

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING
LOREN NAGY, CHAIRMAN
MAY 12, 2022**

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Chair. Nagy at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Kathleen Brens, Angela Churchill, Tom Galante, Heather Goudreau, Lee Haggas, Laura Miller Hill, Suzi Myers, Chair. Loren Nagy, Pam Otto, Michael Stroud; Student Comms. Callie Ramirez, Deetya Solanki.

Absent: Comm. Ryan Johnson; Student Comms. Morrighan Hayes, Daniella Taylor.

City Staff Present: Marcelline D'Argento, Victor Pierce, AJ Reineking.

Visitors Present: Jim LaPorta.

3. Minutes Review and Approval

Motion to approve and place into the public record the minutes of the April 13, 2022 Natural Resources Commission [NRC] meeting. Motion by Comm. Brens, second by Comm. Churchill to approve the minutes. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:03 p.m.

4. Old Business

A. Arbor Day Recap

Chair. Nagy noted the Arbor Day celebration and clean-up event went well. Comm. Otto agreed and commented that overall Pottawatomie Park was quieter than Lincoln Park due to the traffic on Main Street. The Commissioners complimented Student Comms. Hayes and Ramirez on their speeches at the event. Additionally, Comms. Haggas and Myers noted the tree planting at Wredling Middle School went well with the principal, staff and students actively participating in the tree planting and ceremony. Principal Loversky invited the NRC to plant more trees at Wredling Middle School in the future.

5. New Business

A. Pear Trees

Comm. Goudreau reported on a resident's inquiry she received via the NRC's Facebook page regarding Bartlett Pear trees. The resident asked if Bartlett Pear trees had been banned and if the city is still planting these types of trees. Chair. Nagy commented that these trees have not been banned, but the city no longer plants Pear trees in parkways and the trees are not recommended for private planting. The resident also inquired if Illinois has a bounty on Pear trees as some other states have implemented. Chair. Nagy responded this is not being done in Illinois. Comm. Churchill suggested including a link on the NRC's Facebook page to a recent talk and video done by Wasco Nursery regarding Pear trees.

Comm. Goudreau stated the resident also asked if only trees native to Illinois are planted by the city in parkways. Chair. Nagy noted the city's Urban Forestry Management Plan does include some non-native trees, however, some native species, such as the Black Walnut, are not appropriate for planting in parkways. Comm. Otto noted some non-native species to Illinois are preferred for planting in parkways based on certain characteristics.

Additionally, the resident inquired about the annual prescribed burn in the Williams Wetland in the Hunt Club area. The burn is done by the St. Charles Park District, not the city.

6. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee

Comm. Myers reported on an initiative between the organizations, Everything Birds and Dark Skies, in support of nocturnal migratory birds. Comm. Myers noted over 4 million birds flew over Kane County on May 11th, however, lighting continues to be a concern impacting navigation of migratory birds. Comm. Myers suggested the NRC could promote having residents turn lights off and the city could participate by turning the lights off at City Hall, for example, to raise awareness of this issue during the fall bird migrations. Comm. Myers circulated a copy of the children's book *Lights Out*, and will forward the link to the Birdcast Migration Dashboard to city staff for distribution to the rest of the Commission.

Additionally, Comm. Myers shared information regarding stickers to be placed on paper towel dispensers in restrooms to conserve paper. The stickers state: "*Remember... These Come From Trees. This sticker will save up to 100 pounds of paper every year.*" Comm. Myers proposed distributing the stickers to local businesses, city buildings, and other locations as a reminder for people to discontinue excess use of paper towels. Comm. Otto noted the Park District's Hickory Knolls location is LEED certified [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] and required hand dryers to be installed in restrooms. However, during the COVID pandemic the hand dryers had to be replaced with paper towels to mitigate aerial spread of the virus. Comm. Otto will place the stickers on the paper towel dispensers at Hickory Knolls and Pottawatomie Park. Comm. Myers suggested having the city order the stickers from: [TheseComeFromTrees.com](https://www.theseComeFromTrees.com).

B. Langum Woods Clean-Up Committee

Comm. Otto reported there are no clean-ups scheduled at this time. Comm. Otto updated the NRC on former Comm. Jon Duerr's plant survey, and reported he had found a rare type of Trillium plant growing in the woods. Mr. Duerr is continuing his plant survey, and when it's completed, he will prepare a report that will be available for the NRC's use.

