



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, January 21st, 2021 – 4:00pm – 5:00pm
Virtual Meeting – 127 N. Wyman St., Suite 100

ATTENDEES: Ian Linnabary, Reno and Zahm; Rebecca Olson, Olson Ecological Solutions; Scott Capovilla, Colin Belle, City of Rockford; Ashley Sarver, Studio GWA; Dan Kane, Boone County Conservation District; Brad Roos, Sustain Rockford; Aaron Miller, Nicor Gas; Amanda Mehl, WCHD; Dennis Anthony, WSWCD; Mark Hunter, IDNR; Sean Von Bergen, Winnebago County; Tom Lind, Rockford Park District; Shelby Best, Sydney Turner, Nathan Webb, Kaylin Janicke, Kristen Hayden, Azure Dominguez, Region 1 Planning Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

- a) **Call to Order:** Mr. Linnabary called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.
- b) **Attendee Introductions:** Mr. Linnabary began introductions with himself and started the process of calling on the next person.
- c) **Approval of November 19th, 2020 meeting minutes:** Mr. Linnabary entertained a motion for approval. Ms. Sarver commented that in agenda item 2b, it should state “AES” rather than “OES”. With edits, Mr. Roos motioned the approval (4:06 PM); it was seconded by Mr. Kane (4:06 PM). Approval passes unanimously at 4:06 PM. Motion passed unanimously.

2. COMMITTEE ITEMS

- a) **2021 Greenways Plan:** Ms. Best provided an update on the 2021 Greenways Plan. She stated that Region 1 Planning Council has been working with the working group on a draft of the plan and maps that will be available for public review next week. There will be a newsletter, press release, social posts, and distribution list, including the Environmental Planning Committee. This public comment period will last for 30 days.
- b) **Keith Creek Corridor Plan:** Ms. Best also explained that RPC was still waiting on the paperwork from IDOT so there is not much to update on the Keith Creek Corridor Plan. Once we receive signatures, we can get started.
- c) **Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan:** Ms. Turner provided an update on the Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan. The plan will be released for a 30-day public comment period next week, similar to the Greenways Plan. RPC is excited to have them both out for review and await comments.
- d) **Committee Working Groups:** Mr. Linnabary asked for updates from committee working groups.
 - i. Mr. Kane reported that the water project from the Geological Survey is beginning. They are conducting 3D geological mapping for Boone County, including the Eastern edge of Winnebago County. Additionally, the three-year 3D groundwater modeling project for Boone county is continuing. They are receiving grants from the Federal Government for the project but still need a matching donor to provide funds for a graduate study assistant to conduct a Master’s thesis for two

years during this project. They are looking for multiple, local funds to support that, for a total of \$40,000 over two years.

- ii. Ms. Olson reported that AES had an internal meeting to begin the water quality study for the Keith Creek Corridor Plan. There have been conversations with RPC and other organizations to discuss moving forward, including expanding engagement into the community in the next few months.

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

- a) Mr. Roos provided an update on the Greentown Conference. They are looking at around 150 - 300 people for an in-person event on October 15th. A potential venue is the Northern Illinois University campus in Rockford, in between Boone County and Winnebago County. Mr. Roos explained that there are three audiences for the Green Town event: policy makers and elected officials, sustainability-oriented organizations, e.g. Boone County Conservation District, Winnebago County Forest Preserves, Keep Northern Illinois Beautiful, Rockford Park District, Natural Land Institute, and the general public. The goal is to create a culture that will support the implementation of a sustainability plan, all three groups are essential. To accomplish this, there will be pre-conference events, the conference, and post-conference events. The most beneficial pre-conference event will be inviting representatives from other communities that have successfully developed these plans to talk about their process and the factors that went into it. Pre-conference events will be held over Zoom, then in-person events will come later including those in the arts and community, and then post-events to follow up on what's been done. It is important to facilitate the formation of policy-makers over time so that all of the weight doesn't fall onto the conference for sustainability planning. The conference will be inspirational and educational for all three audiences and planning is going on through the Core Planning Team. Starting in March there will be an Advisory Council that will meet two to three times and discuss how to make the process effective. All EPC members' input is welcome. They will also be reaching out to corporations for sponsorships that will help bring in inspirational speakers and support the event. They have raised \$20,000 but they need to raise another \$30,000 through corporations and other grants. 7th Generation Ahead will cover the GTC if there is a shortfall so it is guaranteed to happen. The Core Team will work to make sure resources are collected before, during, and after. Mr. Linnabary asked if the goal of 150 - 300 people was based on capacity or interest. Mr. Roos replied that according to attendance rates of other GTCs, 150 - 300 is a standard and hopefully will not be impacted by COVID. Everything possible will be done to get the right people there. Elected officials may not be able to stay the whole day, but policy makers and the sustainability organizations will be there and the general public as well. They want to take all opportunities to make this a target-rich environment for learning.
- b) Mr. Lind provided an update on the South Fork Kent Creek Watershed Plan. The final plan has been submitted to the IEPA and OES was able to include their comments. Now they are waiting on final approval and will hold a stakeholder meeting in February to discuss implementation.
- c) Ms. Sarver added that it has been an interesting year with people returning to nature and anything we can do to further that is positive. Lots of organizations are getting creative about getting outside, including hikes, book clubs, neighborhood bike rides, and the City Market. The Natural Land Institute puts on the book club every other month and March will include a casual discussion on the content in "The Omnivore's Dilemma." Anyone who wants to get involved is welcome. The hope is that all of these events promote a community focused on healthy living and sustainable travel.

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- d) Mr. Anthony noted that the Soil and Water Conservation District has webinars coming up in March in which they are partnering with other counties to have Regenerative Agriculture conferences. Everyone is invited and the information will be sent out.

4. ADJORNMENT

- a) Mr. Linnabary stated that the next Environmental Committee meeting is scheduled for **March 18th, 2021** at 4:00pm, most likely via video/teleconference but will depend on external factors.
- b) Mr. Linnabary entertained a motion to adjourn at 4:26 PM. Ms. Sarver made the motion (4:26 PM); it was seconded by Mr. Von Bergen (4:26 PM). Approval passed unanimously at 4:27 PM. Motion passed unanimously.

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

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