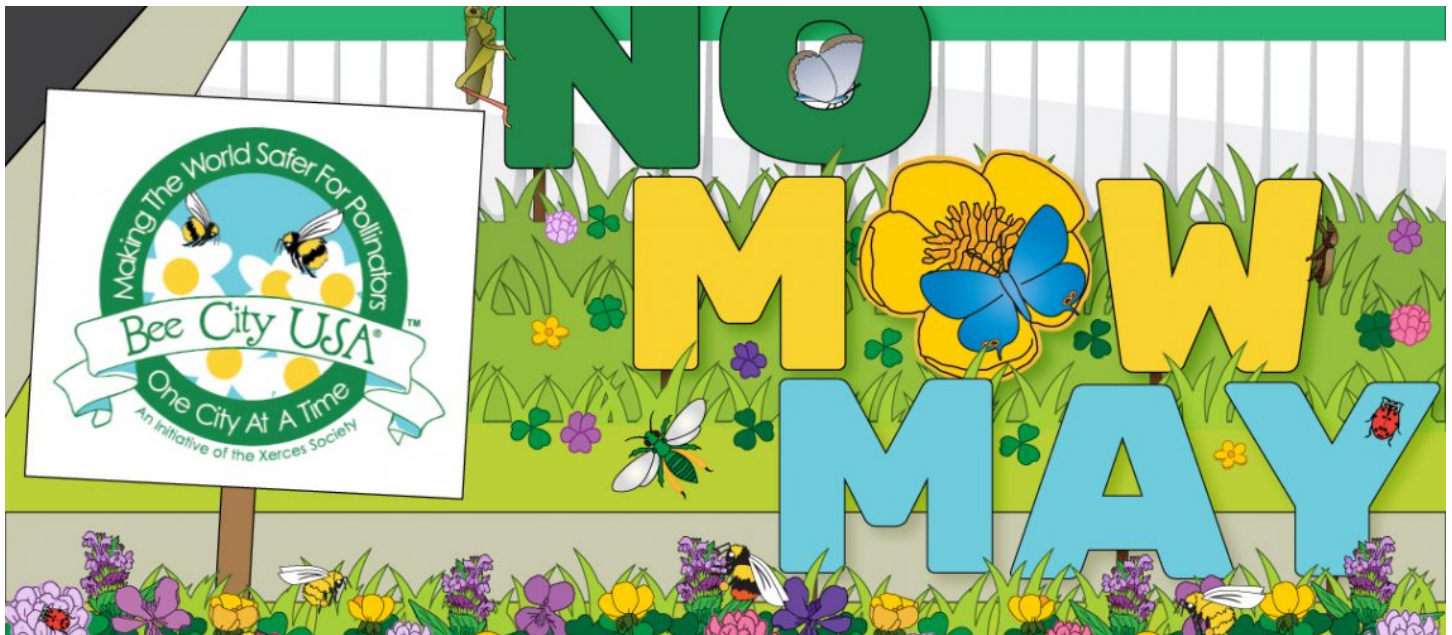
Note: the Commission should also consider whether this moratorium would apply to all properties or just residential properties.

If the Commission would like to proceed with this recommendation, the following motion would be appropriate:

Motion to make a recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees to suspend enforcement of weeds and grass height regulations for <type of> properties during the month of May.

Attachment:

Welcome Pollinators to Your Lawn article



Welcome Pollinators to your Lawn with No Mow May

April 9, 2021 , 2:55 am , Uncategorized

By Molly Martin, with content by Justin Wheeler

A lush, green, weed-free lawn has historically been center stage in American landscaping. It tells the whole neighborhood that you are a competent, hard-working, contributing member of society. Dandelions and an overgrown lawn are a sign of neglect, incompetence, and laziness—or so our culture would have you believe.

Americans have a love affair with lawns—maintaining roughly 40 million acres, or 2% of land in the US, making them the [single largest irrigated crop we grow](#). Lawns require frequent mowing, raking, fertilizing, weeding, chemical treatment, and watering—sucking up time, money, and other resources. Not only are lawns burdensome for the people maintaining them, but they also provide little positive benefit to wildlife, and in fact are often harmful. The traditional monoculture

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Re-thinking the American lawn can take a variety of forms from reducing mowing frequency or area mown to permanently converting lawn to a more diverse and natural landscape.



