

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST. CHARLES  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING  
RALPH GRATHOFF, CHAIRMAN  
FEBRUARY 13, 2020**

**Members Present:** Kathy Brens, Tom Galante, Heather Goudreau, Ralph Grathoff, Ryan Johnson, Jillian Leturno, Suzi Myers, Loren Nagy, Claire Norman, Pam Otto

**Members Absent:** Andrew Diorio, Caroline Wilfong

**Others Present:** Chris Adesso, Marcelline D'Argento, AJ Reineking

**Visitors Present:** Nancy Hannah

**1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was convened by Chair. Grathoff at 7:02 p.m.

**2. Introduction of Visitors, Comments and Concerns**

Ms. Hannah was in attendance as a private citizen and resident of St. Charles in support of the Natural Resources Commission [NRC].

**3. Minutes Review and Approval**

Motion to approve and place into the public record the minutes of the January 9, 2020 NRC meeting. Motion by Comm. Nagy, second by Comm. Brens to approve the minutes. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:03 p.m.

**4. Old Business**

**A. Greenest Region Compact II**

City staff has completed sections of the GRC framework to reflect city programs, policies, infrastructure, etc. that are planned for, in progress or already in place. The GRC framework categories completed by staff are: mobility, municipal operations, sustainable communities and water. The city's Electric Division, Environmental Services Division and Community & Economic Development Department will also complete sections of the GRC framework document. Chair. Grathoff stated the NRC will begin its review of the document after the city has completed its items.

**B. Curbside Composting**

Chair. Grathoff requested information from city staff regarding the next steps for curbside composting. Mr. Adesso explained Lakeshore Recycling Services [LRS] is working with the city's Communications Division Manager to develop promotional materials and a notification to customers to be included with their LRS bills. Comm. Goudreau reported an article will be featured in the March issue of *The Den*, and an informational meeting for the community is scheduled for March 12, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. with the NRC and LRS in the Public Works training room. Additionally, information will be posted on the NRC's Facebook page and via a press release in the *Kane County Chronicle*.

**5. New Business**

**A. St. Patrick's Day Parade**

Comm. Otto reported that America in Bloom - St. Charles will not be participating in the parade [please see 5.F. below].

## **B. Single-Use Plastic Bags**

Chair. Grathoff followed-up on the discussion from the January 2020 NRC meeting regarding the formation of a new NRC committee focused on the topic of single-use bags. Comm. Brenns reported on a Kiwanis Club project that involves making benches from plastic bags. Comm. Myers reported did a “personal survey” on single-use bags, and reported 99% of the people she spoke with support a five-cent fee on single-use bags to encourage residents to use reusable bags instead. Student Comm. Leturno reported many of the students she spoke with did not initially support a fee for single-use bags; however, after she explained why there would be a fee, students supported the initiative. Chair. Grathoff confirmed the interest of the Student Commissioners in forming a new NRC committee to focus on this issue; they responded affirmatively. Chair. Grathoff requested a formal motion.

Motion to approve the formation a new NRC Committee focused on single-use bags. Motion by Comm. Galante, second by Comm. Myers to approve the formation of a new NRC Committee. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:20 p.m.

Chair. Grathoff, Comm. Goudreau and Comm. Nagy suggested next steps would include: defining the Committee’s goals with regard to reducing the use of single-use bags, obtaining community support possibly via petitions, researching the state of Illinois’ progress on this issue and coordinating with the cities of Batavia and Geneva.

Mr. Adesso suggested if the NRC were to go forward with a recommendation to the city regarding reducing the use of single-use bags, the first steps would not include collecting signatures from residents in favor of this initiative, but rather making an informational presentation to the city’s Government Services Committee [GSC] prior to recommending further action. Additionally, Mr. Adesso noted if a single-use bag fee is implemented, an amendment the City Code would be necessary and decisions would have to be made as to how the revenue generated from a bag fee would be allocated, among other considerations. Mr. Adesso suggested that the Student Commissioners attend and observe a GSC meeting prior to planning for and making a presentation to share information on any topic, including the bag fee.

Comm. Otto noted a bag fee of \$0.07 per bags was successfully implemented in Chicago after a bag ban proved unsuccessful. Comm. Otto explained research on consumer psychology indicates the negative perception of having to spend \$0.07 per bag was a greater incentive to shop with re-usable bags than the perceived benefit of saving \$0.07 per bag. Comm. Otto stated in Chicago the proceeds from the bag fee are allocated with \$0.05 going to the city and \$0.02 to the retailers.

Chair. Grathoff stated he would contact the Batavia Environmental Commission to inform them of the NRC’s single-use bag initiative. Comms. Churchill and Nagy volunteered to serve on the new Single-Use Bag Committee with Student Comms. Leturno and Norman [the provisions of the Open Meetings Act will not be compromised as only two voting members of the NRC will be on this committee].

## **C. Wine, Cheese & Trees**

Comm. Goudreau reported a resident had contacted her regarding a fundraising event hosted by the Geneva Natural Resources Committee, “Wine, Cheese & Trees.” Proceeds from this event are used to plant trees in Geneva. Perhaps the NRC would consider a similar event if there was a special project the NRC was interested in doing that was not funded by the city, for example.

