

DOWNERS GROVE
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMISSION

Minutes

February 14, 2019

I. Roll Call

Chairwoman Pelloso, Commissioner Bement, Commissioner Ellis, Commissioner Marron, Commissioner Salman
Commissioner Duda arrived at 7:06pm

Commissioner Horvatin – Absent

II. Visitor Welcome

Chairwoman Pelloso welcomed the visitors to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

Dr. Jan Hessler, mentioned he has lived in Village for over 40 years, and was previously a member of the Brick Street task force.

Leslie Sadowski-Fugitt, said she is a candidate for Commissioner and is interested in environmental concerns. She is an environmental educator and wants to see why there has been a lag in the meetings, and the plans for 2019.

Sue Farley, mentioned she has attended ECC meetings a few times to present information. She works on pollinator gardens, is a DG Marcher and Green Grovers member. She is responsible for the library plantings and hopes to expand the program in the Village. She is also a Master Gardener and has worked with the Darien Park District and Conservation Foundation. She wants to see the Village focus on the climate and stated Downers Grove is far behind. She noted in Westmont there is a council member on their committee.

Chairman Pelloso said historically she thought there was a council member who attended each commission and asked Mayor Tully to speak to that.

Mayor Martin Tully, noted that practice of council members attending each commission meeting was abolished years ago. He introduced himself as the Mayor of Downers Grove and said he will talk about things the Village has done for environmental sustainability. He said he is here tonight because Chairwoman Pelloso brought it to his attention that the ECC has not met for a while. He asked for the meeting to be scheduled. He said he wants to set this committee up for success for the next council and to try to fix things that have gone off the rails with this commission. He noted he would share more under the agenda item.

Resident in attendance, He said he noticed the Mayor was attending the meeting and wanted to attend himself.

III. Public Comment

Dr. Hessler alluded to information not flowing well. He said he is a research physicist, and has given many talks on climate change. He stated in 1965 the President of the United States informed the country that there is a significant problem. Scientists told Congress many times. Dr. Hessler said all of the research he's read indicate calculations are getting better and time is getting shorter. There is less than a year to solve this problem for Downers Grove and CO2 emissions need to be cut today.

Ms. Sadowski-Fugitt said she holds teacher workshops on climate change. There is one on February 23rd to teach students and assist with messaging. She said she would like to see the facilities plan focus on environmental concerns, sustainability, clean energy, LEED certification. Often these things are cut first to save money.

Chairman Pelloso said there is not a clear voice, flow of communication to the Council. She feels the commission should harness the expertise of the community to make smart decisions to inform the future of Downers Grove.

Ms. Farley said there are so many people to draw upon. She is confused because she works with the Forester and the Park District. There should be a liaison to come to ECC meetings to give a report.

Chairman Pelloso said all of the commission members live locally and if they have flexibility during the day to meet with some of those folks or they could email communications. The information flow could be better.

Ms. Farley was asked by the Library to do gardens. She finds it odd that this is not a Village program.

Chairman Pelloso suggested Ms. Farley put her name in the ring for a commission spot.

Ms. Farley said she saw online there were 80 applications for the ECC.

Commissioner Ellis said she always refers back to Evanston. Evanston created a climate workgroup. She discussed this with Mayor Tully. The workgroup could include members from the community outside of this commission. This might speak to what Ms. Farley is referring to. The City of Evanston doing a lot in this area. Ms. Ellis encouraged all commission members to look at what they are doing. They are in the action state now.

Commissioner Salman said there are a lot of talented people and organizations in this community. There should be synergy between all of the different groups. She suggested an assessment that could be done by staff. There is already a group in the community working to implement the Future Energy Jobs Act.

Chairman Pelloso asked if the 80 applicants mentioned were just for ECC.

Ms. Miles noted there were 80 active applicants for ECC and this is consistent for most boards.

Ms. Farley said the ECC hasn't met for a year so people are working independently. There

is so much more to be done. She wants to know how the ECC can take the next step.