The traditional monoculture lawn lacks floral resources or nesting sites for bees and is often treated with large amounts of pesticides that harm bees and other invertebrates. Photo: Pixabay



A lawn converted to pollinator habitat. Photo: Xerces Society / Eric Lee-Mader

Do More By Doing Less

Mowing your lawn less creates habitat and can increase the abundance and diversity of wildlife including bees and other pollinators. One way to reduce mowing is by participating in Now Mow May. **No Mow May** is a conservation initiative first popularized by Plantlife, an organization based in the United Kingdom, but which is gaining traction across North America. The goal of No Mow May is to allow grass to grow unmown for the month of May, creating habitat and forage for early season pollinators. This is particularly important in urban areas where floral resources are often limited.

In 2020, residents of Appleton, Wisconsin, an affiliate of [Bee City USA](#), became energized about No Mow May and the City Council agreed to suspend their weed ordinance for the month of May. Over 435 registered property owners participated in the campaign, and Lawrence University, an affiliate of [Bee Campus USA](#), partnered with Appleton to conduct research on the impact of No Mow May on pollinators. Researchers Israel Del Toro and Relena Ribbons collected data on the abundance (the number of individuals) and species richness (the number of species) of flowers and bees found in unmown yards of a subset of the properties participating in No Mow May. They then compared those numbers to the abundance and richness of flowers and bees found in nearby urban parks that are regularly mowed. The findings were impressive! Not only were the abundance and richness of bees higher in the yards of properties participating in No Mow May, but they were way higher. Participating yards had three-times higher bee species richness and five-times higher bee abundance than nearby parks that had been mowed. This study was published in 2020 and is available for [free download online](#). Empowered by their success in 2020, Appleton has spread the word and attracted even more participants in 2021.

Other studies have looked into how reducing the frequency of mowing throughout the growing seasons impacts bees. In a [recent experiment](#) conducted by Susannah Lerman, a research ecologist with the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station, Lerman and her collaborators explored whether different lawn mowing frequencies influenced bee abundance and diversity. The team mowed herbicide-free suburban lawns at different frequencies (every week, every other week, and once every three weeks) in Springfield, Massachusetts. The results of their study found bee abundance

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her colleagues documented a staggering 93 species of bees, with supplemental observations bringing the total number to 111 bee species—nearly a quarter of all bee species native to the area!

The efficacy of reducing mowing may be expanded upon by altering the composition of your lawn to include more flowering species. A “bee lawn” may include Dutch clover (which captures nitrogen and helps feed the lawn) as well as other low-growing flowering plants such as creeping thyme (*Thymus* spp.), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), and others. Some plants, such as [native violets](#) (*Viola* spp.) may already be present and should be encouraged as they are valuable host plants for fritillary butterflies. For more information about creating a flowering lawn please see the resources at the end of this blog.

In addition to benefiting pollinators, reducing mowing frequency will save water, help your lawn become more resilient to drought, and reduce emissions from gas-powered lawn equipment that often lacks the emission reduction equipment found on larger engines.



Evening primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*) planted in a lawn provides pollinators with pollen and nectar. Photo: Xerces Society / Anne Stine

Go Lawnless

Lawn certainly has its place. It provides a perfect platform for kicking a ball around, provides “accommodation” for the

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lawn that needs mowing. In place of that lawn, consider [planting a rain garden](#), [pollinator garden](#), or [wildflower meadow](#)—or replacing your turf grass lawn with [native lawn alternatives](#).

What About Weed Regulations?

Most cities and municipalities have some form of weed ordinance that dictates the height and sometimes even the types of plants a homeowner is allowed to grow. Unfortunately, many of these ordinances are woefully out of date and out of touch with the modern movement towards creating yards that support wildlife in urban settings. While local ordinances will vary greatly from place-to-place, here are a few tips for keeping local officials, and your neighbors happy:

