

**MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 6, 2025,
MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION (ENRC)
VILLAGE HALL 6101 CAPULINA, MORTON GROVE, IL 60053**

1. **Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/ Roll Call:** Pursuant to proper notice and in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the regular meeting of the Environment and Natural Resources Commission was called to order at 6:00 PM. Chairperson Georgie Brunner called the roll:

Commissioners Present: Georgie Brunner, Jenny Cleary, Andrew Hoffman, Ibrahim Khan, Volha Liston
Kim Moldofsky, Tariq Puthawala, Sarah Tag

Commissioners Absent: None

Village Staff Present: Zoe Heidorn, Mike Lukich

Guests: Trustee John Thill

2. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Cleary moved to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tag. No corrections were noted. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.
3. **Chair Comments:** Chairperson Brunner welcomed everyone. She discussed a docuseries on Netflix she is watching called Famous Last Words. Episodes are produced while the subject is alive, then released once they pass. One of the episodes features Jane Goodall. She said that this particular episode was inspiring and reminded her that just one small thing, multiplied by the billions of people on earth, becomes a big thing. In the case of the Expo, if only five people walked away and changed their habits, the Commission has done something significant. Chairperson Brunner thought this should be encouraging to the Commission and the work that they do.

Chairperson Brunner then said that she wants to push at the Commission level, including through her role on the Special Events Commission, that they should be reducing waste at Village events. Chairperson Brunner said that she spoke with Groot and WasteNot at the Expo and that there are waste-reduction efforts that they could implement at Village events. There may also be sponsorship opportunities for in-kind donations of services. Commissioner Hoffman said that at Skokie Days, there were volunteers to help put waste in the appropriate receptacles. Chairperson Brunner said that they should look into this. She would continue to work with the Special Events Commission to look into these opportunities for the community events they plan.

Chairperson Brunner then thanked Village staff for putting on another successful Sustainability Expo. Zoe Heidorn said that things did not go quite as planned due to the inclement weather, but that it all came together in the end. She thanked the volunteers who contributed their time from the Commission.

Commissioner Moldofsky said that she wondered why some of the exhibitors were included. Ms. Heidorn responded that some groups represented themselves one way in advance but provided different information at the event. Exhibitors would be more carefully screened next year. They discussed Leopardo Construction, a commercial architecture and construction firm, being at the event. Ms. Heidorn said that Leopardo did receive questions but suggested having a construction firm with a residential focus to better answer questions from residents.

Commissioner Liston asked about the level of sponsorship and whether it was more or less than last year. Ms. Heidorn reviewed the sponsorship level and said that she believed it was lower but would verify. She said that the funds received covered all costs with the exception of Public Works staff.

Commissioner Cleary commented that it would be helpful to have a more appealing sponsorship package. She asked if staff could develop a version that is more engaging and better highlights what the event is and accomplishes, possibly including some data points. Ms. Heidorn agreed and said she could put something together.

She noted that staff had discussed creating a coordinated sponsorship package for all Village events but that she would move forward with this one independently. Commissioner Moldofsky said that staff should look into examples online of sponsorship packages.

4. **Staff Report:** Mike Lukich, Director of Public Works, provided a review of Staff activity since August. Mr. Lukich said that the leak report project would be underway by the end of October. The Village's water system is aging and it's natural to have the network leak in locations. The leaks are often occurring in the subsurface. The leak survey helps detect these leaks so that Village staff can respond accordingly.

Mr. Lukich continued to report that the New England Avenue water main replacement program would be postponed because the replacement of other water mains have become a higher priority. It's likely that the project would be back on the construction schedule in 2027. More infrastructure planning would occur in 2026, and the Village will undertake a greater portion of improvements in 2027.

Mr. Lukich provided an update on solar panel installation through permits issued. He said that 39 permits have been issued to-date. He said that the Metra project was progressing slower than planned but that the building and parking lot should be completed and operational by mid-November. The landscaping and punch-list items would be completed in Spring 2026. He said that the project will be transformational for the area. The Commissioners agreed.

Mr. Lukich then provided an update on the North Pumping Station variable frequency drive conversion. He said that the project will help reduce water main breaks in the future. He then provided an update on the tree grant. Staff is planning for use of the second portion of funds in 2026. 225 trees have been planted through the grant to-date and a similar quantity will be planted next year. He said that the Village was able to save a lot of money and plant more trees by using staff rather than a contractor to plant.

