

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2021

Conducted Remotely

Commission Members Present: Laura Derks (Chair), Crystal Hodges, Mark Goldberg, Stephen Morales, Lisa Boone, Colin Taylor
Staff Liaison Present: Mindy Agnew, Sustainability Coordinator
Staff Present: Bill McKenna, Village Engineer

- 1) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Derks
- 2) **Approval of Minutes:** A Motion was made to approve previous meeting minutes and unanimously approved with none opposed.
- 3) **Public Comment:** No Public Comment submitted.

4) **Uses of Sustainability Fund for Green Alleys, Bill McKenna, Mindy Agnew -**

Staff liaison Mindy Agnew provided a Brief overview of the Green Alleys agenda item.

The Board requested input from the EEC regarding the January 19, 2021 Motion 21-4 to Direct Staff to Bid the 2021 Green Alley Improvement Project.

The Village Manager is researching if and how the funds can be replenished to the Sustainability Fund for the Green Alleys project.

This is an example of a Climate Action and Resiliency project that invests in equity and inclusive planning with neighborhoods that qualified for CDBG funding, covers a goal to deliver equitable outcomes where typically underserved areas get the infrastructure improvement investment, infiltrates water for conservation and also manages stormwater to mitigate possible flooding issues we have in Oak Park.

Bill McKenna provided additional background on the 2018 \$475,000.00 grant from MWRD to construct Green Alleys to mitigate flooding and reduce rainwater treatment to MWRD to reduce the burden on the sewer system as well as help prevent basement water backups into residential homes. Every drop they don't have to treat reduces their electricity load and GHG emissions. The four green alleys proposed within the entire project would capture and store at least 220,000 gallons of storm water per rain event. In May of 2020, due to losses in revenue associated with COVID, the Village requested that MWRD allow for the work to be deferred until 2021. Staff recommended using approximately \$550,000 of sustainability funds to fund the project along with the \$440,000 in CDBG funds already allocated for the work plus the \$475,000 in MWRD grant funds. The Village hasn't moved forward with the project for 2 years now and MWRD communicated to staff they would prefer the construction begin in 2021.

EEC Commissioners asked questions and discussed whether this is the best use of the sustainability funds. Commissioner Taylor offered the perspective that the perception of a large project like this may garner more enthusiasm if it was a direct grant benefit for residents to install rain barrels for example rather than the current perception of a large public works construction project, even though the end result would be management of larger volumes of rainwater with positive green effects. There seems to be less emphasis of this as a green initiative and hence less enthusiasm under the umbrella of a large Public Works construction project. The EEC presented their recommendation by moving forward with a

Motion to include the feasibility of a transfer of sustainability funds with the condition that those funds would be restored to the Sustainability Fund in 2022. The Motion was unanimously approved with none opposed. If that is not feasible, then the Village should request that the funds be deferred and suggested the Village move forward on funding the programs that the Ad Hoc group suggested in December, 2020.

GHG inventory update: Staff provided clarification requested on the validity of the data collected for the inventory. The data received from the utilities was valid. During the audit review of the data input, it was discovered that only partial data was provided for 2017. Detail by sector will be provided at the next Board meeting and Staff has requested the complete 2017 community electricity data as well as 2020 data. We can move forward with preliminary forecasting and goal setting with the 2018 and 2019 data information collected.

Chair Derks suggested the EEC work on a draft of guidelines for use of the Sustainability Fund.

Old Business:

Chair Derks asked if there was an update on the energy efficiency retrofits status update. Staff shared that DCS has perspective income eligible projects that may qualify for the grant program. Any project that moves forward would have a comprehensive report with GHG emission and energy savings documented.

Earth Fest status? Staff has to confirm if the 2021 Earth Fest will be virtual this year.

5) **Adjourn:** At 7 p.m. a motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting.

Next Commission Meeting Will Be Scheduled in March, 2021