

Environment Committee

Minutes of the Meeting on
August 1, 2023

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

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm by Chair Consolino.

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

Members present were Chair Jennifer Consolino, Chris Chiappetta, Fran Perveiler, Joe Turrise, and Staff Member Taylor Udarbe.

Staff Member Melissa King was telephoned into the committee meeting at the start of the meeting. Member Andy Panelli arrived to the meeting at 5:59pm.

Trustee Sue Steilen was also present.

4. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.

Member Turrise asked to touch on the information from last meeting on the Chicago-Bloomington/Hadley Road project. They added this discussion to new business. Chair Consolino made the motion to approve the agenda and it was seconded by Member Turrise. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Minutes.

a) July 11, 2023

The motion was made by Member Turrise and was seconded by Member Perveiler. Chair Consolino requested the minutes be amended from reading "Facebook posts" in section 7.ai to read "social media posts". Minutes passed as amended.

6. Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

7. Old Business.

a) 2023 Environment Committee Event/Activity Dates

i. Community and Nature in Harmony Award.

Staff Udarbe gave the committee a presentation on the site visits from the Community and Nature in Harmony Award nominees that have been visited so far. The committee members discussed the reasons why each have been nominated and why they deserve the award. Staff Udarbe told the committee there are two (2) more site visits tomorrow if any of the committee members would like to join. She added that these nominees were also on the Women's Club Garden Walk.

Staff Udarbe told the committee that there are two (2) board meetings before Homer Glen Lands Day. The committee agreed that they should do the earlier meeting.

Chair Consolino asked Staff King about looking into a more permanent yard sign for the CNH winners. Staff King said they had not yet but staff will look into it. Member Perveiler said she still had her sign from winning a few years back.

Chair Consolino said they only have around ten (10) nominees every year and spending around \$40 on a more permanent sign might have more people wanting to participate. She asked the committee for a vote on if they are okay with moving forward with a sign, preferably metal and affordable. Member Turrise motioned to approve and Member Perveiler seconded. The motion passed.

ii. Stargazing.

Chair Consolino told the committee that this event is September 22nd. She asked the committee about volunteers. Member Perveiler said she will be out of town and Member Turrise said he usually goes. Member Chiappetta said that he can volunteer for stargazing.

Staff King explained to the committee that her and Jacquelyn were talking about how it would be cool to just do owls since they are nocturnal. They got a contact for the northwest Illinois raptor society and they do programs and they bring all twelve species of native owls and also stuffed ones. She said they thought it was so cool and unique and their price is around \$490 for the base program. She said they pay around that for Big Run so it is not out of the realm of what they usually do. Trustee Steilen confirmed that they came many years ago and said they were awesome; the price is worth it.

Member Turrise said, yes, they have a rotation but they should add them in. Chair Consolino asked for a motion to go with the owls for the Stargazing indoor program. Member Turrise motioned and Member Perveiler seconded. The motioned passed.

iii. “Hike and Haul”, Homer Glen Lands Day Cleanup

Chair Consolino said she needs to talk to parks about this to see if they wanted to add another park. Member Turrise said he thought they would do the same location as last year. Chair Consolino explained that it will be at Culver Park but she wanted to see if Parks would be interest in joining or taking on their own park. The event is Saturday, September 30 at 10am.

Member Panelli arrived to the meeting during this discussion.

Staff Udarbe asked for clarification that the Parks committee will join their park or plan a separate site, and Chair Consolino confirmed they could do a separate event.

iv. Fall Tree Planting

Chair Consolino asked the committee for date ideas in September or October. Member Chiappetta said they have a lot going on next month and the committee agreed to look at October since it will not be too late for planting.

Chair Consolino asked Staff King if the first or second week is better. Staff King said it does not matter, but the more members involved is better. Chair Consolino asked if they should incorporate it into the committee meeting date in Lamer's Park. Staff King asked that if they have good weather, that they can hold the meeting at the park and committee agreed that it would be nice, weather permitting. They confirmed this will be Tuesday October 3rd at 4:30 prior to the meeting. Member Panelli motioned to approve this date and Chair Consolino seconded. The motion passed.

The committee discussed how to get to Lamer's Park.

8. New Business.

Staff Udarbe said they added the discussion on the Chicago-Bloomington / Hadley Road project. Chair Consolino asked staff to fill in the committee and Staff King said she would while Staff Udarbe pulled up the informational website for the project (<https://www.parkerhadleystudy.com/>).