- **Maintain a mowed buffer.** Yes, after spending a considerable amount of time discussing the problems with lawn, we are suggesting you keep some—strategically. Keeping a mowed edge in front of or around a natural planting of a foot or two may be all that's needed to define “lawn” from “garden” and keep you in step with local ordinances or Homeowner Association guidelines. Maintaining a tidy mowed edge also makes a busy natural planting look less overwhelming, and makes these spaces look intentional rather than neglectful.
- **Engage with your city council, health department, or other local officials.** Tell them what you are doing, why, and begin a conversation about how they can support natural landscapes in their community. [This fact sheet from Penn State](#) can help arm you with facts to overcome the common myths that have led to overly restrictive weed ordinances.
- **Suggest an “opt-in” program, such as a Natural Lawn Registration program** to sidestep the need to re-write a health code ordinance. Under such a model, a homeowner may register their natural landscape with their local health department. The health department can then decline to fine registered properties as long as they are maintaining the natural landscape properly and not encouraging the spread of noxious weeds.
- **Educate your neighbors and passersby about your landscaping choices.** Displaying a simple sign designating your yard as pollinator habitat can be the difference between it being seen as a neglected area to people viewing it as an important part of a thriving landscape. Xerces offers [downloadable signs for Now Mow May](#) and you can receive a pollinator habitat signs as a thank you for your donations through our [gift center](#).

Resources

[Visit the Bee City USA No Mow May page to learn more and download signs you can print at home](#)

[Lawn mowing frequency affects bee abundance and diversity in suburban yards](#)

[BlueThumb.org: Pollinator-Friendly \(Bee\) Lawn](#)

[University of Minnesota Bee Lab](#)

Guidance from Natural Resources Defense Council: [More Sustainable \(and Beautiful\) Alternatives to a Grass Lawn](#)

White paper from Yale's Environmental Protection Clinic: [Toward Sustainable Landscapes: Restoring the Right NOT to Mow](#)

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Village of River Forest
Public Works and Development Services
400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 8, 2022

To: Sustainability Commission

From: Sara Phyfer, Management Analyst

Subj: SolSmart Silver Update and Options to Move Forward

In 2019, the Village was awarded the SolSmart Bronze designation. The Commission is now seeking the SolSmart Silver designation for the Village. The Village needs to meet the [following criteria](#):

Total of 100 Points

The Village currently has 85 points and can satisfy the additional 15 points with the following:

- 1) PI-8 (20 points): *Provide an online process for solar PV permit submission and approval*
In April of 2021, the Village launched permitting software which can be accessed at riverforest.onluma.com. The permit process is entirely online and includes a permit type specifically for solar energy systems.
- 2) MD-4 (20 points): *Support a community solar program*
In September of 2022, the Village Board of Trustees passed a [resolution](#) supporting the Community Solar Clearinghouse Solution Program (CS2).

Because these two items were completed after receiving the Bronze designation, the Village is eligible for these points.

Zoning Clarification

Pre-requisite credit PZ-4 states: *Post an online document from the Planning/Zoning Department that states accessory use solar PV is allowed by-right in all major zones. (e.g. via a zoning determination letter)*

The Village's Zoning Code, which governs definitions of accessory uses, does not currently contemplate solar panel systems. Staff has been interpreting them as *appliances* to the primary use, which has allowed the Village to issue these types of building permits. Use of the term "accessory use" is a strict requirement for this credit. In order to define these systems as an accessory use, the Zoning Code must be amended. This is done through the text amendment process, and Staff does not have the authority to bypass this process and declare solar panel systems an accessory use.

There are two ways forward on this:

- Option 1 is to wait for the Zoning Code overhaul, which will include an update related to solar panel systems, and resubmit once codified. This overhaul is planned for FY23, which begins May 1, 2022.
- Option 2 is to make a recommendation to the Village Board to proceed with a standalone text amendment for solar panel systems. If the Board is amenable, they would remand it to the Zoning Board of Appeals, who would then hold a public hearing and take their recommendation back to the Village Board for final consideration.

If the Commission would like to proceed with a standalone text amendment, the following motion would be appropriate:

Motion to make a recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees to proceed with a text amendment related to solar panel systems.

On a related note, the Commission can make a separate recommendation in the future to cap residential solar permit fees. Research into what other communities are charging would be necessary to substantiate the recommendation. Staff's perspective is that the fees can be capped but not to eliminate pass through costs (such as 3rd party plan reviews and inspections).

River Forest Sustainability Commission webpage revision
Discussion Draft, 4.3.22

Questions for Commission input at April meeting:

1. Comments on proposed goal and audience for commission webpage
2. General comments on proposed reorganization, including consensus to proceed on low hanging fruit and overall restructuring, with details to be worked out with staff
3. Ideas for better way to highlight Green Block parties, River Forest Tree Trails

Vision:

The goal of the Sustainability Commission webpage is to help residents figure out how to live more sustainably. The audience is all River Forest residents but the page design should consider that residents have varying degrees of existing motivation and knowledge about living sustainably. It is likely that those who voluntarily seek out the page have higher than average motivation and possibly knowledge. In an ideal world, the page content could be divided by “persona” and present basic vs. advanced knowledge to different potential users, but this would take a great deal of work. So for now, the content will focus on “how to” live sustainably but will also be written in simple action oriented language but information about the “why” will also be included.

