



Village of Winnetka

Environmental and Forestry Commission Meeting

March 13, 2024 at 7:00 PM
Winnetka Village Hall Council Chambers - 510
Green Bay Road

AGENDA

- 1. Introduction & Chair's Remarks**
- 2. Public Comments**
- 3. Review and Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Approval of the January 10, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes
- 4. Old Business Updates**
 - a. Sustainability Coordinator Update
 - b. Sourcing Communications Items
- 5. New Business**
- 6. Communications**
 - a. 2024 Green Award Submission
 - b. April Communications Items
 - c. May Communications Items
- 7. Committee/Staff Reports**
- 8. Open Forum**
 - a. Green Bay Trail Proposal
 - b. Commissioner-Led Initiatives
- 9. Adjournment**

NOTICE

All agenda materials are available at villageofwinnetka.org (**Government > Council Information > Agenda Packets & Minutes**); the Reference Desk at the Winnetka Library; or in the Manager's Office at Village Hall (2nd floor). The Village of Winnetka, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requests that all persons with disabilities who require certain accommodations to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting or have questions about the accessibility of the meeting or facilities, contact the Village ADA Coordinator, at 510 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, Illinois 60093, 847-716-3543; T.D.D. 847-501-6041.

**WINNETKA ENVIRONMENTAL AND FORESTRY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 10, 2024**

A record of a legally convened meeting of the Environmental and Forestry Commission of the Village of Winnetka, which was held in the Council Chambers at Village Hall, 510 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, Illinois, Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

Call to Order:

Chair Hanley called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Voting Members present: Commissioners Elizabeth Kunkle, Peter Eck and Tim Ring. A quorum of presently appointed members was present. Village Council Representative present: Robert Dearborn. Student Representative Present: Scarlett Harper. Interim Staff Liaison present: Erik Jensen, Assistant Public Works Director.

1) Introduction & Chair's Remarks:

Chair Hanley welcomed the group and explained that tonight's meeting was to have a discussion on several topics related to urban forestry including hearing from the Friends of the Green Bay Trail and Openlands and to begin conversations about recommending a buckthorn nuisance ordinance.

2) Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

3) Review and Approval of Minutes

a) Approval of the December Regular Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Kunkle, seconded by Commissioner Ring to approve the minutes as presented.

AYES: KUNKLE, ECK, RING, HANLEY.

NAYS: NONE

ABSENT: ANDREW, FREZADOS, VARCA.

4) New Business/Old Business Updates:

a) Presentation by Friends of the Green Bay Trail

From the audience, Mr. Bryan Lammers introduced himself and gave a brief overview of the work of the Friends of the Green Bay Trail organization. He introduced members of the group in attendance and overviewed the group's efforts for trailside restoration along the Green Bay Trail. He further elaborated on the difference between the Friends group and the "Chainsaw Gang" which helps eliminate dead wood along the trail.

Mr. Lammers discussed the Friends group's desire to remove and replace the invasive species along the slopes of the trail with native plantings. He explained some of the factors that would need to be considered including working with neighboring residential properties. He briefly overviewed the group's current proposal which would be to complete a demonstration plot along the trail.

A brief conversation followed on the challenges posed specifically by the steep slopes along the trail.

Chair Hanley noted that he had also asked for Openlands, an open space preservation nonprofit, to speak briefly tonight on some of their programs.

From the audience, Mr. Hector Carrasquillo spoke about Openlands and specifically their Treekeeper program. He explained that Openlands could assist with education initiatives. He passed out materials for the Commission and stated Openlands would be very open to working with Friends of the Green Bay Trail.

A conversation followed buckthorn mitigation, both along the trail and in the Village. Mr. Lammers briefly discussed the Illinois Exotic Weeds Act, and the power for municipalities to regulate buckthorn within their jurisdictions. A conversation followed on whether other municipalities had passed any regulations as a result. Ultimately, Chair Hanley stated the Commission could complete a more thorough review of a potential ordinance recommendation later in the year.

Chair Hanley returned to the question of the Friends' proposal for a demonstration plot and stated that was the most likely path forward.

Representative Dearborn explained that the charge to the Commission was to propose a plan and develop a program in accordance with the Green Bay Trail plan.

A conversation followed on how to proceed at the given time. Representative Dearborn suggested appointing a point person for the conceptual plan side of the proposal. Ultimately, Chair Hanley stated that a draft proposal would be brought forward for additional consideration.

5) Communications:

A conversation was held on the Communications items for February. A brief discussion of potential candidates for the Green Awards was held.