C. Community Sustainability Committee

Comm. Goudreau reported she is planning ahead for the holiday lights collection later this year. The St. Charles Police Department was considered as a drop off location, but due to the Police Department's safety restrictions on the type of containers that could be used at the station, that location is not feasible. Other possible drop off locations may be the St. Charles Public Library, various Park District locations and the Public Works Department. Comm. Brens volunteered to collect lights again.

D. Single-Use Bag Committee

Chair. Nagy reported a presentation and ordinance are being finalized regarding single-use bags. Comm. Nagy reported Kane County, Aurora and Elgin are considering ordinances as well. Comm. Nagy stated the committee's current proposal allocates funds collected from single-use bag sales as follows: 4¢ to the city, 4¢ to the retailer and 2¢ to the county. Comm. Brens noted the Kiwanis Club hosts regular plastic bag collections to recycle the bags into benches. Chair. Nagy reported the results of the recent single-use plastics survey indicated support to limit disposable plastic straws and tableware, which could be provided by retailers upon request only.

E. Greenest Region Compact Committee

Chair. Nagy noted progress on the Greenest Region Compact [GRC] was needed, and that all members of the NRC should be participating on one of the sub-committees. Comm. Otto noted the St. Charles Breakfast Rotary Club was installing a monarch way station at Hickory Knolls Center. Comm. Myers noted during a recent GRC Metropolitan Mayors Caucus there was a discussion regarding the region's bicycle and pedestrian paths, and that new connections can be made to existing walking/biking paths, trails and public transportation. Comm. Miller Hill stated she will work on the application for the city's Bicycle Friendly Community designation. Mr. Reineking stated funds are included in the Public Works Engineering budget this year for a study on the bike-ability and walk-ability of current path systems and their potential to be interconnected. Opportunities to enhance bike lanes and walking paths will be incorporated into the city's road programs going forward. Comms. Myers and Miller Hill noted these city projects would fulfill sections of the GRC.

F. Urban Forestry Management Plan Review Committee

None.

7. Communications – Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports

Motion to approve and place into the public record the Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports for the month of April 2022. Motion by Comm. Churchill, second by Comm. Brens to approve the reports. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:51 p.m.

8. Public Comment

Mr. Jim LaPorta, an area resident, was present to discuss the NRC's single-use bag initiative with the Commission. Mr. LaPorta's overall concerns involved: the impact of a 10¢ per bag fee on individuals and families with limited incomes at a time when the costs of food, gasoline, etc. are rising; the potential for bacterial contamination from animal products placed in reusable bags; banning plastic bags will not solve the problem of pollution caused by plastics; and residents should be offered an alternative to using plastic bags. Mr. LaPorta stated there are facilities in other parts of the country that convert plastic waste into energy. Chair. Nagy explained the NRC's position on the goal of reducing the use of single-use plastic bags, not to generate revenue, but having the city grandfathered with regarding to fee collection and retention versus retention of fees by the state of Illinois. Chair. Nagy stated studies have shown the reduction in use of plastic bags is more effective when a fee is charged than when cities have attempted to ban the bags. Additionally, there are exemptions for meat products and prescription drugs. Chair. Nagy noted any fees associated with the use of single-use bags are avoidable with the use of reusable bags. Comm. Stroud acknowledged Mr. LaPorta's concern regarding potential financial hardship for some residents, and noted in other parts of the country where single-use bags have been eliminated, it has become acceptable and normal for residents to shop only with reusable bags. Comm. Stroud questioned if the fees could be waived for residents paying with food stamps. Chair. Nagy thanked Mr. LaPorta for his interest and input, and thanked him for attending the meeting.

9. Additional Items

A. Commissioners

Comm. Myers informed city staff that the Kane County Wild Ones, a local organization that promotes native plants, plans to submit a proposal to the city for a natural garden on city property. The garden would be planted and maintained by the organization.

Chair. Nagy acknowledged Comm. Otto's educational appearances on WGN-TV morning news. Comm. Otto noted she has an upcoming presentation on the news regarding "one of these things is not like the others" to discuss some of the items found in St. Charles parks that

don't belong there. During another presentation Comm. Otto explained she had made "animal scat" chocolate cookies as part of her educational talk. Comm. Myers noted Comm. Otto's other contributions including her nature articles in the Kane County Connects newsletter and her weekly zoom-cast, Good Natured Hour.

B. City Staff

Mr. Reineking introduced Victor Pierce, the department's new Public Services Division Manager.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Comm. Brens, second by Comm. Otto to adjourn the meeting. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 8:23 p.m.