



January 9, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Hello! Thank you to all who attended our meeting on Working Towards Sustainability: Engaging municipalities, citizens and local organizations. Below are the notes from that meeting.

Remember to check our [website](#) for upcoming events and information, and to post your events and topics to the site.

2018 Go Green Illinois Meetings:

Please mark your calendar for our 2018 meetings: March 13, May 8, July 10, September 11 and November 13. All meetings are held at the Chicago Botanic Gardens from 1 - 3 pm. If you have an idea for a meeting topic or speaker, or would like to help organize one of our future meetings, please contact [Beth](#). Thank you to Chicago Botanic Gardens for continuing to host our meetings in 2018!

Go Green Illinois Meeting Notes: January 9, 2018

DOUG GERLEMAN– Go Green Northbrook - Sustainability Planning

Doug stresses the need for grassroots organizations to put pressure on their village/trustees or municipality to get them active to a) create a sustainability plan and b) follow through with the actions in it. Go to meetings and talk to people, maybe the press, environmental commission.

The Northbrook Strategic Sustainability Plan was adopted in Nov 2013. It was put on the shelf, and recommended actions were not completed. Doug tried for 2.5 years with no results. He then summarized the sections of the Plan. GG Northbrook has been successful getting some of its members onto Northbrook environmental commission.

They had some success in transportation as the Village did implement “traffic calming” to decrease speed by making lanes narrower. The Village just hired a transportation engineer to update the bicycle plan, there are plans to expand the bike lanes and bike priority systems. There is also a Lake Cook Transportation Management Association (TMA) that could be a useful partner. For example, they could set up a system to put carpools in place, or reformat Northbrook Court to hook it into good transit access.

Doug submitted a green infrastructure proposal using trees and shrubs that are much more effective at soaking up water. They have an education program for Pest control and fertilizer, also very important.

KUMAR JENSEN– **Evanston** Sustainability Coordinator

History – Evanston has had a staff person paid by the city for a decade which is a distinguishing factor. Helps by committing to plans/policies, responding to residents concerns. Evanston has never had a sustainability plan, but do have a Climate Action Plan (CAP) which is undergoing its 3rd iteration.

Community priority from 2006-9 was to focus on climate action and reducing carbon emissions. The early work was focused specifically on what their goals would be specific to Climate Change. The Mayor recently created an advisory group called Climate Action and Resilience Plan Working Group (CARP) with a specific charge defined by mayor's commitments. The Group will make a recommendation to City Council.

A Sustainability Plan can be helpful in providing goals, but there must be ownership of the Plan within that municipality, and it should be inclusive of the needs and concerns of the community. Strategies can also be articulated without using sustainability terms in order to get the attention of different people.

Evanston has a municipal electricity aggregation program in which the city negotiates price of electricity for residents. They have been able to procure 100% renewable energy for residents through the program. The price was competitive, so City Council was supportive. Advocates must talk about *all the benefits* of that program. Price is only one part, and the one that they pay most attention to.

Understand their perspective, i.e. why bike lanes can be a pain. Find opportunities to change the messenger and change the message that you are sending. It can be relieving to those who feel like they always have to say no. Find opportunity to get a win even if it's small.

CURT VOLKMANN– Lake Forest – Chair, Lake Forest Collaborative for Environmental Leadership (LFCEL)

Volunteer group including representatives from city staff, both school districts, LF college, and LF Open Lands. 5 years old.

They created the City Sustainability Plan in 2016. Access the plan here:

https://www.cityoflakeforest.com/assets/1/7/Lake_Forest_Sustainability_Plan_September_9_2016_Plan_Commission-Final.pdf

The plan started in 2013 as a strategic plan. In 2015 the City Manager approached LFCEL to create a city-wide Sustainability Plan. Their intern looked at the neighboring climate action plans/sustainability plans. LFCEL wanted to include community input in the elements of the plan. In 2015, they did an online survey to solicit plan ideas using Survey monkey. 80% of the respondents said it was a good idea to have a sustainability plan. They got 400 responses to the survey and found 82% wanted opportunities to reduce energy in their homes and 3/5 want to be more engaged in sustainability efforts. They received 66 ideas for they could do.

