

DOWNERS GROVE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMISSION
May 15, 2005
Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois
7:00 PM

Chairman Gilbert called the morning to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was established.

I. Roll call

Present: Chairman Mike Gilbert; Members: Dr. Gordon Goodman, Joseph Sterner, Laura Feste, Robert Pawlak, Brian Freeman.

Absent: Member Jeffrey Lifka

Staff: Marketing/Media Dir. Doug Kozlowski

Chairman Gilbert thanked Dr. Goodman for chairing last month's meeting.

II. Minutes of April 14, 2005

Minutes of April 14, 2005 were approved on motion by Dr. Goodman, seconded by Mr. Sterner. A comment arose on making a notation in the minutes as to who arrives. Dr. Goodman suggested highlighting and/or bolding any formal actions or votes of the commission.
Motion carried by voice vote of 6-0.

Chairman Gilbert stated he spoke with Ms. Paige who gave him some resources to contact, i.e., Kay McKeen, from the DuPage County Community Recycling Education Group and Christine Liptrot (phonetic spelling) from School District 58, who was willing to provide recycling assistance at the School District 58 level. Regarding the *Walk to School* matter, Ms. Feste indicated the program was more of a safety program versus an air pollution reduction program and questioned whether this commission wanted to get involved in that area. Dialog followed on the importance of including children in the Village's recycling program.

III. Comments by Edith Mak ra

Ms. Marka welcomed the commissioners to the Morton Arboretum and explained she was the Community Trees Advocate at the arboretum. She proceeded to explain the historical background of the arboretum, noting it was mainly a museum which focused on research, education, and collections. The arboretum recently changed its approach within the last ten years, making it more visitor-friendly and inviting to the community. The arboretum's focus was creating a more greener, healthier, and beautiful world. Ms. Marka explained she has assisted many communities on topics from tree pruning to assistance with tree ordinances/policies. She does work with other environmental commissions and would eventually like to gather a number of other environmental commissions together for collaboration purposes. Dr. Goodman, on behalf of the DuPage County Environmental Commission, indicated his commission was also trying to gather a list of other environmental commissions and believed bringing all the commissions together for collaboration was ideal.

Per some questions, Ms. Marka explained that a number of tree classes were offered for the general public and Dr. Wheir, although retired, was still available on-site. Dr. Goodman also provided some input as to the educational signs being installed around the arboretum.

As the partnership person for the arboretum, Ms. Marka explained that the U.S. Forest Service will be touring in Chicago and visiting Downers Grove next week to observe how the urban environmental groups interact with each other and how they develop working partnerships with each other. Dialog followed regarding the Lyman Woods area and getting people to understand the importance of those woods as their benefit.

Chairman Gilbert proceeded to explain that the Downers Grove Environmental Concerns Commission was new but was ready to begin educating the public about the environment and collaborating with different groups. The commission invited Ms. Marka to stay for the meeting.

IV.A. Update on the Tree Preservation Ordinance

Dr. Goodman conveyed that he stayed for the community meeting and handed out information as it related to the first Tree Preservation Ordinance workshop. Believing the web “links” were more useful via e-mail, he asked **Dir. Kozlowski to forward the e-mail links to the commissioners. Commissioners concurred.** He explained that because the Downers Grove Village Council felt uneasy moving forward with tree protection for parkway trees and trees on private property, they asked that the ordinance be split into two parts. Regarding the parkway tree portion discussed at the April 5, 2005 meeting, developers found the ordinance to be counter-productive if additional requirements for fencing were imposed. However, at the May 10, 2005 meeting, there were no further negative comments regarding the parkway trees and Dr. Goodman believed that council was comfortable with the ordinance since staff prepared a good case. In reviewing the upcoming agendas for the tree preservation ordinance, Chairman Gilbert did not recall addressing trees on other governmental bodies.

Dr. Goodman believed the information from the workshop was beneficial to the commissioners. It was a clear statement as to where Downer Grove was heading and it provided access to staff memos and provided both versions of the ordinance. Lastly, he reviewed his summary of the ordinance meetings which he would be providing to a co-board member of the Pierce Downer Heritage Alliance.

