

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
August 26, 2020
7:00PM
Conducted Remotely

Commission Members Present: Laura Derks (Chair), Tim Thomas, Ravi Parakkat, Crystal Hodges, Mark Goldberg, Stephen Morales
Staff Liaison Present: Mindy Agnew, Sustainability Coordinator

- 1) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Derks at 7:00 pm.
- 2) **Agenda Approval:** A motion, to accept the agenda as presented, was made, seconded and approved.
- 3) **Public Comment:** Agnew stated that there was no public comment.
- 4) **Approval of Minutes:** Previous meeting minutes were being drafted for approval for the next commission meeting.
- 5) **Chair Report (Laura Derks):** Suggested that the meeting revolve around 3 recommendation items on the agenda.
- 6) **Staff Liaison Report:** Will be included in the bag fee agenda item
- 7) **Plastic Bag Fee:** First item of discussion is a letter circulating from local resident plastics group to try to reinstate reusable bags. Commissioners discussed recommending to allow for reusable bags and the single-use fee to come back. Mindy Agnew updated the group on the status of the latest public health order that extended the suspension of reusable bags in stores and the single-use plastic bag fee ordinance until further direction from the State of Illinois on the matter. Effective until the end of September 2020. Members discussed the lack of science that supported transmission of the virus from surfaces like reusable bags and whether a citizen commission could affect future public health department orders on this issue. Since the item was on the agenda for action, the EEC unanimously agreed to move forward with documenting their recommendation. **Mark Goldberg made the motion to go back to using reusable bags and re-establishing the Village of Oak Park single-use bag fee ordinance as of September 30, 2020. Stephen Morales seconds. None opposed.**
- 8) **Single-use plastics:** Second agenda item is another plastic issue regarding single use plastics in local businesses. Chair Derks introduced that the EEC put together a recommendation that every take-out container item be recyclable. If the Village of Oak Park is not in a position to put forth a single-use plastic ban, this could be an alternative. Commissioner Goldberg cautioned that any actions shouldn't be an imposition of additional costs on small businesses already financially challenged because of the pandemic. Open discussion that there are two ways to address this issue; be conscious that the recommendation cannot hurt the recovery of the small businesses, and also to plan for data to support it. Prior to COVID 19 many businesses had left Oak Park. Try to create some incentive to draw them back and recommend that sustainability be part of that recommendation. Secondly, know that some companies

have already made the transition and in time of COVID have really gotten some scale. Offering some recyclables at cheaper prices that may benefit the other businesses. Use what is already there to the benefit concrete actions. to partner with other entities. Just pushing the recommendation may not work. Group discussion Introduced the idea of a grant to small business incentive to help businesses going green. To incentivize the business in ways to address the plastics issue. Hold off until a near future meeting to discuss the framework on this recommendation. Ravi Parakkat and Laura Derks offered to work together on additional details on a small business sustainability incentive framework. Recommendation to Board on what kind of incentive to support recovery and sustainability at the same time. Commissioner Morales clarified two parts of the idea. One part may be to offer small incentive grants out to new and existing business and the other part is the data collection piece to support and track the effort.

- 9) **Old Business:** Chair Derks and Commissioner Parakkat appealed to EEC to consider assisting with AdHoc Climate Action Planning with a local community group.
- 10) **New Business:** Commissioner Parakkat October is energy efficiency month to offer to see what the EEC can do to make recommendation at the next meeting and discussion about what can be helpful to residents and businesses.
- 11) **Adjourn:** A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Next Commission Meeting Will Be Scheduled in January, 2021