6) Commission/Staff Reports:

None.

7) **Open Forum:**

Chair Hanley asked if there were any updates for that evening from individual Commissioners' initiatives. There were none.

8) **Adjournment:**

There being no further business, Chair Hanley asked for a motion to adjourn which was moved by Commissioner Kunkle and seconded by Commissioner Ring. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote; the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

DRAFT

April 2024 EFC Communications Content

1. Compost Available at Village Yards

E-Winnetka Newsletter

The Village offers free leaf-based compost material to residents beginning in Spring. Residents are welcome to pick up compost at the Public Works Facility located at 1390 Willow Road between 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on weekdays. Residents are asked to supply their own container or bucket. Residents should call in advance to ensure there is an ample supply available.

2. Phosphorus Ordinance

E-Winnetka Newsletter

As a measure to protect water quality by reducing phosphorus runoff, the Village developed an ordinance banning the use of phosphorus-containing fertilizers within the Village. State law already prohibits the application of phosphorus-containing fertilizers by commercial applicators. The Village's ordinance complements the state law and allows exceptions for the Park District and residents when phosphorus doesn't naturally occur at high enough levels, is otherwise low, and for newly sodded or seeded lawns.

While phosphorus is an essential nutrient for healthy plant growth, it is already present in efficient levels in our local soils. The application of excess phosphorus degrades water quality by causing excessive growth of algae and other aquatic plants, depleting dissolved oxygen and reducing biodiversity. Because residents are no longer permitted to use phosphorus-containing fertilizers, phosphorus-free and organic fertilizers are an effective alternative that can be found at most hardware stores. If you have any questions, please contact the Public Works Department at 847-716-3568.

3. Earth Day – April 22, 2024 and Arbor Day – April 26, 2024

E-Winnetka Newsletter

Residents are encouraged to celebrate Earth Day on April 22, 2024. Earth Day has become a globally-recognized day dedicated to protecting our environment. First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day is now celebrated in more than 190 countries.

In addition to Earth Day, residents are encouraged to celebrate Arbor Day on April 26, 2024. The Village of Winnetka invites residents to come to the Public Works facility at 1390 Willow Road and

Village Hall at 510 Green Bay Road to obtain FREE tree seedlings. Arbor Day has been celebrated since the tradition first began in 1872 in Nebraska. Seasonal tree information displays along with free tree seedlings will also be available. Today Arbor Day is internationally recognized and celebrated in many countries around the world. Trees provide many social, ecological and economic benefits to our society worldwide. If you have any questions or need an inspection of your own trees, please call the Village Forester at 847-716-3589.

4. Pesticide Alternatives

E-Winnetka Newsletter

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill unwanted insects and pests (often mosquitoes). Often, they have negative effects on lots of other species, including bees, cats, fish, birds and even humans, especially children. There are many reasons not to use pesticides and plenty of alternatives. To keep your yard mosquito free without harming your bees, butterflies, pets and children, you could use safe repellents (be aware that many companies that advertise as organic and safe are not), mosquito repellent plants (such as lavender, marigolds, basil, sage, bee balm, lemongrass and rosemary), screened in porches (which allow outdoor bug free space) and eliminate standing water for mosquitoes to lay eggs. Before you use pesticides, consider what you are using in your yard and how it affects your animals and your neighbors.

May 2024 EFC Communications Content

1. Green Awards Recipients

Summer Winnetka Report & E-Winnetka Newsletter

(TBD after April 16th Village Council Meeting)

2. Stormwater Best Management Practices Guide for Residents

E-Winnetka Newsletter

In 2016, the Environmental and Forestry Commission developed a guide for homeowners of stormwater best management practices. This guide is a resource for homeowners to educate and give practical examples of ways to make properties stormwater-friendly. The recommended stormwater best management practices in this guide are intended to help with stormwater control and may not solve all stormwater problems. This guide can be found on the Village website: <http://www.villageofwinnetka.org/government/boards-and-commissions/environmental-and-forestry-commission/>. If you have any questions, please contact the Public Works Department at 847-716-3568.

3. Environmental and Forestry Commission Recycling Tip - Break Down All Boxes

E-Winnetka Newsletter

Each ton of cardboard recycled saves 46 gallons of oil and 390 kWh of energy. The Village's recycling provider encourages the recycling of cardboard and other paper-based materials. Prepare cardboard for recycling by removing all materials in the box such as plastic wrap, polystyrene, and other packaging materials. Breaking down boxes saves storage space and reduces pick up costs. Keep cardboard dry and free from excessive food waste. Cardboard can get wet and still be recycled, but is more difficult to carry due to the added weight of the water.

