



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, September 17th, 2020 – 4:00pm – 5:00pm

Virtual Meeting – 127 N. Wyman St., Suite 100

ATTENDEES: Ian Linnabary, Reno and Zahm; Katie Walsh, Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District; Rebecca Olson, Olson Ecological Solutions; Tim Bragg, Tom Lind, Jeff Macke, Fehr Graham; Scott Capovilla, Colin Belle, City of Rockford; Ashley Sarver, Studio GWA; Dan Kane, Boone County Conservation District; Brad Roos, Sustain Rockford; Bev Moore, citizen; Neeley Erickson, Illinois Realtors Association; George Bellovics, IDNR; Harlan Johnson, Citizen; Rebecca Quirk, Sustain Rockford; Sean Von Bergen, Winnebago County Highway Department; Steve Ernst, Rockford Regional Health Council; Steven Hall, Northwest River Valleys Sierra Club; George Gaulrapp, ComEd; Allen Mills, Kaylin Janicke, Jon Paul Diipla, Sydney Turner, Shelby Best, Region 1 Planning Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

- a) **Call to Order:** Mr. Linnabary called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.
- b) **Attendee Introductions:** Mr. Linnabary began by welcoming attendees to the meeting – then turned it over to Mr. Mills to introduce Ms. Best. She then provided a detailed background of her environmental experience and answered questions from members. She completed roll call, which is reflected in the above attendees. Rebecca Quirk and Harlan Johnson joined the meeting at 4:10.
- c) **Approval of July 23rd, 2020 meeting minutes:** Mr. Linnabary entertained a motion for approval. XXX motioned the approval (4:11 PM); it was seconded by Mr. Kane (4:11 PM). Approval passes unanimously at 4:12 PM. Motion passes unanimously.

2. COMMITTEE ITEMS

- a) **2021 Greenways Plan:** Ms. Best provided an update on the 2021 Greenways Plan. The update included information related to the working group, partner agencies, work plan, data updates, and data collection needs. Ms. Best explained that the Environmental Planning Committee's role in Greenways was continual updates and a steering committee.
- b) **Keith Creek Corridor Plan:** Ms. Best also explained the Keith Creek corridor project was in the beginning stages, including work plan development and initial conversations. The two-year corridor study will be focused on redevelopment. Ms. Best explained that the EPC will also act as a steering committee and provide updates along the way as the agreements with IDOT continue over the next two months.
- c) **South Fork Kent Creek Watershed Plan:** She then provided an update on the South Fork Kent Creek project after Rebecca Olson dropped from the meeting. Draft updates have been completed and the EPA has received the final version. OES is waiting on the EPA for final review.
- d) **Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan:** Ms. Turner provided an update on the Electric Vehicle Readiness plan, a three-part project that measures how ready our region is for electric vehicles. There has been a 300% increase in the number of electric vehicles registered in Illinois so the plan helps to prepare us. She briefly explained the plan's framework, best practices and awareness, then it moves to a public/stakeholder

engagement phase. This phase gauges readiness and consists of a survey that goes out to the public and municipal staff at the end of October. The next step is policy, zoning, ordinances, and what we as a region need to do to move forward. Languages and documents still need to be addressed, including boiler plate language and uniform code across the region. Commercial and residential development as we move into the future will ensure uniformity for language. Ms. Turner also discussed a request for proposal for a single source procurement process for electric vehicle infrastructure as essentially an implementation phase.

- e) Ms. Sarver provided an update on the IEPA 319 grant that was awarded to Zion that will study water quality. There is a match from the City of Rockford for \$40,000. They are waiting to get everything back from the IEPA and it should be finished by end of 2021.
- f) Ms. Olson discussed the Kent Creek grant submission from the end of August. The draft is on the Rockford Park District Levings Lake page where you can view comments made on the draft and provide feedback. They are waiting for comments from the IEPA and the final plan is due by the end of 2020.
- g) Mr. Linnabary spoke about the EPC's role as the steering committee for Greenways. He stated how the working group helps handle details for update advisory feedback. Mr. Mills talked about data requests, reviewing language and maps, and additional context such as cons areas and key elements and partners. Mr. Kane asked about additional partners in McHenry County and if there was interest in expanding the area. Ms. Turner replied that we are adding Ogle County to the 2021 Greenways plan but aside from that, further discussions would be necessary since other counties extend out of our area and past our MPO.
- h) Mr. Johnson brought up the issue of two lakes adjacent to South Fork Kent Creek that are in terrible shape. He said he has had communication with the Rockford Park District (RPD) about it but wanted to know what can be done. Mr. Johnson also asked for updates on the Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan charging stations and the implementation of infrastructure. Ms. Turner responded by saying the first two documents will be on the website by the end of September. Others will be available later in the year (2020). She also discussed the public engagement round which will determine where charging stations are needed and provide regular updates to the EPC. Mr. Lind followed up about the lakes and stated that the Parker Woods property has been identified in the South Fork Kent Creek plan as a potential project site to improve water quality and infrastructure. The RPD's next step would be to apply for 319 grant funding to implement projects identified in the plan.
- i) Mr. Linnabary asked if anyone had any questions. After no response, he invited a group discussion of committee working groups. He mentioned the EPC provides a good forum for data concentration and report outs to the community and other partners. He and Ms. Sarver are continuing to evaluate the working group structure and are opening the floor to the group as to what it becomes. Ms. Sarver stated that she was excited to see many community and residential faces and wanted to be able to bring the EPC to the public to impact the community directly and get input to make the committee more dynamic. Ms. Best began to review the alternative structure proposals written by RPC and asked the committee what it would want moving forward. The options included discontinuing the working groups and establishing more project-based working groups when necessary and desired. Meeting would only occur on a project-by-project basis; or, converting some working groups into topic area working groups that focus more on collaboration and conversation. This is a more casual, knowledge sharing opportunity. Leads would be identified, and they would report back to the EPC directly. Ms. Best then opened the floor for feedback on the current structure