Comm. Goudreau acknowledged the financial support the NRC has received from the city for its initiatives such as storm drain markers.

**D. Pollinator Habitat Grant**

Comm. Goudreau reported a resident had shared information with her regarding grant funding available for monarch butterfly and pollinator habitats. Comm. Goudreau recognized former Comm. Ray Hauser's interest in supporting monarch populations. Perhaps the NRC would be interested in securing a monarch grant. Ms. D'Argento will forward the links to the grant information to the NRC via email.

**E. Earth Hour**

Comm. Goudreau reported a resident had contacted her via the NRC's Facebook page regarding St. Charles' participation in Earth Hour. Comm. Goudreau explained that Earth Hour is an annual worldwide event with involvement by many large cities, not just grassroots interest. Earth Hour 2020 will be observed on March 28th at 8:30 p.m. The focus of the event is to have people turn off everything [lights, TVs, phones, etc.] for one hour for the purpose of raising awareness for positive environmental change. Comm. Goudreau stated she would be interested in promoting St. Charles' participation in Earth Hour in 2021. Mr. Adesso stated support from the City Council would be needed to have city staff turn off public lighting at locations such as the municipal tower, lights at city hall, etc. Comm. Goudreau stated she would like to introduce this event to the City Council in advance of next year's Earth Hour. Mr. Adesso suggested that the NRC write an information-only memo to the GSC for the March 2020 meeting.

Comm. Otto suggested inviting the local business community to participate in Earth Hour. Possibilities include having lights go dark on Main Street store fronts, bar/restaurant lights and the Arcada Theater marquee. Comm. Goudreau noted Earth Hour could become a downtown St. Charles event as it is in many other cities.

Comm. Myers introduced a motion to request a resolution from the GSC regarding the city's participation in Earth Hour 2021. Motion by Comm. Myers, second by Comm. Nagy to request an Earth Hour resolution. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:54 p.m.

**F. America in Bloom**

Comm. Otto reported the city will no longer compete in American in Bloom [AIB], having won the national competition and hosted the annual AIB symposium. Some key members of the city's AIB committee have retired, and overall the city will be less involved with AIB including discontinuing participation in Arbor Day. Perhaps some of AIB's activities could be absorbed by the NRC such as the 1st Street Plaza pumpkin display and holiday lights recycling program.

**6. Arbor Day**

As noted above, AIB will not participate in Arbor Day this year. Comm. Otto reported she has not been able to find a teacher/school with the curriculum tie-in to Arbor Day or teacher(s) that are willing to have their students participate. Comm. Myers expressed her thoughts on continuing Arbor Day at Lincoln Park [versus relocating the event to Mt. St. Mary Park]. Comm. Myers acknowledged attendance at Arbor Day has decreased and often teachers don't have time to commit their students to an event outside of school. Comm. Otto stated based on the central focus of Arbor Day, which is trees, perhaps the annual school tree planting with students and teachers could be the Arbor Day event. Comm. Goudreau noted permission would likely be required in

order to have the general public attend a tree planting on school property; she also suggested having the event at the Friday weekly farmers market if its back outside by April 24th. Comm. Otto suggested having the Arbor Day event be a tree planting ceremony in Lincoln Park and inviting the pre-school students and teachers from St. Patrick School since it is located directly adjacent to the park. Chair. Grathoff asked if anyone had reached out to St. Patrick School, and Comm. Otto responded that preliminary contact had been made and the school principal was open to have the students participate. Chair. Grathoff asked if the Mayor would still attend and read the Proclamation and if the event would be held for approximately an hour, as usual. Comm. Otto suggested having the St. Patrick's students participate in a mid-morning tree planting ceremony rather than the usual speeches, raffle, etc.; the public would also be invited. Ms. D'Argento explained a tree planting and Arbor Day Proclamation are the only criteria required to fulfill the city's continued Tree City USA status. Chair. Grathoff confirmed the change in location and program for Arbor Day 2020 – no opposition was voiced by any of the NRC Commissioners. The decision to present an Arbor Day stewardship award will be discussed at the March NRC meeting.

**7. Committee Reports**

**A. Education Committee**

None.

**B. Langum Woods Clean-Up Committee**

None.

**C. New Committee**

None.

**8. Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports January 2020**

Motion to approve and place into the public record the Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports for the month of January 2020. Motion by Comm. Nagy, second by Comm. Myers to approve the reports. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 8:17 p.m.

**9. Additional Items**

**A. Commissioners**

Comm. Goudreau reported she had received an inquiry from a resident concerning mosquito spraying. The concern was if mosquito spraying would impact her bat house. Mr. Reineking suggested having the resident contact Clark Environmental, the city's mosquito control contractor.

Comm. Brens informed the NRC of various community events.

**B. City Staff**

None.

**C. Visitors**

None.

**D. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Comm. Myers, second by Comm. Nagy to adjourn the meeting. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 8:25 p.m.