Chairman Pelloso said she thinks the ECC should go back to charter of this commission.

Commissioner Duda said she is bothered by name of commission. It is not a proactive name.

Mayor Tully said there are a lot of things the Village has done that are not well known. He said he is here tonight because he had the privilege of appointing almost all of the members. He heard what was said and wants to help change direction.

Commissioner Marron noted from his point of view he feels isolated, and there is no direction or requests. The commission has nothing to act on.

Mayor Tully said it is his objective is to work with Commission Marron to give him a completely different viewpoint on that topic.

IV. View and Approval of April 12, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Pelloso asked for a motion to approve.

Commissioner Salman made a motion to approve, Commissioner Marron seconded the motion. The motion to approve the April 12, 2018 meeting minutes passed by voice vote.

V. Staff update on ongoing projects

Ms. Miles said there are no updates now for the commission but stated more broadly staff is working towards building a new facility. Ms. Miles said she looks forward to a more consistent feedback loop with the commission.

Commissioner Ellis asked if the event with Republic on the composting program was recorded.

Ms. Miles said it was not recorded but handouts were given and a question and answer session took place between the representatives from Republic. There are plans to assess the program at staff level.

VI. New Business

Discussion of 2019 Agenda items

Chairwoman Pelloso introduced Mayor Tully again to speak on this agenda item.

Mayor Tully said he saw the lack of meetings and wanted to schedule the meeting to get things back on track. He said he understand the concerns and this is a broader issue. He then reviewed the history of the boards in the Village. There are 16 boards and commissions and it is difficult for the Village Council to review all minutes of each board.

He said some boards and commissions are petition-driven and some are not. He noted the petition-driven boards are the Stormwater and Flood Plain Oversight Committee, the land use boards – Zoning Board of Appeals and Plan Commission, the Transportation and Parking Commission and the Liquor Commission. Petition-driven boards are someone asking for something. The other type of board is an advice and counsel board. Mayor Tully said the Technology Commission is an example of this, and would look at whether the Village could use a new computer system. The Human Service Commission has not had members for years. An ad hoc Committee for the Human Service Commission to figure out what the commission should do going forward was recently created. Mayor Tully said the Village cannot have a commission that becomes a mini Village Council. In his view non petition-driven boards have clear guidance that primarily do one of two things:

1. Look at issues or questions like recycling contracts, pollinator gardens, grant opportunities, or if the Village should expand upon our bio-diesel program. These issues would come from staff or the Village Council
 - a. Chairman Pelloso said she feels in 7 years there has not been a request.
2. The other role of an advice and counsel board is to be an antennae into the community and identify things to send to Council to consider. Mayor Tully said it is appropriate to identify an issue and have Council look at the issue further and perhaps involve staff.

Chairwoman Pelloso asked how the commission can ensure that information makes it to Council.

Mayor Tully said unless something is requested by staff or Council the item will not make it on an agenda. He suggested taking a vote on something being communicated to Council. This should be delivered to Council outside of the minutes.

Commissioner Ellis asked how an item can be placed on an agenda.

Mayor Tully said through request of staff. He noted a new business item would need to be sufficiently researched and developed so Council knows what the item is. Council can then decide if they want to move forward.

Commissioner Marron asked what the physical mechanism of getting an item to Council.

Mayor Tully said to email the Council

Ms. Miles said in the case of composting that was accomplished. It was ultimately added as a rider to the solid waste contract.

Mayor Tully said there should be a communication. A vote should be taken at a meeting and Council should give a response, sufficient direction and what the end product should be.

Chairwoman Pelloso said there is a communication issue.

Mayor Tully said this has been recognized as a problem. The Council has been trying to hold a Boards and Commissions retreat for training and to discuss the proper roles of Boards and Commission, Village Council and staff. The facilities project came up and many things had to be taken off the list. It was on the list for 2019. Mayor Tully said on the topic of the liaison issue there were historically only a few boards or commissions that had liaisons. This practice was abolished a while ago. The ECC never had a member of the council as a liaison. Different council members have had different views on this.

