

MINUTES
MCLEAN COUNTY GREENWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2016
UPTOWN STATION, 3RD FLOOR
NORMAL, ILLINOIS

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at approximately 8:35 a.m.

PRESENT

Mike Hall (chair), Mercy Davison, Phil Dick, Chip Henrichs, Sue Henrichs, Erin Herbez, Jeanne Moonan, Marcus Ricci, Vasu Pinnamaraju (staff), Jamal Smith (staff)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hall asked committee members to review the minutes from the May 19, 2016 meeting. After a few minor edits, Mr. Hall moved to approve the minutes. Jamal Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

PURPOSE

The first item on the agenda was defining a purpose statement for the Greenways Committee to post on the Greenways section of MCRPC's website. Mr. Hall presented a paragraph in the Greenways Plan (p. 75, paragraph headed "McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee") describing the committee and its activities as a model for the statement. Some members pointed out that the committee has not consistently undertaken all of the activities mentioned in the paragraph, and there was discussion about whether to narrow the scope of the purpose statement to match the committee's actual recent activities. However, it was agreed to use the plan's language without any further qualifications in order to preserve the committee's future flexibility.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

Mr. Hall proposed the creation of "officer" positions with responsibility for specific tasks to spur the committee to become more active. The officers will form an executive committee that will meet in months between full committee meetings.

Newsletter and Website Coordination

Mr. Hall proposed that the group designate a person or persons to be responsible for gathering information and coordinating with committee members and stakeholders outside the group to develop content. Ms. Moonan volunteered to help coordinate that effort.

Committee Secretary

Mr. Hall also proposed establishing a committee secretary position to take meeting minutes and coordinate external communications, grant applications, and so forth. Ms. Davison offered to do so.

Coordination with other groups

Ms. Pinnamaraju highlighted the need to do a better job of coordinating with related committees such as the Watershed Oversight Committee. Mr. Hall suggested meeting with Jackie Kraft from the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), who is a member of the Watershed Committee but currently not a member of the Greenways Committee, to see if she would be willing to perform this role.

Bringing other groups to the table

The committee agreed that there were various agencies and organizations across the community that should have more of a presence in the Greenways Committee. The majority of this discussion centered on the Bloomington and Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD), as its wastewater treatment efforts are intertwined with conditions in local watersheds (particularly Sugar Creek and Little Kickapoo Creek).

FUTURE PRIORITIES

Mr. Hall and Ms. Pinnamaraju introduced the subject of the committee's priorities over the next two to three years. Several were identified:

Sugar Creek

Mr. Hall said that now the Rt. 66 trail is well on its way, protecting and improving conditions in the Sugar Creek watershed represents the next "low-hanging fruit" the committee should pursue.

Ms. Pinnamaraju said that Sugar Creek is on the Illinois EPA's 303(d) list of Impaired Waters due to elevated levels of phosphorous, and that BNWRD is trying to get the creek delisted because it is currently being held responsible for the pollution. BNWRD may have to construct a new wastewater treatment plant to replace its West Plant in order to better treat the phosphorous. BNWRD has argued that the impairment is due to downstream pollution from nonpoint sources rather than any deficits in its treatment capabilities. Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that either way, the pollution in the creek needs to be addressed. The committee agreed that it should play a role in a broader conversation about both point and nonpoint sources of pollution of Sugar Creek and other local waterways.

Mr. Hall noted that the City's and Town's stormwater management plans have addressed the issue of nonpoint source pollution within the urban area, but said there is a pressing need for the Greenways Committee to play an advocacy role to make sure those plans and any other important remedial measures are implemented.

Kickapoo Creek

Mr. Dick suggested that Kickapoo Creek should also be considered a priority area, as it receives treated municipal wastewater and is adjacent to current and planned development.

Kings Mill Acres subdivision bike trail (short-term)

Mr. Dick informed the committee that the developer of the Kings Mill Acres subdivision in the western part of the county wants to vacate the right-of-way for a bike trail that was supposed to be built across the subdivision after a certain number of houses were built, because it is not connected to the trail. Mr. Dick noted that the trail R-O-W in question matches a priority greenway mapped in the Greenways Plan. The committee agreed to advocate the preservation of the R-O-W and connection to the existing trail system. Mr. Dick agreed to champion this effort.

Coordination with small communities in the county

Ms. Moonan highlighted Mr. Ricci's idea from the May 2016 meeting that the committee should meet with leaders from McLean County's smaller towns to ensure that they are aware of the Greenways Plan and work with them to share information and build up the county's greenway network. The committee agreed that this should be one of the priorities over the next few years. Mr. Ricci and Ms. Moonan agreed to reach out to these communities.

OTHER ITEMS

County-wide or regional watershed plan

Mr. Dick mentioned that the Watershed Oversight Committee has considered expanding its focus from the Lake Bloomington and Lake Evergreen watersheds to other watersheds in the county and region. The committee discussed possible funding sources, including federal 319 grants to address nonpoint source pollution. Ms. Pinnamaraju added that a Sugar Creek watershed plan would be beneficial, and eventually it would be ideal to have plans for all major watersheds in the county.

County bike plan

Mr. Ricci asked whether the county's roads have been rated for bicycle-friendliness. Ms. Davison responded that they have not, but Bike BloNo and Friends of the Constitution Trail have asked the county to create a bike plan and may be willing to contribute to that effort. She suggested that the committee advocate for the creation of a county bike plan.

Public outreach

The committee generally agreed that local governments and the Greenways Committee should make more of an effort to educate the public about existing greenways amenities.

With regard to public outreach on the BNWRD plant situation, Ms. Pinnamaraju brought up a suggestion from the previous meeting about holding an event and inviting a speaker, aimed at helping community leaders understand the scale and scope of the challenge. Ms. Davison noted that the project could include "soft engineering" solutions such as wetlands, trails, and green space, which would have both environmental and recreational benefits. Ms. Herbez pointed to Austin, TX as an example of a community that turned its wastewater plant into a popular birding location through the integration of wetlands.

Plan updates

Mr. Dick proposed that the group update Greenways Plan's drainage and proposed trail maps. Ms. Moonan suggested that the Plan be updated with any threats to existing and proposed greenways.

NEXT MEETING/ADJOURNMENT

The committee agreed that the full committee should meet the second Thursday every other month, with subcommittee and executive committee meetings in off months. The first executive committee meeting was set for August 4 at 9:00 AM. The next full committee meeting was set for September 1 at 8:30 AM because some members are not available the second Thursday in September. The following full committee meeting was set for November 10 at 8:30 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamal Smith

McLean County Regional Planning Commission