

Environment Committee

Minutes of the Special Meeting on
January 9, 2023

**Village of Homer Glen
14240 W 151st Street, Homer Glen, IL 60491
Board Room**

1. Call to Order.

The special meeting was called to order at 6:07 pm by Co-Chair Consolino.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.**3. Roll Call.**

Members present were Co-Chair Jennifer Consolino, Chris Chiapetta, Andy Panelli, Joe Turrise, John Walters, Staff Member Melissa King and Staff Member Taylor Udarbe.

Members Absent: Co-Chair Ruben Pazmino, Member Carina Cirillo, Member Bob Moses and Member Gary White.

Also present was Fran from the Women's Club.

4. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.

There were no amendments to the agenda.

5. Minutes.**a) November 7, 2022**

The motion to approve the November 7, 2022 Minutes was made by Member Turrise and was seconded by Member Panelli. The motion passed.

6. Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

7. Old Business.**a) Memorial Tree Planting**

Staff King and Co-chair Consolino reminded the committee that the talking points from the last meeting could be found in the November meeting minutes or with the Memorial bench and tree program supplement sheet in the packet. Staff King explained that she worked with park staff to get more detail on bench types and prices.

Member Consolino reviewed committee discussions and ideas for the memorial tree and bench program with Member Walters, who was not present at the last Environment committee meeting. She added that the committee made a lot of progress and member Walters said this program was a great idea.

Staff King mentioned that when she spoke with Jennifer Vittori, she thought it would be a good idea to allow people to pick the park location for the tree plantings or bench installation. Co-Chair Consolino then told the committee that she spoke with Trustee Reynders to see if her parks committee wanted to designate one memorial park. She added that people should also have the option to be placed at a park of their choice, although a dedicated park would be sweet.

Member Panelli stated that he liked the idea of a dedicated space as the proximity of all these trees and/or benches would have procedural benefit over allowing people to choose. Member Turrise said a central location could make sense for trees but he couldn't imagine seeing a park with fifty-or-so benches. Member Panelli suggested that the committee could always start with a few parks, see how it goes, and see if people end up requesting alternate parks.

Co-chair Consolino asked Staff King if the Village has a map of all the parkway trees. Staff King explained that there is a tree inventory but it is not 100% accurate as there have been many trees planted since it was done. She added that the Village is going to apply for a grant to get a new tree inventory done. Member Walters asked if that would go through the committee and Staff King explained that sometimes the committee has some money available for tree inventories, but the cost was shared last time. She said the committee paid around \$5,000 for their share and could not recall if they had the money in their budget currently. Staff King assured the committee that Gia would complete all of the Village's grant applications and she thought it was important that this role was dedicated to one person who knows how it is done. She also added that they could probably do something next year.

Member Turrise asked staff King about what happened to the committee's role in choosing parkway trees. She explained that Chris Camardo and John Robinson used to do this program but Debbie Stevens is now the one keeping track. She also told the committee that all tree recommendations are coming from Roger but the project is now staff coordinated. Staff King was not sure why the committee did not work on this project anymore, as it happened before she started working for the Village. Staff King and Co-chair Consolino said they could look into the history.

Co-chair Consolino said she spoke with Trustee Reynders about the program and believed that she would like to see all parks included as a site option for the memorial program. She explained that she reached out to her out of courtesy, but she thinks this program should be the Environment Committee's because this could be a great opportunity.

The committee discussed the prices for the program and Staff King added that she provided bench quotes. Of the two types of benches that exist in our parks, park staff said that the composite benches are susceptible to vandalism, like etching, or damage from skateboarding. Staff King explained that the cost estimates in the packet came from past bids for Heritage Park's active core, so they may not accurately depict smaller project pricing. The committee reviewed the quotes and discussed how the prices for other memorial programs are all comparable price wise.

Staff King told the committee that Jennifer said it might be nice to pick an alternate bench for the memorial so they stand out.

Co-chair Consolino said that the Village has, unfortunately, seen an increase in vandalism. She added that she likes the idea of the recycled plastic / composite bench, but she had vandalism concerns.

Member Panelli said that the bench pricing is likely liberal rather than conservative to factor in maintenance or replacement costs.