Regarding the private property portion of the ordinance, Dr. Goodman understood that portion would be included into the discussion of residential development/demolition which would be included in the community dialog. To date, he recalled there was no scheduled date for the community dialog and that staff was still in the process of developing proposals. Dr. Goodman expressed concern that the private tree topic had lost momentum. He also provided more specifics of the tree preservation meeting as it related to private property ownership.

Chairman Gilbert recalled that the tree preservation ordinance was discussed back in March and April, which was near election time. He believed the Village Council was being cautious at the time to hear all sides of the issue and, since that time, the issue has become a carryover from that time. Chairman Gilbert indicated he was pleased that the issue was being raised, being a strong advocate for property rights; however, his major concern was that the community may believe the Village wanted control of trees on an individual’s property. The goal was to have the ability for owners to feel that if they wanted to add an addition and a tree blocked that addition, they could remove their tree.

Mr. Freeman reminded the commissioners that this commission could only recommend to the council as to what it thought was important and the final decision, as to enforcement, was up to the Village Council. Again, Dr. Goodman reminded the commissioners that the Village's forester was proposing enforcement during the construction period. Once construction was over and the site was closed, the property owner could do whatever he wanted. Dr. Goodman explained that one of the main reasons for tabling of the tree preservation matter at the March 15th meeting was that the council wanted to see the minutes of this commission's March 10th meeting. Therefore, Dr. Goodman recommended that the March 10th minutes and the April 12th minutes of this commission be presented to the Village Council in the Mayor's Report at the upcoming May 17th Village Council meeting. Additionally, he indicated the council was looking for a report of the community dialog from the March 23rd community meeting. Therefore, he recommended that those minutes also be submitted to the mayor for the council to review. Mr. Kozlowski indicated that both sets of minutes were in the council's packets.

As to making a further recommendation from this commission, Chairman Gilbert believed that taking the private property issue to the community for dialog should be encouraged and be done expeditiously so as not to lose momentum. Dr. Goodman proceeded to hand out pictures of a property that was acquired by a developer (Joel Anderson) which had a number of trees removed before any plan was approved by the Plan Commission or received by the public. Discussion followed. Dr. Goodman conveyed Commissioner McConnell's comments from the meeting about the importance of trees as valuable resources and encouraging tree preservation in general. Chairman Gilbert agreed the matter needed continual pushing and a forum was needed to specifically address the topic. He believed the Village was in the midst of changes as it relates to housing and other important issues; Mr. Freeman concurred.

Mr. Freeman offered to make a motion that the Village Council continue to move forward and continue its momentum with the tree preservation ordinance .

Mr. Pawlak and Ms. Marka inquired whether the proposed tree ordinance or the current ordinance reflected what the utility companies could do with the parkway trees, wherein Dr. Goodman stated that the state legislature had pre-empted the village's ability to deal with what the utility companies could do to the parkway trees. Mr. Sterner stated he noticed the utility companies becoming more cognizant of the trees when providing their services. Ms. Marka also conveyed her positive observations from her pre-tour of the village. When asked how other villages motivated their councils to move forward on this topic , Ms. Marka explained that a steady pressure worked as well as finding out how other communities dealt with the issue.

Further dialog followed that the Environmental Concerns Commission supported the protection of public and private trees and that the momentum should not be lost.

Mr. Freeman made a motion that stated the Environmental Concerns Commission supported the protection of both public and private trees in Downers Grove and urged that the momentum for work on this effort not be lost.

The Downers Grove Environmental Concerns Commission supported immediate approval of the pending staff proposal to amend Chapter 24 of the Municipal Code in order to improve protection of parkway trees as proposed at the May 10, 2005 workshop meeting.

Moreover, the Downers Grove Environmental Concerns Commission urged that consideration, including community input, be expedited for the additional staff proposal to initiate protection of trees on private property during demolition and certain other construction activities. Seconded by Ms. Feste. Roll call:

Ayes: Chairman Gilbert, Goodman, Sterner, Feste, Pawlak, Freeman

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED: VOTE: 6-0

It was suggested that Dir. Kozlowski find out when the next community dialog would take place and report back at the next meeting.

Because the Village Council was in the process of reactivating its committees, Dr. Goodman suggested that someone from this commission attend the Public Service Committee to bring to them some of the concerns of the Environmental Concerns Committee. Chairman Gilbert supported the suggestion to keep the matter upfront and moving ahead.

