

**Consortium of North Shore Environmental Groups Meeting Notes
Building Effective Environmental Groups
March 8, 2016**

Citizens Greener Evanston

Eleanor Revelle: Citizens Greener Evanston is 10 years old (formed in 2008, became 501(c) 3 in 2011). It grew out of Evanston signing onto the Mayor's Agreement on Climate Protection. CGE focuses on greenhouse gas reduction and a climate action plan.

After the signing of the Mayor's agreement, the City Manager did an emissions inventory, and State Rep. Julie Hamos provided state money for a sustainability manager position for 2 years. CGE worked with city staff to create a plan with specific emissions reduction goals. They came up with a 200 step action plan, and presented it to city. They formed task forces to work on renewable energy and electrical aggregation. They were able to get 100% clean energy for their aggregation contract, with residents automatically in the program unless they chose to opt out. By 2013 they had met their target of 13% emissions reduction, and put in place a new goal of 20% reduction by 2016. They expect to meet this goal, and are broadening the discussion to include economic vitality and social justice.

Evanston Environmental Association

Dick Peach: Evanston Environmental Association started in 1975. They wanted to create an ecology center, and raised private funds to build it. They donated the Evanston Ecology Center to the City for environmental education, and worked will with the City. About 4 years ago, the Ecology Center was to be cut from the City budget and EEA stepped in to help. EEA created a three year plan to get operations in the black, and raised money for renovations and an addition to the center that was recently completed. Each year, 900 kids use the programs and camps. All are invited to visit and see the new space. They have free snow shoe rental and canoe rentals. The City says it is an example of perfect public private partnership.

Go Green Wilmette

Saima Abassi: Go Green Wilmette has been very successful at recruiting volunteers, and she shared information on how they accomplish this. They have many events – Going Green Matters, Alternative Yard Tour, Tree Walks, etc – that keep volunteers engaged throughout the year. Keeping people involved and making them feel connected is a large part of their success. Boy Scouts have been an asset. Alternative Yard Tour helps build a network of engaged people. There are social opportunities throughout the year. Meetings weren't popular, so they began to offer activities instead (Get out and play). Their events are always free,

and they look for opportunities to tap into established community groups.

Beth Drucker: One key to engaging volunteers is to help build relationships that sustain people. Keep things positive and fun. People like activities and social events more than meetings. Keep the chatter going on social media.

Go Green Northbrook

Doug Gerleman: He was a Northbrook Commissioner and head of the Bicycle Task Force. Those governmental agencies were making progress until change of leadership. When that happened, Doug decided to start Go Green Northbrook.

Doug went to a village event for Earth Day and got 50 people to sign up. They now have 450 on the newsletter list. Engaging people is always hard. Their quarterly briefings were not too popular. They have tried lots of things. They will do a program if there's a volunteer who is interested. Some of their programs include:

RUBI (ReUsable Bag Initiative): GGN created window stickers to remind people to bring their own bags, and worked with Sunset Foods on this program.

Home Energy Audits with Elevate Energy: They had 5 house parties, but rebates disappeared so that program is on hold.

Bicycle Trail by Techny – Worked to create a new bike trail. Petition presented two years ago but nothing has happened. Once worked with individual trustees but now presenting to the entire board.

Library programming – They have a very popular and successful partnership, including Green Scene movies and other educational programs. The next program is Weird Weather on March 21, 7pm featuring Joel Stauber.

They want to offer free yard inspections to help people understand how they can contribute to storm water management, they are looking at starting composting, and are encouraging people to call legislators to oppose the DARK Act (stops mandatory labeling of GMO food).

GGN focuses on the issues that people are interested in, but if key people move on, it is hard to continue. The important thing is to get together a group with good ideas that they can try together.

Go Green Park Ridge

Amy Bartucci: Go Green Park Ridge began in 2012 when Amy moved to Park Ridge and wanted to find like-minded people. The group started as an

intergovernmental group, with representation from different local governments, but that didn't work well and it transitioned to a citizen group. It has taken a long time to find a core group. They needed to create relationships with each other and build trust first. Now they have 4 active sub groups that focus on various topics that they are most interested in.

Amy has recognized that she is the woodpecker – persistent and willing to take stands. The city now knows that they are not going away. They have had to build relationships with the village – and they are making progress. Three members just joined the Health Commission that is expanding to work on Environmental issues, and Amy has a contact on the city council.

Some recent successes include Green Drinks – a successful monthly social meet up, the City shared a survey on their website to find out what people are interested in, and they have been mentoring a high school student.