Staff King explained that Will County had more of an informational meeting with boards but they had not received more information than was already shared prior. She said they had boards showing options for a road project. Generally speaking, they aren't looking at adding more lanes but they are recommending intersection improvements. She said there was a board showing section profiles of the road showing lanes, shoulder, and ditch to meet Will county standard including the close drainage system. She said currently the lanes are 10 feet wide with 2ft of gravel shoulder, though the shoulder has been degrading and that the ditches are mostly overgrown or flat. She added that, oddly, that the rural cross section does take up a lot of space. She said her and Brett had discussed how the closed section looks narrow, though the reality is there would be significant impact to the roadway and maybe more ROW taking or just be equivalent between closed drainage or rural route. She said mass grading will be needed and they need to dive into the reality of these impacts. She said she feels that the board shows a closed drainage being a better option, though the reality is there is still a lot of impact and the system would change the character of the road. She said if she lived out there, she would want to keep the rural cross section and as for minimal impact with narrowing lanes and shoulder.

She explained they had a public comment and sign in sheet and arials with post-it notes for comments, but it was annoying not seeing anyone guiding the tables to understand how to interact. She said when she was there, it was already an hour and a half in and there were no comments on the post-its. She was concerned that the only comments people would have is that they did not want it, instead of more specific reasons and concerns.

Member Turrise said they let people vote on 10- or 12-foot lanes but did not disclose there is an additional gas tax being proposed to pay for the project. He said a lot of residents gave Will County a piece of their mind since they did not want this. He said there the number of trees tagged for removal are over 4,000.

Trustee Steilen added that she hopes the Village takes a stand and acts to make this least impact and maintain the rural character. She said narrow roads scream rural and she was just in Wisconsin and didn't see this anywhere. When she spoke with a lady from Will County, she explained that these were federal highway standards because they have money from federal highway. She would someone to research and find out, as she would like to know, if this is happening in other communities across the county. She added that our residents strongly oppose this.

Member Turrise said there was no reason for it because before the interstate, they had route 6 through Indiana and Illinois which was made for this. He said they would encourage trucks to go through streets like this.

Member Panelli said he was late to the meeting, but when he talked to a younger guy, he said they were not presenting the existing road as an alternate to keep the character. He said he implied that the existing conditions are impossible.

Staff King explained the process of eminent domain if negotiations are not met beforehand for land acquisition.

Chair Consolino said they should request the Board send a combined letter. Trustee Steilen said Melissa or Brett told her that Will County had plans for 20 years in advanced, but the Village doesn't want to change and it is not the vision of the community. She said sharing their community vision with the county to try to reason with them could help. Chair Consolino asked staff where other resources they can reach out to, and staff King said they can compile the committee conversation and hold a workshop with the board to go over all the details and get their pulse and in the meantime, staff can pull together as much information as they can.

Trustee Steilen said she knew residents were organizing and that they should reach out to their board representatives, too. She said was not able to stay at the whole informational meeting because there was a Village Board meeting the same night, but from what she has heard, the room was pretty packed all night.

Chair Consolino said that she will send an email to our representatives.

Member Panelli asked staff King about the due date for the letter and said he had already sent out a letter on behalf of his HOA. Staff King explained that they likely just have a deadline for producing the record of the meeting's public comments and she thinks they will still be taking in comments after, too. She did not know for sure but she can look into it. Member Panelli said the reason he asked was so he can reach out to other HOAs to include more comments.

Trustee Steilen said her Community Development committee is working to keep the public informed. This is something many of the committee members and other members of the community are concerned about.

Member Turrise asked they should send out the plans and Chair Consolino said they send it out to the Patch or write to Michelle Mullen to shine this spot light on the resident's desire to keep the rural charm.

Trustee Steilen asked about the presentation and Staff Udarbe said this information was posted to the Parker Hadley website. Staff Udarbe said it is on parkerhadleystudy.com and Trustee Steilen said they should post that link on their website.

Chair Consolino told the committee she wanted to turn this meeting over to Trustee Steilen as she wanted to discuss Trantina Farm.

Trustee Steilen told the committee that she wanted to explain for people who were hearing things and wondering, thought she would give some background and history. The Township applied for a site development permit to do Trantina Farm and it was approved on April 4th 2023. When they applied for their permit, they submitted a stockpile site plan, because the township was able to get some free fill they thought they could use for future projects, just to get the permitting done. So that was applied to from the Village with their application, they submitted a stormwater pollution protection plan (this is an erosion control plan), that's what these documents are. Brett Westcott sent these to me a while back. On their application, they said that the area that was going to be disturbed, 73,225sf in one section and 17,453 sf in another section. In our code, it says, activities subject to the NDPES construction permits. That has to do with stormwater pollution and it's monitored by the IEPA, it says, these Phase II permits are required for construction projects resulting in land disturbance of 1 acre or more, such activities include but are not limited to clearing and grubbing, grading, excavating, and demolition. So, they submitted this permit and it's in our Village's Engineer to issue a permit without getting support. Our Village Engineer is a good guy and he is a good engineer, but he doesn't have a whole lot of municipal experience. When I found this on the website, I will say, it doesn't say this in our actual code book, it's on our website though, which is kind of weird. There might be a flaw there.