Chairwoman Pelloso said there could be a role for Council to have Council divide up and review board and commission minutes.

Mayor Tully said that has been done before with previous councils and the success of that has a lot to do with the makeup of the people on board or commission and the Council at the time.

Chairwoman Pelloso said this is easier to do now through technology. Minutes could be read and then there could be a point person on the Council.

Commissioner Salman said it would be nice to have someone the commission can invite once in a while to have a conversation with about certain topics.

Mayor Tully said he agreed but again said it depends on the Council makeup at the time. He said he liked Chairwoman Pelloso's suggestion.

Commissioner Salman said if the Village did an assessment, other communities could be looked at to see what works for them.

Mayor Tully suggested a 2019 agenda item to look at a better structure for the ECC than what has historically been done.

Commissioner Ellis asked about ways to report out at Village Council meetings.

Mayor Tully asked to think about that and suggested and said it would differ between boards become some boards are highly regulated while others exist through the municipal code.

Commissioner Ellis said she was specifically asking about advice and counsel boards or commissions, what the best way to get information to Council.

Mayor Tully referenced the Human Service Commission Ad Hoc Committee. He said this committee will have a report for the Council. He said he suggests one thing this commission could do is to make those recommendations, do not need an ad hoc.

Commissioner Ellis said the ECC is not on anyone's mind for projects and said they should be considered when dealing with a project with the school or library.

Mayor Tully said those are different legal entities. The Library is its own entity, with

its own board for example.

Chairwoman Pelloso then read from the Village's Municipal Code on the role of the ECC.

Mayor Tully said the statement "directed by Council and the Village Manager" is a free-flowing process, but there should also be mindful development of ideas which are then routed to Council and staff.

Chairwoman Pelloso said there should be top-down and bottom-up communication. She said the statement in the code could be revised or possibly the name.

Dr. Hessler said if all boards and commissions gave quarterly reports to Council that would only be four reports a month.

Mayor Tully said some boards would be very good at that and some would not.

Commissioner Salman said she stayed a second term hoping to make this commission more effective and said the commission has lost some talented people. She said people want to be effective and feel like their time is well-spent. She said people are up for the task.

Chairwoman Pelloso said having a history was helpful.

Mayor Tully said there is no shortage of experienced and passionate volunteers in the Village.

Commissioner Ellis said there are times when the commission does not have a quorum.

Commissioner Marron asked if there are any guidelines on attendance.

Mayor Tully said there is usually a consult with staff on attendance issues.

Commissioner Ellis said she has spent a lot of time putting things on the agenda and has done a lot of outreach to the community. She said there are a lot of pieces not working. She encouraged the Council and her co-commissioners to do more.

Mayor Tully said he wants to tap the enthusiasm and but also temper the enthusiasm. Not every idea will be met with the same enthusiasm by Council.

Commissioner Ellis said there are fair and reasonable people on this commission. And noted when the community comes to the commission, commissioners tell them what is within the commission's power.

Commissioner Salman said in the past she attended a stormwater workshop. She said they received a lot of questions and feels the commission is an under-tapped resource for the community.

Mayor Tully there are so many qualified people in the community willing to share their

time and expertise which is why there are 16 boards and commissions.

Chairwoman Pelloso asked how the size constraints of a board or commission is decided.

Mayor Tully said some are dictated by statute some exist through our municipal code.

Chairwoman Pelloso said maybe the commission would be more effective if it was larger.

Commissioner Ellis said the commission needs to revisit the climate workgroup potential. This has been successful in many other communities but she does not know how to get that going. The workgroup could dig into what the Village is doing and what can they do by law for climate change and make reports out to the ECC then to the Council. This could address the next step.

Mayor Tully suggested at the next ECC meeting to talk about the creation of an ad hoc workgroup in conjunction with this board and to bring back a report to this commission. He said to make a reasonable proposal. This worked with historic preservation very successfully. He said that would be a very specific thing to propose to the next Council.