In 2016 The City and LFCEL hosted two community engagement forums to seek resident input on priorities, and two student forums. They explained the 66 ideas and participants then voted for their 10 highest priority initiatives. They identified 14 high priority and 12 secondary priority initiatives in their plan. It was manageable, less than 20 pages. Explains why each is important, actions, measures of success, and how to achieve.

The Sustainability Plan went to the City's Plan Commission, and they recommended adoption in the City's Comprehensive Plan. This started the approval process to create the document and make it official. They have a supportive City Manager and had a supportive Mayor. They invited the most conservative Alderman to be liaison and participate in the process. He is the voice of climate change skepticism, but it balances nicely. When they want to write something they run it by him to see how it will be perceived. It's very important to know different perspectives in your marketing.

The City Council unanimously approved inclusion of the sustainability plan in the City's Comprehensive plan in late 2016, so it's woven into the city's governance.

Now they are in the Implementation phase. All the groups from LFCEL are running with pieces of the plan. Challenge was to get this spread out into the community. Meetings are happening all over, like with garden clubs. This year's goal is to get more community involvement.

Plan was developed based on resident input and research. It has 5 major categories.

- Stormwater Management and Water Use
- Ecosystem Vitality and Ravine Conservation
- Waste Management
- Renewable Energy and Efficiency
- Transportation and Air Quality

Note: The group that was involved in making the plan is still working on the plan. It was not shelved.

HALL HEALY – Glencoe – Chairman of Sustainability Task Force

The Village has been doing Sustainability type activities for a long time. They have a very active group going great things, but are constrained by a tight budget. In May 2016, a task force was put in place to promote conservation in a variety of ways. They are looking at environmentally and financially sustainable activities. Public awareness is a huge part of what we do.

They held a brainstorming exercise with thought mapping and came up with many ideas. From that they prioritized what the task force would work on for 2017. Public Awareness has been the most important.

2017 Top priorities

- Public Awareness
- Ravines
- Codes and Ordinances

Public Awareness Building: \$1,000 budget

1. Glencoe Anchor (paper) agreed to a 500 word article every month on one of their initiatives.
2. Use website, logo, coordinating with businesses and regular communication.
3. Created a residential "clearinghouse" if they want to do solar themselves.

Transportation: \$40,000 budget (down to \$20,000 by doing some of work themselves – money from schools, park district and task force)

1. Active Transportation Alliance study will lead to a transportation plan.
2. Having a Steering committee has been a key part, made up of schools and residents, people in public life, students.
3. They are doing outreach using media like Survey monkey. What should safe paths to schools look like, what are the spots that are causing problems? Narrowing lanes has helped with decreasing speed.

Recycling and Yard Waste:

1. New vendor picking up solid waste and recycling, helps to consolidate the efforts

2. Stickers on recycling carts to show what actually can be recycled.
3. Educational programs.
4. Construction Waste management using enforcement of county code.

Partnerships to recognize businesses for what they are doing:

1. Green business sticker program. They want every shop to have a sticker. Start with low expectations, then get slightly higher each year.
2. They've tried hard not to preach to people but want this to be a collaborative effort – We want people to say, how can I improve my bottom line as well as my environmental awareness and activity. They are not telling them what to do, but making suggestions, and asking them for suggestions. Working closely with Chamber of Commerce.

Ravines:

1. Erosion, reduced property values, pollution. It's important to be careful when talking with ravine property owners. You can say that a better ravine means higher property value. Ethan Brown from Alliance for the Great Lake and Ryan from Open Lands have been helpful. Creating an alliance on a single ravine (they have more than any other suburb on NS). Hope to have it expand beyond one alliance, but very careful not to preach to people.