The committee discussed their bench preferences without factoring in potential vandalism. Member Turrise asked if they could include some type of solar powered lighting to deter vandalism and the committee came to a consensus that it is something to look into.

Members Walters and Chiappetta said they like the composite benches. Member Panelli added that while the composite is recycled, the metal benches are fully recyclable at the end of their life cycle, but they should see how it goes with the composite benches first. Member Turrise told the committee he likes the metal benches because he recalled John Robinson ran into incidents with composite being set on fire. Member Turrise then explained that without the vandalism factor, he would like the composite bench. Fran added that the composite benches do not get as hot in the sun as a metal bench. The consensus of the committee was to go with a composite bench.

The committee discussed the possibility of memorial plaques deterring vandals out of respect. Co-chair Consolino said they should try the composite and see how it goes. Staff told the committee that staff will get hard costs on these types of benches.

Staff King asked the committee about what trees species they wanted to select from Roger and Jennifer's recommendations. She told the committee that Jennifer likes the idea of unique trees for memorial plantings but also oaks, maples, hickory, buckeye, and sweetgum. Jennifer also recommended offering understory trees like magnolia, crab, tulip, or redbud. Roger's list includes Chinkapin oak, pecan, triumph elm, red jewel flowering crab, hickory, American basswood, hackberry, and American hornbeam.

Member Turrise asked about tree bags and Staff King said it is usually is up for the first year. He also stated that he thinks it is important to get drought tolerant and hardy trees. Staff King said most of those trees meet that criteria, though sweetgum likes water and that redbud, hickory and oaks are all native to this area.

The committee wants to see a chart with tree characteristics including, hardiness level, drought tolerance, salt tolerance, sun/shade resistance, life span and insect resistance. Member Panelli also asked if they could ask nurseries in the area about how in demand each tree is. Fran added that general survivability is important.

Member John added that some trees perform better depending on a lot of factors like grade changes. Staff King also said that there are plenty of resilient

trees that could perform in a wide range of environments and that we could get a list of four to five trees that could do this.

Member King asked if anyone has additional trees that staff could look at. Member Turrise said they had planted a tree a few years ago at a park off of the south side of 159th Street that was really hardy. Staff King thought maybe this was planted at the Evelyn's Gate North park. Co-chair Consolino said that of the list compiled by Roger and Jennifer, they could probably find very hardy trees available.

Member Walter told the committee about the chestnut blight that took out a lot of beautiful chestnuts. Co-chair Consolino added that crab trees and/or any fruit or nut tree is also highly susceptible to blight.

Member Turrise told the committee that the tree he was talking about was at Stonebridge Woods park.

Fran told the committee that she liked a variety of trees because the Village needs tree diversity. Staff King added that Roger does not recommend planting any more maples in the Village, since over 75% of the parkway trees in the Village are maples. She explained that arborist industry thinks maple is the next species to get a pest and there is a bug that scientists are monitoring in Indiana.

Staff King reiterated to the committee that staff will put together cost estimates and an application for the program.

The committee discussed using a concrete pad or an engraved rock for the memorial tree. Co-chair Consolino wants to know the cost difference between the options. Member Panelli added that a deep concrete block would be difficult for people to dig up. Staff King told the committee that John Lobick's plaque is made of epoxy and she is not sure how that material could hold up in the weather. The committee discussed sending this plaque to his family and then ordering a new one to match the memorial program.

Co-chair Consolino asked the committee if the applicant had to be a Homer Glen resident. The general consensus is that they would not care who applies because it benefits the parks and people may have loved ones in the Village.

Co-chair Consolino said everyone is very excited about this program and that they should get this to the board as soon as they can.

8. New Business.

a) Simple Recycling

Member Panelli passed out a flier and explained that this is a for-profit program that picks up donations from your home. This is easy for residents and reduces waste from people throwing out these types of products. While this is for-profit, the Village or resident do not have to pay for the service.

Staff King asked if they need authorization or resolution from the Village Board to adopt a program like this, which is how Community Solar was adopted. She added that Community Solar may be a different case since it was vetted by the mayor Caucus and the Village has a lot of rules in regards to website postings and for-profit businesses.

Co-chair Consolino said that she could look into these requirements. She added that existing drop-off boxes, like the one out by Home Depot, had been turned into a dumping ground.

