

# Glen Ellyn Park District

## Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting Highlights May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Opportunities for Improvement

#### Energy

- Manger Gutmann updated the committee on a solar panel proposal for Spring Avenue Rec Center that would utilize panels on car ports. One side of the parking lot could power the entire building while providing shade to cars. Commissioner Nephew stated Illinois is passing a law that will allow for 20-year contracts for solar. Keriann Dubina asked if the park district had solar panels elsewhere. Commissioner Nephew and Manager Gutmann mentioned Lake Ellyn. Commissioner Nephew added a solar company looked at the potential for solar panels on the roof of Ackerman Sports and Fitness Center.
- Manager Gutmann reported that the lights at the Ackerman hub will be formally evaluated for Dark Skies certification on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### Waste Reduction / Recycling

- Manager Gutmann stated staff recently had discussions about improving the park district's waste / recycling bin system, including consistent bin coloration, bin location, and the potential for new signage on bins. Commissioner Nephew added that the bins with round openings, that are intended to encourage people to insert cans only, do not work. Manager Gutmann mentioned that signage with images of acceptable objects to dispose of in each bin have shown to be effective.
- Manager Gutmann stated the 2022/2023 holiday light recycling program collected 3,483 lbs. of metal, plastic, and glass that were prevented from entering landfills. Stephanie Adams suggested exploring the possibility of two, one-day collection events. Examples she gave included the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Boxing Day. She added that the park district could partner with other park districts and / or municipalities to ensure enough is collected to offset potential pick-up fees from the recycling service. Commissioner Nephew mentioned the Village / Go Green Glen Ellyn's Recycling Extravaganza also takes holiday lights.
- Manager Gutman stated that park district staff have been exploring alternative options for plastic Easter eggs for annual hunts. Commissioner Nephew suggested searching for eggs are made of corn-based material or cardboard. Stephanie Adams suggested repurposing plastic eggs for kids crafts. Manager Gutmann added staff have discussed the possibility of using objects during egg hunts that represent eggs, and then participants collect and exchange for candy. Keriann Dubina stated there are ecofriendly eggs available. Stephanie Adams added that they are biodegradable. Commissioner Nephew suggested exploring the possibility of using fewer plastic eggs. She also proposed the idea of charging an extra \$10 for the program, and then if participants turn in eggs, then they get their \$10 refunded. This incentive would be an attempt to reduce loss of eggs.
- Manager Gutmann stated that park district staff discussed the possibility of sourcing environmentally friendly glitter, since glitter is made of PVC, PET, and aluminum and contributes to microplastics pollution. Keriann Dubina mentioned that she has found environmentally friendly glitter on Amazon, but it is expensive.

- Manager Gutmann reported that the park district has expanded use of green chemicals to preschool rooms.

#### Education / Programmatic

- The group discussed the concept of “No Mow May.” Stephanie Adams suggested the use of buffalo grass because it only reaches 8 inches tall and is native to Illinois. Commissioner Nephew asked how well buffalo grass resists weeds. Others on the committee were uncertain at how effective it was at resisting weeds. Keriann Dubina stated Lombard does a “No Mow Until Mother’s Day” and starts enforcing lawn ordinances the day after Mother’s Day.
- Manager Gutmann stated all the activities that took place during the park district’s Earth Week involved a total of 358 participants. The previous year’s one-day Earth Day event drew 44 participants, although it rained for much of the event.
- Manager Gutmann mentioned nature camps begin in less than 3 weeks.
- Manager Gutmann stated that the park district had been approached to host a native flower swap and the new Johnson Center will have an area dedicated to propagating native plants. Part of this area could be allocated for giveaways to this type of swap, should the district decide to host that type of program.

#### Natural Resources Protection

- Commissioner Nephew asked for an update on the Lake Ellyn oak wilt concern. Stephanie Adams explained how two different rounds of tests could produce different results. She said the type of test and location on the tree where samples were taken can affect test results. Stephanie Adams added that Phytophthora – an organism that causes root rot – is the primary concern at Lake Ellyn. For example, when the sidewalk was constructed along Lenox Road years ago, it stressed the trees around it and reduced soil drainage. Stressed trees are the most vulnerable to Phytophthora. Also, Phytophthora is favored in environments with poor drainage. That is likely the reason the trees around the sidewalk have experienced health problems in recent years. Commissioner Nephew stated the roots of those trees were cut prior to construction and asked if that was the correct action to take. Stephanie Adams confirmed it was, stating that if the roots were not cut then equipment, like front loaders might grab roots and lift the entire trunk. She added the tradeoff of cutting the roots, though, is it inflicts stress on trees, especially older trees. Also, if heavy equipment was allowed to run over root zones of trees, that would’ve further stressed them via soil compaction. Manager Gutmann stated soil compaction is widespread at Lake Ellyn. Stephanie Adams stated she would put Manager Gutmann in contact with the Morton Arboretum’s soil specialist to explore possible testing of Lake Ellyn soil.
- Manager Gutmann reported the park district has entered into a lease agreement with the village for the park district to take over management of Manor Woods and Panfish Park. The park district will begin management activities in 2024. Stephanie Adams offered assistance to evaluate the health of Panfish Park trees.

- Manager Gutmann reported on restoration efforts since the previous meeting. The park district cleared over 3 acres of invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle over the winter and spring. Natural Areas staff are in the process of planting 16 trees in the cleared areas, and these are mostly species of oak. In a Churchill Park cleared area, staff also planted 115 cuttings of native elderberry and some red-osier dogwoods. These plantings will serve as a visual screen along the southwest border of the property and are high-value species for birds. Manager Gutmann added that 6 bur oaks were donated and planted at Maryknoll and will help to expand the oak savanna onsite.
- Manager Gutmann stated that a new bioswale will be installed soon at Lake Ellyn to protect the new shoreline path from runoff.

#### **Committee Comments, Suggestions, and Questions**

None

**End**