They reduce goals and agendas over the summer to give everyone a break and get refreshed.

Go Green Winnetka

Liz Kunkle got very involved with the school environmental committee and then someone suggested that she take her efforts community wide. She got in touch with stakeholders at the Library's green fair, including the Park District and Village. Then she began to form a citizen's group for Winnetka and Northfield (they share a Library district, so the combination made sense). Her focus is waste, recycling, and composting. She has made huge strides, and makes it up as she goes. She had couple hundred people on the mailing list, but wasn't successful at getting people to attend meetings. She liked making progress directly and informally, not serving on committees. She worked hard on the education piece, and created a set of guidelines that the Village has posted on their website. She's hoping the Village will start adding green tips to their email blasts.

She has recently separated from Northfield, and is focusing her efforts on Winnetka, while also trying to find people to build Go Green Northfield. Liz invited 10 contacts to meet and they were able to develop a board.

Go Green Glencoe

Laurie Morse suggested scheduling walking meetings to visit what is special in your community. It's also easy to get people to attend clean ups and beach sweeps.

Kevin Harvey reported that he is President of Go Green Glencoe, and they have applied for 501c3 status. He is not a lawyer. He wanted GGG to be more effective,

and wanted more structure. It's not that difficult to become a non-profit. We would all qualify for the 1023 EZ form which fast-tracks the process. It can take less than 6 months with the fast track.

GGG also got help from a student through the Loyola Business School Clinic, which was a great resource. To begin, you have to write your by-laws. Don't start from scratch on bylaws – borrow from others (he will share Go Green Glencoe's). The process forces you to define yourselves, and also requires a Board of at least 3 members, regular meetings and minutes.

You must follow the steps in the proper order to become a non profit: 1) get a lawyer, 2) incorporate the organization, 3) apply for tax exempt status (costs \$400), 4) register with Illinois Attorney General.

The benefits of non profit status are that donations are tax deductible and you can apply for grants. You need money for websites, communications and programs. It's hard to get donations without 501c3 status. It helps you build capacity.

You can also make purchases without paying sales tax if you register for Illinois Sales Tax exemption. This is free, but Illinois is making it harder to qualify.

Once you become a 501c3, you need to fill out state tax forms. This is not difficult or costly. You can also serve as a fiscal agent for other groups that don't have non profit status, enabling them to receive tax deductible donations. You should set up a bank account at a local bank, and consider a debit card.

Forefront (formerly Donors Forum) provides resources for non-profits. Go here to see what they offer: <https://myforefront.org/events/nonprofits>

Join the local Chamber of Commerce and/or Rotary Club to get your message to local business people.

Amazon Smile Program donates to non profits when people shop. Your supporters go to Amazon smile, designate you as their non-profit and Amazon donates a percentage of the sale to your group. I-Give is a similar program. If you register through GrassRoots.org offers free web hosting and Tech Soup offers reduced rates on software for non profits. Charity Miles provides donations when people walk and log in to the app.

Highland Park:

Just Eat it, a film about food waste, is showing at the HP Library on April 18 at 7 pm.

The NS Electric Aggregation Consortium is reviewing proposals for energy efficiency and renewable energy services for residents.

All electronics recycling programs in Lake County are closing as of May 1. Value of materials has dropped and state requirement for manufacturers to pay for recycling of their products has been reduced. This requires a state-level fix.

Merchants of Doubt – two showings. Climate deniers ADD information about it.

Commented [KS1]: Who mentioned this?

Friends of the Green Bay Trail - Work day at Turnbull Woods March 12th

Go Green Highland Park – Trying to reduce straws being provided automatically in restaurants. Also working on anti-idling.

Lake Forest – School districts are considering an anti-idling campaign in partnership with Forest Bluff Green Minds.

Skokie - April 10 Spring Greening Event at Niles North High School.

Riverwoods - Did water testing on the river, and found high levels of pollutants including phosphorous. Looking for others along the Chicago River North Branch to work with them on this. *A meeting will be held on April 18 at 9 am at Arriva Dolce in Highland Park for those interested in discussing this.

Go Green Glencoe: Native Plant Sale with Wilmette. Looking at Transit Oriented Design.

Go Green Lincolnshire – Liz Treiber hopes to start a GGL.

Forest Bluff Green Minds - Lake Bluff has established a governmental commission. End of school supplies collection.

Mettawa: Nancy Stevenson wants to establish Go Green Mettawa. Eleanor Revelle and Beth Drucker spoke at the Stevenson Center.

We need a website for CONSEG – simple with links to all the other groups.

We should set up a Facebook – Closed page.