

1 APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
2 SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
3 VILLAGE OF NORTHBROOK
4 FEBRUARY 28, 2023
5

6 Chairman Reynolds called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Village Hall, DPS
7 Conference Room. Present were Members Rod Burton, Sandra Weiss, Aaron Stash, Ethan
8 Stepen
9

10 **Also Present:** Sustainability Coordinator Liaison Tessa Murray; Director of Development &
11 Planning Services Michaela Kohlstedt
12

13 **Absent:** Rebecca Lee, Sandra Dold, Ying Wang
14

15 **Guests:** Bill Paddor, Mary Munday, Shital Pandit
16

17 **Review and Approval of Minutes**

18 A motion was made to approve the January 19, 2023 draft Sustainability Meeting Minutes
19 by Member Stash and seconded by Member Burton. The motion passed by voice vote.
20

21 **Hear from the Audience**

22 Two public comments were supplied in advance of the meeting: one opposed to gas-
23 powered leaf blower regulations and one in favor of No Mow May.
24

25 A public comment was made at the meeting that expressed there is an urgent need for
26 action to restrict the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in the community.
27

28 **Community Planning Report**

29 The Board of Trustees passed the Single-Use Bag Tax which will go into effect in 2024.
30

31 **Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Regulations Update**

32 The Group Working Report on Leaf Blowers was published in December 2022. The report
33 findings are included in the packet. The Board reviewed the final report on January 10,
34 2023. The Board requests feedback from the Sustainability Committee on policy details.
35 Four potential pathways were presented in the report. The Board selected Option 2: An 8-
36 week window during the fall clean-up season and 4-week window during the spring clean-
37 up season when gas-powered leaf blowers may be utilized. Gas-powered leaf blowers would
38 be banned during for 9 months during summer and winter months. The recommendations
39 from the Sustainability Commission are due March 1, 2023.
40

41 Membership started discussing their recommendations regarding Option 2 at their January
42 meeting. Liaison Murray presented the remaining considerations for membership to discuss:
43

44 1 – Phase-out period:

45 a) 1 year, 3 year, 5 year, or an alternative approach
46

1 Response:

2 Member Weiss expressed concerns regarding the substantial costs associated with electric
3 tools and batteries. Commissioners agreed that a greater lead-time between ordinance
4 adoption and effective date could allow for more preparation for equipment replacements.

5
6 Following discussion, membership agreed that the community should have 2 years to
7 prepare between ordinance adoption and effective date in which gas-powered leaf blowers
8 will no longer be permitted.

9
10 6 – Exemptions

- 11 a) Park District
- 12 b) Golf courses

13
14 Response:

15 Liaison Murray noted that the majority of other municipalities in our area that have gas-
16 powered leaf blower restrictions allow exemptions for Park Districts and golf courses. She
17 provided the Commission with a statement from the Park District in which they note electric
18 blowers are not powerful enough to maintain the current standards for an organization of
19 their size and scope.

20
21 Chairman Reynolds mentioned an exemption would be unfair to neighbors of such
22 properties. Member Stash stated that they should be leaders in the community.
23 Membership unanimously agreed not to recommend an exemption for golf courses and the
24 Park District.

25
26 8 – Incentive program recommendations

- 27 a) Eligible participants
- 28 b) Eligible equipment
- 29 c) Level of reimbursement

30
31 Response:

32 Following discussion, membership agreed that the Village should consider creating an
33 incentive program either through reimbursements or partnerships with local retailers for
34 vouchers. A rebate may provide up to \$50 per household or business for purchasing a tool.
35 If a licensing fee is charged for landscaper registrations, this fee may be waived for
36 companies that commit to year-round use of electric equipment for an additional incentive.

37
38 Member Stash suggested that the level of reimbursement provided by the Village for an
39 incentive program should correlate with the length of the phase-out period (i.e. if the Board
40 wishes to implement the regulation sooner than the 2 year recommendation, a larger level
41 of reimbursement may be considered).

42
43 10 – Additional considerations

44 Membership agreed that any ordinance should be flexible with respect to technology
45 advancements, seasonal anomalies, and other considerations.

1 Member Weiss stated she is not confident that the overall impact of electric blowers are
2 more sustainable than gas-powered ones. Member Burton suggested looking into regulating
3 equipment with an emissions classification rather than gas vs. electric (e.g. allowing 4-stroke
4 gas engines but not 2-stroke) or by noise level (e.g. banning all gas and electric leaf blowers
5 above 65 decibels).

6
7 Member Stash added that a 10-month ban, in which gas-powered leaf blowers are only
8 allowed in fall, may be better aligned with other pollinator initiatives like No Mow May.
9

10 A summary of the Commission's recommendation will be prepared by Liaison Murray and
11 shared with the Board of Trustees at an upcoming meeting.
12

13 **No Mow May Recommendation**

14 Liaison Murray overviewed the 2022 No Mow May initiative's implementation and the
15 public feedback received. She stated that over 85 acres of land in Northbrook participated,
16 including the Village and some Park District-maintained greenspaces. Although it was not
17 required to participate, a total of 80 residents registered with the Village. At least 55
18 residents reached out with complaints about the program.
19

20 Member Stash noted that No Mow May originated in the UK, where their native pollinators
21 co-evolved with native lawn plants like traditional turf grasses and dandelions.
22

23 Liaison Murray stated that last year the Village referred to one major research document
24 that is used as evidence that such a program is beneficial to pollinators in our region, but
25 since then the paper has been retracted due to inconsistent data reporting by the
26 researchers. She added there are several studies that demonstrate a better practice for
27 North American lawns is to mow every other week.
28

29 The Commission agreed that continuing with some form of the program is still important
30 because it is an effective way to raise awareness regarding pollinator conservation. Student
31 Member Stepen suggested moving forward with an alternative program to No Mow May to
32 educate community members about the every-other-week recommendation. Member Stash
33 suggested calling it "Slow Mow May".
34

35 Membership agreed to recommend "Slow Mow May" to the Village Board.
36

37 **Old Business**

38 Liaison Murray stated upcoming dates for Community Moments. Presenters and topics are
39 needed for June 27 and July 25. Membership discussed upcoming topics.
40

41 Chairman Reynolds asked why the Village is not hosting the Earth Day Vendor Fair. Member
42 Stash agreed that this is a missed opportunity for education and outreach. Liaison Murray
43 said she will return with more information regarding this decision.
44

45 **New Business**

46 None
47

1 **Remarks for the Good of the Order**

2 None

3

4 **Next Scheduled Meeting**

5 The next regular meeting of the Sustainability Commission is scheduled for Thursday, March
6 16, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

7

8 **Adjourn**

9 A motion was made by Member Burton and seconded by Member Stash at 7:16 p.m. to
10 adjourn the Sustainability Commission February 2023 meeting. The motion passed by voice
11 vote.

12

13 Respectfully submitted,

14 /s/ Tessa Murray

15 Recorder