127 N Wyman St, Suite 100, Rockford, IL 61101 | 815-319-4180 | info@r1planning.org

www.r1planning.org



and what it looks like moving forward. Mr. Linnabary spoke about how he was very interested in the first option and how it allows for focus on specific projects and fosters more discussion and engagement. Mr. Kane stated that he thought the project-based format was more productive as the opportunity to bring new projects to the community would lend itself to building stronger relationships with the committee partners; this would be a good way to move forward. Ms. Sarver mentioned that we can keep the topic of working groups on the agenda as a revolving item to continually check on specific projects. This can help coalesce ideas and align projects with the day-to-day.

- j) Mr. Bragg brought up the Land Use Committee and its brownfield sites projects. They are evaluating past data and prioritizing sites into funding them. The challenge is, though, that members leave the subcommittees or are not with the EPC. He spoke about how taking inventory would take a survey which is a big undertaking and probably require an intern.
- k) Mr. Linnabary stated that there does not need to be a decision made today about the structure of the working groups, but he and Ms. Best asked everyone to be thinking about it and it can be included as an open item on the agenda as we move forward.

3. GROUP REPORT SESSION: Mr. Linnabary asked for any group reports or agency updates.

- a) Mr. Kane reported on the water committee and how he reached out to Kerry Leigh who indicated a water contact at ILWS with a strong connection with the ISGS. They now have a grant proposal to the USGS to fund a geological survey and a 3D groundwater modeling project for Boone and Winnebago counties. Moving forward, they need local support to provide funding for a graduate assistantship to support a hydrology or hydrography student at a local university for two years at \$20,000 per year. The graduate student would work on field data collection, mapping, and modeling. The ISGS would finalize modeling internally. He had a great discussion with the director of ISGS, Kristina Davis with the IEPA, three hydrologists, and IEPA hydro-geologists. This is a three-year project that will integrate surface and groundwater systems and involve multiple agencies. Mr. Kane asked the committee if there was any interest in providing local support for the graduate assistantship.
- b) Ms. Sarver spoke about the brownfield survey. GWA is currently interested in a multiple property survey of 75 historic industrial properties between the late 1800s and early 1900s. They are working with the City of Rockford to coordinate information between GWA and RPD. Mr. Bragg commented that that made sense and there will be a follow up from the subcommittee.
- c) Mr. Linnabary asked if there were any comments or subcommittee reports and stated that the next meeting will include another discussion about the future of the EPC's structure.
- d) Mr. Roos announced that Sustain Rockford is still planning to host the Greentown Conference in partnership with the City of Rockford, Rockford Convention and Visitors Bureau (RCVB), RPD, Seven Generations Ahead, and A5 Digital in late 2021. The plan is to establish core project meeting teams in October with meetings every month. The budget allows for 360 attendees at the conference representing all major sectors of the community, business, government, private, etc., with a goal to establish one or more sustainability plans. These plans are likely to be either regional or local municipal plans. He also stated that they have raised \$13,800 of the \$20,000 necessary for planning costs. Beginning in the new year (2021),

the intention is to have a number of pre-conference events to establish what to expect and to convey what the conference will be for and what it will be doing.

4. ADJORNMENT

- a) Mr. Linnabary stated that the next Environmental Committee meeting is scheduled for **November 19th, 2020** at 4:00pm, most likely via video/teleconference but will depend on external factors.
- b) Mr. Linnabary entertained a motion to adjourn at 4:49 PM. Ms. Sarver made the motion (4:49 PM); it was seconded by Mr. Belle (4:49 PM). Approval passes unanimously at 4:50 PM. Motion passes unanimously.

Opportunities for public comment will be afforded on all agenda items.

Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact R1PC at 815-319-4180 at least two working days before the need for such services or accommodations.