Chair Consolino called for point of order, just really quick, personnel matters keep that out of here and stick to the facts.

Trustee Steilen said she just wanted to explain what happened here. So anyway, this permit got issued, and we as a Village, are responsible for assuring the IEPA that the permit the applicant applied for their permits and acquired permits (with IEPA) before we issue a permit ourselves, unfortunately that didn't happen. She said that a resident called the IEPA and reported it, and added that some people think she was the one and clarified that she was not. She said she did raise questions regarding this permit and if we had received it and the Homer township Road District Commissioner, kept

saying it was tested. He doesn't understand what the testing is. What they put on their website is a geotechnical report, and she had a copy, and invited the committee to read it. It doesn't test the soil, what they do is they do a boring of the site location where they collect the soil. It doesn't test for contaminants. She said I'm not saying the soil has to be tested for contaminants. What it does tell you is what the composition of the soil is. For example, this one spot has 4" of asphalt pavement, 11" of aggregate base course, then they get down to silty clay, trace sand and gravel. And then when they get down to 3.5' they get to more silty clay, trace sand and gravel. It isn't necessarily, when they say that they got free clay, they have an image of a foundation being dug for a house and that's where this clay fill is coming from, but it wasn't. In the geotechnical report it shows the location of where the fill is coming from, these are photos if you want look at it, it's a road project. They are doing curves and sewer alignment along the side of the road. My question is are they really getting down to the clay if they have to go down to 3 feet to find the clay. That's the argument between us and the township. These are photos of the actual fill that was on site before July 18, these are copies of what this looked like. The IEPA was called and they came out, on, I don't know what the correspondence was.

Trustee Consolino said she thought it was the same day.

Trustee Steilen said there was correspondence that went back and forth between the Township and the IEPA. She said she tried FOIAing it, but because the investigation, they don't give that out.

Trustee Consolino confirmed that yes, it's pending.

Trustee Steilen reiterated she did not have that. The IEPA came out, the township said they didn't disturb 2 acres, they were disturbing under an acre. They came out to measure the space to see if it was under an acre. This is what it looked like when the IEPA came out to measure. All the fill that was there was gone. Either it was buried or carted away within 24 hours.

Trustee Consolino explained that there have also been issues with illegal dumping.

Trustee Steilen said that came after this. This is what it looked like on the 21st. All those other photos were from before the 19th. So then on the 21st a stop work order was made until the Township could get their permit. It will take 30 days to get that permit and the 30 days to get the permit would be from the time they applied. That stop work order happened on the 21st of July and on the 26th of July all of this was dumped there, there's like 5 piles of material (unable to understand). The Township is saying it's illegal dumping that they don't know who dumped it there and there is an investigation.

Trustee Consolino explained that there is an investigation. There is actual proof of the dumping. Trustee Steilen added that is just the status of what is happening.

Trustee Consolino asked for a copy of the documents and Trustee Steilen said you can just have them all.

Member Panelli asked what happens with the IEPA at this point? Trustee Steilen said she did not know if they have received the application from the Township. As far as the illegal dumping, she did not think that affected the permit application.

Trustee Consolino said, maybe what I'll do, if you are ok with it, I had asked Road Commissioner Brent Portfolio to come, he is out of town. But I think it would be good for both conversations to be had with the Environment (Committee), that way we have the whole scope. There are two investigations, one is criminal for dumping at Trantina and the other one is with the IEPA. And we'll see if there is any follow up on that too.

Trustee Steilen said it would be good for the Village to understand and Trustee Consolino said that was why she wanted all the information

Trustee Steilen said that as a trustee and resident, the permitting process here is somewhat flawed, we would not want to issue a permit to a resident to put a driveway on their property without knowing where the house was going to go. And there's 23 acres or more of land over there on that open space. We just did a project that looked at wetlands for the HUD thing. The assisted living center, when they did that project they had to do a wetland report, an EcoCat, that tells you what wildlife could be disturbed with that 5-acre development. And here we have this protected land and that doesn't have any of those things done or a proposal and no plans submitted to the village for what that development is. If you allow this dumping and this stockpiling and the plans don't go through, what then happens to the environment that has been impacted? My thoughts.

Trustee Consolino ask if anyone had any questions? Member Turrise asked, while we're on that subject, on July 11th, if you look at the minutes on the bottom of page 7 and top of page 8, if you look at the Photo of the barn, I brought up the subject of the old barn on Trantina that is going into neglect and it's a historical barn that was moved from another farm. He said he saw that Trustee Consolino was going to look into it. Trustee Consolino said yes, and that it is. It is supposed to be a historical landmark and it's not going to be touched. That's what I was told.