4. Environmental and Forestry Commission Recycling Tip – Leave Lids on Plastic Containers

E-Winnetka Newsletter

To remove or not to remove lids when recycling? The Village's recycling provider, Lakeshore Recycling Systems, asks residents to leave caps on plastic bottles and glass jars when recycling. This keeps residual liquids contained and the small lids from clogging the sorting machines. Most plastic bottles are categorized as plastic #2, while their caps are plastic #5.

5. Pesticide Alternatives

E-Winnetka Newsletter

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill unwanted insects and pests (often mosquitoes). Often, they have negative effects on lots of other species, including bees, cats, fish, birds and even humans, especially children. There are many reasons not to use pesticides and plenty of alternatives. To keep your yard mosquito free without harming your bees, butterflies, pets and children, you could use safe repellents (be aware that many companies that advertise as organic and safe are not), mosquito repellent plants (such as lavender, marigolds, basil, sage, bee balm, lemongrass and rosemary), screened in porches (which allow outdoor bug free space) and eliminate standing water for mosquitoes to lay eggs. Before you use pesticides, consider what you are using in your yard and how it affects your animals and your neighbors.

Pilot Program Proposal: Village-led, volunteer-implemented restoration & stewardship of the Green Bay Trail in Winnetka

Pilot proposal: Friends of the Green Bay Trail (“FGBT”), in coordination with the Environmental & Forestry Commission (“EFC”) and Village Forester, propose to restore a demonstration section of the Green Bay Trail with native vegetation and remove invasive buckthorn.

The challenge: Today, the Green Bay Trail is overgrown with invasive plants, in particular, buckthorn. Buckthorn’s shallow root system causes bluff erosion, threatening properties, while its dense foliage and rapid growth prevents restoration of native vegetation.

Purpose: A restoration pilot program would demonstrate the function and appearance of environmental restoration for the Village and community at-large.

- A limited program would test how volunteer stewardship might restore and maintain sections of the Trail, in partnership with the Village Forester, at low-cost to taxpayers.
- Trail restoration would contribute to the statewide goal of buckthorn eradication (identified in the 2023 State Exotic Weed Act).

Proposed site: From Scott Ave., two-thirds down to Hubbard Pl. on the East side of the Trail.

- Proposed site is abutted by two residences, each fenced.
- Proposed site is adjacent to buckthorn-free sections of the trail, making eradication more lasting.



Estimated pilot program cost: \$40,000

- Labor costs are reduced due to volunteer participation in invasives removal, expertise, and stewardship.
- Costs include purchase price of native vegetation at varying height categories and stages of maturity. Plants to be selected in consultation with a volunteer ecologist and volunteer landscape architect. Costs include plant installation and watering.
- Grant funding available from local, county, state, and national restoration organizations.

Timeline: Volunteers are in place to begin work. Volunteer interest is highest in Spring/Summer. Implementation is estimated to take one calendar year for removal of invasives and establishment of natives.

Participants, roles, & stakeholders

- Lead facilitator – FGBT, a 501c3 volunteer organization, would i) draft a detailed landscape plan, including cost estimates via RFPs, to share with the Village. ii) FGBT would coordinate grant writing and fundraising to help share the cost of implementation. iii) FGBT would coordinate volunteers and contractors to implement the pilot program.
- Village coordination – the EFC would liaise with FGBT in program facilitation and coordinate with the Village Forester and Village Council.

VILLAGE OF WINNETKA M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Patrick Hanley, Chair of Environmental & Forestry Commission

FROM: Andrew Lueck, Village Forester

DATE: March 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Green Bay Trail Restoration Proposal

Background

The Friends of the Green Bay Trail, in coordination with the Winnetka Environmental & Forestry Commission has proposed to perform landscape restoration work along a section of the Green Bay Trail in Winnetka. Restoration would include the removal of invasive plants such as buckthorn along the Village-owned slope section of the trail, followed by planting of native vegetation along the slope.

The group proposes performing the restoration work for several reasons. Buckthorn would be removed, as it grows aggressively and provides little benefit to wildlife and can outcompete more beneficial plant species. Planting native and other suitable, non-invasive plants on the trail would have several benefits, including provision of food for wildlife, aesthetics and minimal ongoing maintenance.