Commissioner Ellis asked why the current Council could not do this.

Mayor Tully said he would champion this if the ECC wanted to move forward.

Commissioner Ellis said a lot of people want to do the work. The workgroup would need to look at what the Village is doing from the top and look at community groups and what other communities are doing. This would be an opportunity for a continued agenda item.

Chairwoman Pelloso said maybe other workgroups are possible.

Mayor Tully said if a description of the ad hoc workgroup was put together he would introduce it and start the process. He said to be mindful of staff time involved. The Open Meetings Act would apply and staff needs to be present and minutes need to be taken.

Commissioner Ellis said she is willing to bring this to the table next meeting.

Mayor Tully said if the proposal is written up, it could be sent to him and he would bring it as a new business item.

Commissioner Marron asked if ad hoc groups are subject to same requirements for the Open Meetings Act.

Mayor Tully said yes, by operational law.

Chairwoman Pelloso said the ECC does not have a social media presence. She said they could make a motion to council to get the ECC their own Facebook page.

Mayor Tully said individual Council members do not have their own page but noted that

separate entities have their own page, the Park District, the Library, etc. Mayor Tully said the Village's current social media presence could be enhanced and noted the Village's newsletter.

Chairwoman Pelloso said she thinks the commission could improve the newsletter with updates and breaking news.

Ms. Sadowski-Fugitt suggested the use of a hashtag.

Mayor Tully said videos could be an option and opportunities exist to enhance or highlight the ECC through existing channels.

Resident in attendance said the Village Council has a goal of environmental sustainability, but there is no definition exists as to what that goal means. He said there are no metrics to assess if that objective is being met.

Chairwoman Pelloso said she shares some of the same concerns. She noted that the scope of the ECC as an advisory set of volunteers is small. Baseline measures are something the staff would undertake.

Resident in attendance said the Village has no definition of environmental sustainability. He asked whose responsibility it is to provide that definition.

Commissioner Ellis said a role of a workgroup could be to find some answers as this was done in Evanston. She noted there are restraints on the ECC.

Resident in attendance asked why this body is advisory.

Mayor Tully said it was setup that way along with other boards or commissions not as creatures of statute but under the municipal code. Mayor Tully said it would be difficult to have this board as petition-driven, what the petition would be. He said Commissioner Ellis's suggestion of a working group is taking steps in the right direction.

Commissioner Salman said climate issues are global and said how the Village responds as a community is important.

Commissioner Ellis said a resident can request something to look at and that can be put on the ECC's agenda.

Resident in attendance said he feels this is a major deficiency, that the Village's goal of environmental sustainability is undefined.

Dr. Hessler said to pick a small part of a problem and work to achieve it. He said to start with one precise metric as a starting point and add things.

Chairwoman Pelloso said she would like to reiterate some things discussed tonight for next month's agenda. She asked how the ECC can be beneficial as the facilities plan moves forward. She said she wants to make a motion to ask the Village Council to work

with the ECC.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion asking the Village Council for the ECC's consideration and advisement on the Village's facilities plan and to consult the ECC on any environmental impact the facilities plan may have on the Village as a whole.

Commissioner Salman seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Commissioner Ellis – Aye, Commissioner Salman – Aye, Chairman Pelloso – Aye, Commissioner Bement – Aye, Commissioner Duda – Aye, Commissioner Marron – Aye.

The motion passed unanimously

Chairwoman Pelloso reviewed the items for next month's agenda. She said she would like a discussion for renaming commission to proactive versus reactive and reviewing the goal of what the ECC does. She asked the commissioners to come to next month's meeting with suggestions for top-down and bottom-up information flow. She also said she wants to place an item on the agenda to discuss some working groups and the potential for an ad hoc workgroup and how to move that item forward to Council before the new Council is seated.

VII. Adjournment

Chairwoman Pelloso asked for a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Duda seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was passed by a voice vote.

Meeting adjourned.