Member Panelli asked if the Village had to formally be involved in the program or if residents could do this.

Co-chair Consolino said that the committee would not need to make a motion on this item, but the consensus is to look into this more.

Co-chair Consolino told the committee about the two garbage truck fires and added that one occurred in her subdivision. The fire department determined that these fires were started because of lithium batteries. She wanted information to be put out to the community on the dangers of lithium batteries and proper disposal methods.

Staff King mentioned that the environment committee pays for the recycling event every other year. She said she needs to contact Will County and Jacquelyn to get this event going.

The committee discussed how they used to be able to do recycling drop off at Lockport but this is no longer available.

Co-chair Consolino read the upcoming Board item for this event to the committee. She said Trustee Fialko had concerns about this item as the staff report did not explicitly state the funding is coming from the Environment Committee but she will bring this up at the meeting so everyone knows. She also mentioned that another trustee didn't believe the Village should be paying Will County at all.

Staff King explained that they have been doing this for a long time. Staff King asked if this went to the Administration and Finance Committee and Staff Udarbe confirmed that it did not, since the meeting was cancelled. The item was pulled up and Staff King also confirmed that the account number listed on the board report is the Environment Committee's account number.

b) 2023 Environment Committee Event/Activity Dates

Staff King told the committee that they usually talk about the upcoming yearly events in January. She also told the committee that they have a new event coordinated since Sue left, and that Jacquelyn is also a Homer Resident which is very cool. Member Turrise thought it may be nice to bring her to a meeting to meet everyone as she would be very useful for their events.

Staff King told the committee that Jacquelyn had already reached out to the astronomers to get their availability. These dates are May 26th and September 22nd. Staff King said she will circulate these dates and asked the committee to see if these dates worked and to get back to her.

Staff King asked if they were still interested in trash pickup and seedling events for this year. She said that last year, they thought the May date for seedling events was too late and that it should be April. She added that Jacquelyn likes this event and thinks proper marketing and expanding the age/grade range for participants would get them a good turnout.

Co-chair Consolino asked for the committee's opinion on including a small registration fee to incentivize attendance. She added that participants received a lot in return like plants, little shovels, snacks, and stickers like last year. The committee came to a consensus that they could cut off registration at forty people.

Staff King told the committee that there had been discussion between Trustee Reynders and Jennifer about this planting area. She said they were looking to take it all out and install native plantings that are easy for staff to maintain in the small area. She added that the committee could do something like that, too.

Fran said she would not recommend planting anything, unless it was frost hardy, before Mother's Day. The committee discussed dates for this event, which included May 6th, May 7th, or May 20th. Staff King said the Vintage craft fair is on the 20th and Kite Fest is the 13th. Staff King suggested that Sundays are also a possibility. The committee came to a consensus to do this even on Sunday, May 21st from 11am to 2pm.

For stargazing, the committee was still okay with the May 26th and September 22nd dates.

Staff King also asked if they want to do another clean up event. After discussing with Sue and Jacquelyn, staff thought they should keep the same park and work out kinks before exploring other locations in the Village so they can gain momentum. She said they have tried to do this event around Public Land's Day and the date options were September 23rd or 24th, or September 30th to give the committee time between the stargazing event. The committee agreed that 11am to 2pm is a good time. Member Turrise told the committee that it is sometimes difficult for parents and kids to make these events due to sport involvement.

The committee then discussed the fall tree planting event. She said they likely wouldn't be able to do it on Public Lands Day but they should look for a week day. They said September 21st could work and Co-chair Consolino requested the planting be earlier than 2pm. The committee is okay with this time frame.

Staff King added that Jennifer had recommended planting new oak trees in Lamers park, as they had lost a few this year. The committee is okay with this. Member Turrise added that he would recommend a Shingle Oak and Staff King said that she did not think Jennifer has a specific species in mind.

Staff King said she would get costs and order them ahead of time so they don't run out of inventory.

9. Announcements/Committee Member Communication

There were no committee announcements.

10. Adjournment/ Committee Members Communication.

Member Turrise motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm and Member Chiapetta seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted:



Melissa W. King/Taylor Udarbe
Director of Planning and Zoning/Assistant Planner