Other Activities:

Conduct Inventory of all buildings on what they are already doing

Work with faith communities: Synagogues, schools, government, churches.

There's an impressive list of what they are already doing – from LED bulbs to \$4 mil geothermal project.

Spoken to the Botanic Gardens, Rotary and Chamber, Park District Board, School Board.

More information is at:

https://www.villageofglencoe.org/government/committees_and_commissions/sustainability_task_force/index.php

GRACE RINK – Quercus Consulting, Consultant for Highland Park and Lake County

Originally worked on the staff of City of Chicago Dept. of Environment and is now consultant to cities.

There are pros and cons to working with an outside consultant on sustainability, and each community should choose the model that is right for them.

A consultant can't do it all, and often needs support from municipal staff and volunteers on implementation. Lake Forest's Collaborative includes city staff and residents, and has commitment from the City. Not only can City staff go to the meetings, but the institution is committed to implementing the recommendations. That's a very effective model. Consultants are committed to doing what the municipality asks them to do.

1. When there is one paid staff person they have to be jack of all trades to get everyone's agenda accomplished. That's a lot to ask of someone. They need to know everything, and that person rarely has a budget to get expertise from other parties. Other staff may have expertise to help, but not time.
2. A Consultant will be able to enlist experts as needed. A part time consultant can cost less than a full time staff member with benefits.

3. Consultant teams need to have a passion for the subject, and act on what the client tells them to do.
4. Staff must be supportive for a Consultant to accomplish anything, and the Consultant must be respected within the organization. If a consultant doesn't get responses to emails, or there is inconsistent communication, things can't get done. The
5. It's important that the consultant reports to a person who has a passion on the subject, and an ability to get things done within the organizational structure.
6. Municipalities can team up and share one consultant for certain projects through a shared services agreement. For example, Highland Park did a lighting code review. A consultant could have reviewed lighting codes for several communities at the same time for less cost per municipality. Other areas where shared services could be appropriate are bike infrastructure, waste hauling and regional planning.
7. Education and outreach materials can easily be shared among communities. For example, Highland Park developed information on food scrap composting that is pertinent to others.
8. Find your shared interests. If you need consultant expertise, if staff don't have the expertise, or time or residents to do it, band together.
9. When you create a Sustainability Plan, start with benchmarking. It's important to know what you already accomplished before determining next steps. The Greenest Region Compact (GRC2) is a good place to start. It is available online at <http://mayorscaucus.org/initiatives/environment/rec/>. If your community hasn't yet signed on, talk with your local elected officials and ask them to do so.
10. Doesn't always make sense to have a Sustainability coordinator for all towns. A community might not be big enough, may not have enough for them to do.— Band together 75,000 people between the communities to decide on 6 things and purchase them together. They will pay less collectively.

Q and A:

Doug – Look for people who have clout. Or, what can we use to develop clout?

Kumar – majority of sustainability activity doesn't come from the city. There are strong community groups that have figured out how to accomplish their goals. When plans come to the city it is for something very specific. That's when Kumar can help, to see where things overlap and where collaboration can be helpful. He makes recommendations (doesn't lobby) and does not participate in the politics.

Curt – They use an intentional, positive approach to getting kids passionate about an issue. The kids then bring it home and talk to their families. This is an amazing communication channel. They also talk to environmental clubs at high school and local summer camps about the issues.

Highland Park hospital been a good partner and are the largest employer.

Hall - Glencoe has been successful with collaboration with the Park District and school board. Middle school has a green club, they ask the task force for advice.

Doug set up collaboration between Wilmette, Glenview, Northfield to put together a regional Skokie Valley Bike Trail extension.

Doug is putting together a report for his State Senator and Representative on local environmental

initiatives. Please provide information on successes to him for inclusion.

Likely Topics for 2018 GGI meetings:

Great Lakes Watershed and Green Infrastructure

Community Solar

Greening the fleet, car charging

Zero waste, composting

Plastic reduction and water

Pollinator gardens, native plants and pesticide use