Member Turrise asked about it going into decline.

Trustee Consolino asked if it's going into decline? She said she will see if they have anything planned and added that she would think that would fall into the open space fund.

Member Turrise asked her to look at the photo of it and Trustee Consolino said that it's been in decline for some time.

Member Turrise said he attended a meeting with Supervisor Steve Balich himself was concerned. It's a historical building and it was going in to the declined. He would like to see it moved to another location. They don't have the expertise or people to keep it in the state that it should be. He was concerned about it and I was wondering what is being done about this historical building. It should be concerned.

Trustee Consolino said that it is there jurisdiction and their property. Member Turrise said that as a concerned citizen, he thought it is part of the Environment Committee to look at this sort of thing but didn't want to step on anyone's toes. All of us are concerned, this is an historical landmark and we want to preserve it.

Trustee Consolino said she wanted to know if there are any plans with touching it, with all the activity, said absolutely not, it's an historical landmark and they will treat it as such. The committee discussed which parts of the barn are weathering

Trustee Consolino urged Member Turrise to attend Township meetings to provide comments to Board. We don't want to see anything happen to the barn. They discussed the annexation of Trantina Farm and Staff Udarbe said she would look into it. Staff King said she recalled it to be this calendar year.

Chair Consolino asked Trustee Steilen if her committee had discussed Trantina. Trustee Steilen said that they have not since they only had one meeting but they have expressed concerns with losing the "Community and Nature in Harmony" and she explained the history of the rebranding and how it is just now only in the seal. The committee members discussed his slogan. Chair Consolino asked if they would bring this before the Board, and Trustee Steilen said they could. Trustee Consolino said this may be a good discussion at the board level.

9. Announcements/Committee Member Communication

Member Perveiler wanted to give the committee an update on the garden walk and said it was no coincidence that we have four (4) of the garden walks on the Community and Nature in Harmony Award list. She said they like seeing variety and they don't need to see anything too flashy. She also added that the Annunciation Byzantine church allowed them to use their property for check in and have acres of beautiful prairie, too. She said the Cedar Path owner raffled off a \$300 Japanese Maple.

Member Panelli discussed the inflation reduction act with the committee. Last summer, the inflection reduction act was passed. This federal government program makes \$38 billion available a year for the next 10 years. For a variety of things including forestry programs, climate smart agriculture, consumer home energy rebates, biofuel, nuclear, carbon capture, a whole basket of thing. The purpose is for our residents – he did research and not a lot of people know about this. He said each resident in the Village has up to \$14,000 worth in tax credits. He passed out an information document. He said there is a planner on the back and for example, he replaces his air conditioner with a heat pump that meets the energy standards and he

will get a \$2000 tax credit for the 2024 taxes. He explained there are many different ways they can map it out over 10 years to get all of the available tax credits. He said there can be a service they can provide, since it is an environmental mission, when people take advantage of this, they typically replace fossil fuels with electricity supported by clean energy. Reduce air pollution and climate change is related to the fossil fuel use. Also, energy efficiency, there are tips for weatherizing your home. Or if they decide to get an electric car, there are funds for that. He suggest they look into it and generate idea on how they can educate people in the village to this legislation so they can more easily take advantage of it, website or other mechanisms, so people can take advantage of this. They should consider this and come back with ideas for the next meeting.

Member Chiappetta told the committee about his savings and his progress and explained its really more of a refund. Member Panelli said there are also probably state incentives but this is just federal. The committee discussed the program more and Member Chiappetta's experience. He said he shared info and bills with his friends to get them into it too.

Chair Consolino asked Staff King if Community Solar was still on the website and the committee confirmed that it is. Member Perveiler told the committee that she signed up and that she was very pleased with the smooth process. She added that she is now on a waitlist because she waited too long.

Member Panelli said they can put together some information and kick around ideas for PR in the future. He added they usually do tables and Member Chiappetta agreed and explained that most people run from them. Chair Consolino said that most people just don't like solicitation.

Chair Consolino asked member Turrise if he had anything to add. Member Turrise said that not all makes and models of electric cars are eligible for the program. Member Panelli said there is a fixed list.

Member Turrise also wanted to talk about how they were looking into memorial benches before shelving it. He said he saw the library's bench and said they look really nice and they id they ever look into it again that they should look ay the library. Chair Consolino asked what the last quote was that they received. Staff Udarbe said Touch of Green quoted around \$6,000 plus for full installation. Chair Consolino said it is not for lack of wanting, but the cost were astronomical.

10. Adjournment/ Committee Members Communication.

Chair Consolino thanks Trustee Steilen for coming and Trustee Steilen thanks the committee for allowing her to be part of the conversation. Member Perveiler motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 pm and Member Turrise seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted:



Taylor Udarbe
Assistant Planner