IV.B. Continued Discussion on Demolition Ordinance

Chairman Gilbert informed the commission he recently tore down a small home on Bryan Street and went through the entire demolition process. He shared the details of the physical removal of the home as well as the emotional aspects of the process. However, he noted that at the end of the demolition, there was no raking down of the empty lot and believed it should be noted somewhere in the ordinance. As the home was being torn down, Chairman Gilbert recalled seeing no code enforcement person at the site; however, there was an inspector present for a site inspection the day prior. Mr. Sterner pointed out that it only showed that the Village was short-handed and the matter would get worse. Chairman Gilbert concurred, explaining that someone will have to get to the Finance Committee to explain to them the value of having the Code Enforcement department properly funded.

Discussion followed on whether Assistant Director of Code Services Don Scheidler should be involved in the matter to which the chairman believed it was not necessary but rather to go directly to the Finance Committee, explain the need for more code enforcement officers, and the need to have more inspections at teardown sites. Dialog was raised on bringing the matter to the Finance Committee currently, wherein conversation took place that that timing was not right but the matter had to remain on the agenda.

Dr. Goodman proceed to state that the village was expected to have a surplus of revenue and believed the Finance Committee would have extra funds to allocate as carryover money. Chairman Gilbert agreed but also pointed out that this commission had to get educated in the process of where the funding came from and who spent it, etc.

Per a question, Mr. Freeman explained a letter he handed out as it relates to the hazards of demolitions and carrying them out properly. He emphasized that monitoring should take place. Additionally, besides the hazard issues, green space, setbacks and drainage issues needed to be addressed. Dr. Goodman handed staff a copy of the Village's current Demolition and Construction guidelines and suggested making copies for the commissioners. At the same time he noted the assistant director of Code Services currently did not have the authority in the current ordinance to do the kind of enforcement that would be necessary to meet standards such as those discussed above.

Per a question, Mr. Freeman indicated Glen Ellyn was in the process of creating a demolition ordinance as well.

Chairman Gilbert believed an outline to present to the Village Council would be necessary to assist them. He suggested discussing the topic at the next meeting, but in the interim, the commissioners should review and provide some of their own ideas for an outline. Mr. Sterner would review the information and put a draft together. Chairman Gilbert reminded the commissioners that they will have to determine whether they want to focus on just the protection and whether it falls within the purview of this commission. Mr. Freeman believed the commission should address hazardous substances, green space, drainage/run-off, etc. As to the disposition of the materials, there was no Village information on that topic.

Reminding the commissioners that he would not be attending the June meeting, Dr. Goodman suggested to defer the discussion on coal fire power plants to a fall meeting. He also suggested that staff create an updated future agenda; Chairman Gilbert would follow up with staff.

V. Discussion on Activities relating to Educational Videos about Recycling and Composting

The chairman suggested placing this agenda item on a future agenda. He would follow up with Doug Kozlowski. However, Dir. Kozlowski did have information on the topics and handed it out to the commissioners for their review. Commissioners could provide input at the next meeting.

VI. New Business

Ms. Feste announced that Trader Joe's was having a raffle to promote conservation of resources. She suggested that the Village provide Trader Joes with some type of award of recognition. Chairman Gilbert concurred and stated he wanted the Environmental Concerns Commission's name attached to the award. Staff would follow up and speak to the mayor about inviting Trader Joe's to a Village Council meeting or an Environmental Concerns Commission meeting, with a photo op and press release. Commissioners concurred unanimously.

On another matter, Dr. Goodman discussed the importance of sidewalks and how to handle those sidewalks where the Village has no right-of-way for either the road or a sidewalk and the importance of two-way cooperation with safety and resource preservation. Dr. Goodman will be addressing the same matter before the Public Service Commission and would report back to these commissioners via email on that discussion. He suggested that sidewalks be added to a future agenda. Mr. Pawlak mentioned that the Gilbert sidewalk would have environmental issues due to the creek.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m. on motion by Mr. Freeman, seconded by Mr. Sterner. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
(as transcribed by tape)

/s/ Celeste K. Weilandt

Celeste K. Weilandt, Recording Secretary