The group has proposed a pilot program, where a section of the trail would serve as a demonstration project. The suggested pilot program site is located at Scott Avenue, south to a point about two-thirds of the way to Hubbard Place along the east side of the trail. This site appears to be acceptable as a pilot location, as it contains a moderate amount of invasives and is not directly adjacent to residential properties. There is a concrete walkway and fence located between the project site and residential properties. A portion of the proposed location is outside of the Village of Winnetka. In addition, the UPRR in coordination with Metra has proposed to begin a substantial renovation to the Hubbard Woods Train Station in the near future. Similar to the Elm Street renovation project this work may require the closure or a portion of the trail for construction equipment. The pilot site should also be adjusted to the south slightly so that its borders are entirely within the Village, and the proposed work zone will not fall within the proposed train station project limits. Lessons learned from the pilot project would be applied to future restoration work.

Removal, Planting and Establishment Plan

Before any restoration work can begin, Forestry recommends completion of a thorough analysis by a qualified firm to help determine the current condition of the proposed project area and slope. Such an analysis would include the following:

- Plant material to be removed
- Soil characteristics
- Structural stability of slope
- Engineers Opinion of Probable Costs (EOPC)
- Recommended Maintenance program
- Planting and Establishment Plan
- Alignment with Green Bay Trail Master Plan

As noted above, a planting and establishment plan should also be completed before restoration work begins. It is important that the entire scope of the project be planned and funded prior to commencement of work so that the scope of work can be completed in a defined period. Plants to be selected should be adapted to growing conditions on the slope, including soil nutrients and structure as well as available moisture and sunlight. Native plants should be selected where appropriate, with other plants selected in areas poorly suited for natives. The long-term establishment and maintenance of plantings must also be considered. Plants that do not require frequent, ongoing maintenance should be preferred to reduce Village maintenance costs.

All work should also align with the Village's Green Bay Trail Master Plan. Communication with residents along the trail would need to be performed prior to any work, especially those with properties adjacent to the pilot program site.

Process & Costs

Village staff is recommending that a request for proposal be developed to select a firm to complete the analysis and plan prior to any work commencing. The FY 2024 Village Budget includes \$50,000 towards Green Bay Trail planning efforts. This budget would fund the cost of the firm preparing the analysis and plan and is the only funding available for this year. The cost of planning and restoration is unknown at this time. Actual costs to complete planning and restoration would be obtained through proposals submitted through the RFP. While a cost estimate for the proposed pilot project has been received, the actual costs to complete the planning and restoration would be known and finalized through the RFP process.

The group's proposal suggests grant writing and fundraising efforts to assist in offsetting costs of the project. The group is encouraged to look for outside fundraising sources, but staff is recommending that these applications be delayed until a final EOPC can be developed for this project. With respect to writing grant applications, many applications require the unit of government ultimately responsible for the work be the entity that completes and submits the grant. In addition, further discussions between the Park District and the Village need to occur to prioritize projects for the trail so that the Park District and the Village can collaborate on jointly

submitted grant applications. (such as OSLAD grants – Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Grant program).

Finally, this week, Village staff received notification that a federal grant that had been previously prepared by staff, and submitted to Congressman Schneider is moving forward through the federal budgeting appropriation process. This grant totals \$887,835, which represents 75% of the total preliminarily identified cost of \$1,183,780 for a substantial “Target Demonstration Project.” The grant was developed with assistance from the Lakota Group and is conceptually included in the Green Bay Trail Master Plan. Staff recommends that we should wait to ascertain the outcome of this grant and prioritize our planning efforts towards this project if awarded. If this grant is awarded, which appears likely, the Village’s share of the cost would need to be budgeted in the FY 2025 budget.

The proposal also states that much of the work would be completed by volunteers. This is commendable, but the extent of work to be completed by volunteers versus an outside firm will not be known until the scope of work is finalized through a planning and analysis process. Some of the proposed clearing and removal activities may be outside of the scope of a volunteer groups capabilities, and may require additional safety measures to be completed.

Village Council approval would be required prior to the commencement of the work, given the likely cost and visibility of the project.

Recommendation

A few steps need to be taken before restoration work can begin:

- Site area and goals of pilot project finalized
- A better understanding of the team recommending the pilot program
- RFP issued for analysis, planting and establishment plan
- Funding sources for planning and restoration work finalized

Meanwhile, the volunteer crew that has been removing brush from the slope of the trail is welcome and encouraged to continue this cleanup work throughout the year. The Village has budgeted funds for disposal of brush collected by volunteers in 2024.