Mr. Lukich then provided an update on WasteNot compost service collection for residents, commercial users, and Village facilities. In 2025, the service provider has collected and composted 70,663 pounds of waste from 124 households. Commissioner Moldofsky said that she spoke with the Police and Fire Department at the last neighborhood outreach meeting. She said that she felt that staff are not using the compost service as much as they could. Ms. Heidorn responded that she would communicate with department heads and encourage them to use the service more regularly. She noted that the Fire Department cooks a lot, so she believed most of the waste is being generated by Fire staff.

Commissioner Cleary asked about future trees and native plantings at the Metra Station. Mr. Lukich responded that the tree plantings are robust at the site. Ms. Heidorn said they cannot confirm that all plantings are native, but that she can confirm that the goal was to use as many native, drought-tolerant, and low-maintenance plantings as possible. She said that the architect received this direction. Ms. Heidorn said that she would send along a landscape planting plan for the Commission's review.

Commissioner Cleary said that some of the newly planted trees look a little unhealthy. She asked what the follow-up would be by staff. Mr. Lukich said that it would be helpful to have the Commissioner let staff know which trees look unhealthy because they need to address the tree health and report this information to the grant provider. Commissioner Cleary also said that she noted that staff or residents often plant turf up to the tree base of a newly planted tree. She asked if staff could install mulch around the new tree base rather than allow turf. She said that professional landscapers will come in to mow and damage the tree base. Mr. Lukich said that he would direct staff to mulch around the bases of newly planted trees in the future.

Commissioner Tag asked if the homeowner gets direction on how to take care of a new tree in the parkway in front of their homes. Mr. Lukich said that they do follow-up and provide literature to residents. He said that some residents are responsive and care for the trees accordingly and others do little to support the tree health. Much of the ongoing maintenance of new trees, including watering, has to be performed by Public Works staff.

5. **Programs & Events:** Ms. Heidorn reported on the Adopt-A-Block Program. She said that around ten individuals had received buckets and were active captains. Only one captain reports to her on a regular basis. She said that others had signed up but never picked up her buckets. Ms. Heidorn said that she would work to promote the program better and start more outreach to existing captains to assess their activities.

The Commissioners discussed the Greener Morton Grove Award Program for 2026, which was being handed to the Commission from the Economic Development Commission. Ms. Heidorn stated that she expected they would expand the program to residents because the same businesses and organizations were receiving the award every year. Commissioner Moldofsky said that the Greener Morton Grove Awards should be by nomination. The Commission agreed that they should allow nominations, including self-nomination.

Commissioner Tag said that her father received an award from the Village of Skokie for maintaining his yard for many years. She suggested that staff implement a new type of program like Skokie's program for residents. Ms. Heidorn responded that adding new programs is difficult given the constraints of staff time and resources. They discussed and agreed that the Greener Morton Grove Award Program could be augmented to include native garden awards for residents. The program could be advertised starting in Earth Month and winners could be announced at the Sustainability Expo in September, which would help capture the summer growing season. The Commissioners discussed other award types. Ms. Heidorn said that she would put together some program guidelines.

Commissioner Cleary talked about the Village's leaf pick-up program and asked if the staff could promote leaving leaves in place to support pollinator habitat over the winter. Trustee Thill said that he brought this up at the last Board meeting. Ms. Heidorn said that this has been featured in the Village's e-News and social media channels, but that they would continue to promote the message in conjunction with the leaf program communications.

Trustee Thill said that he has personally experienced how much biodiversity could be supported by leaving leaves in place in his own backyard. Mr. Lukich spoke to the leaf collection pick-up guidelines and confirmed that the leaves are mulched. Commissioner Cleary said that not offering the program would force people to mulch their leaves.

Commissioner Cleary asked if the Village could promote the No Mow May initiative. Ms. Heidorn explained that it would be difficult to place a temporary moratorium on the Village's grass height and weed ordinances. However, she noted that staff understands the intent of the initiative and generally does not issue citations for tall grass during May. She added that formalizing such a practice is not desirable from a code enforcement perspective, as it could contribute to poor property maintenance that is not in the spirit of No Mow May.

Chairperson Brunner said that there's another event this year, the Pumpkin Smash. Commissioner Moldofsky said that she would like more messaging around composting at the event and less focus on the violence of throwing the pumpkins. She also said that she would like to preserve edible produce and donate it to the food pantry. She remembers a lot of butternut squash being thrown away. Trustee Thill said that we should check with the food pantry and the Commissioners agreed.

Chairperson Brunner discussed goal setting in relation to the Sustainability Plan. The Commissioners agreed that they should discuss this in December and come up with goals for 2026.

6. **Next Meeting:** Monday, December 1, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

7. **Audience Comments:** None

8. **Adjournment:** Hearing no further comments, Commissioner Cleary moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tag and approved by a unanimous voice vote at 7:03 p.m.

Minutes By: Zoe Heidorn