Layout/organization:

Phase 1 of the website revision will focus on reorganizing the existing content based on the existing simple scrolling layout of text that is used on other village guide pages. However, for a later phase, a visual, graphically appealing layout will be more effective. A question for staff is whether the commission page can be reorganized visually with images like the home page of the village website.

Phase 1 will first fix some low hanging fruit issues like changing the name to “A Guide to Sustainable Living” and eliminating the right hand menu items which have grown like moss and do not match the scrolling content on the left.

Then content will be organized into two types of resources – time-specific sustainability activities, and those that can be done anytime. The landing page will operate as a table of contents that provides links to more specific information about each topic, either an external website or a dedicated behind the scenes page on the village website. This will make it easier to see “at a glance” what is on the landing page, although there will still be a fairly long list of topics. One question to discuss is where to feature actions that the village, as opposed to individual residents, has taken or can take – i.e. permeable alley pavers, electric charging station/vehicles.

The first section will be a very brief one that links to the village News page to find current sustainability events (i.e. Things To Do This Month). Examples of time-specific items that will

show up on Village News page include One Earth Film Fest, Bicycle Exchange, Holiday Lights Recycling/Sustainable Holidays, and Green Block Parties.

The second section will reorganize the current content into five categories of primarily “evergreen” information: Energy, Waste, Ecosystems, Water and Learning/Education (these were the original five categories when the commission was created and still capture most of the issues). It will be a simple list of topics that link to more detailed information so it’s easier to see most of the available resources without scrolling too much. The list will consist of active “how to” verbs or phrases rather than just a list of nouns.

See below for initial suggested organization and topics, with details to be worked out with staff. To keep the landing page easy to review “at a glance.” Some of the specifics will not appear on the landing page but will be incorporated on separate “behind the scenes” webpages reached via link.

1. HOW TO REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

- a. Switch to Renewable Sources:
 - Rooftop solar
 - Community solar
 - Municipal aggregation
- b. Reduce Energy Usage
 - Participate in ComEd energy efficiency programs
 - Install LED lights - *link to ComEd discount products*
 - Install high-efficiency heat pump products
 - Possibly include “ten tips” on other options like eat less meat, ride your bike, take public transportation
- c. Electrify
 - i. Purchase an electric vehicle
 - ii. Heat home with high-efficiency electric heat pumps
 - iii. Install a heat pump water heater
 - iv. Purchase a high-efficiency induction stove
 - v. Purchase a heat-pump electric dryer

2. HOW TO WASTE LESS (*w/ tips/resources on how to do each*)

- a. Compost
 - i. Village compost program - *provide link*
 - ii. Backyard composting - *provide info*
 - iii. Countertop composting - *info on products*
 - iv. Vermiculture - *provide info*

- b. Reduce - *avoid single use plastics (i.e. single use plastic ordinance), purchase less, purchase second-hand*
- c. Reuse - *i.e. Repair Cafe, Bicycle exchange*
- d. Repurpose - *donation sites*
- e. Recycle - *link to Lakeshore Recycling web page*

3. HOW TO CREATE A GREEN ECOSYSTEM

- a. Grow a natural lawn - Healthy Lawn/Healthy Family
- b. Plant a native garden
- c. Get certified as a Wildlife habitat
- d. Take care of River Forest trees (Learn more about the River Forest Tree canopy - *include CO2 sequestration #s*)

4. HOW TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE WATER

- a. Install water-saving fixtures - *ComEd energy efficiency program*
- b. Check for leaks - *made easier by recently installed smart water meters*
- a. Order a rainbarrel
- b. Install a rain garden
- c. Install a permeable driveway

5. HOW RIVER FOREST IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- a. Commission strategic plan
- b. River Forest GHG inventory and goals
- c. Village initiatives (Bioswales, Permeable alleys, charging station, LEDS, upgrades at pumping station)
- d. Regional goals (Chicago Climate Charter, PlanItGreen)
- e. Village certifications (i.e. Municipal Arboretum, Tree City, Community Wildlife Habitat)
- f. Opportunities to learn and share among residents- Green block parties, River Forest Tree Trails – is there a better place to highlight these programs? Seasonally on the News page?