

Hickory Creek Watershed Planning Group
May 28, 2010 Meeting Minutes
Village of Mokena

Attendance: Ron Sly, Village of New Lenox – Chairman; Jim Urek, AECOM; Erin Venard, Village of Homer Glen; Derek O’Sullivan, Will County Land Use; Paul Pearson, Village of Mokena; Jesse Elam, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; Matt Bardol, Cowhey Gumundson Leder; Tom Schwerha, City of Joliet; Cindy Skrukrud, Sierra Club; Robin Ellis, Village of New Lenox; Scott Killinger, Will County Stormwater Committee; Mark Willobee, Geosyntec Consultants; Bill Eyring, Center for Neighborhood Technology - Coordinator; Tim Good, Forest Preserve District of Will County; Tony Minette, Village of Frankfort; Adam Nielsen, Village of Frankfort; Art Mackay, Joliet resident; Jeff Smith, Village of New Lenox; Dan Slewoki, Village of Orland Park; Tom Heidegger, Village of Orland Park; Julie Arvia, Frankfort Square Park District; Traci Barkley, Prairie Rivers Network; Trent Stober, Geosyntec, Ed Schussler, Orland Park Trustee; Pat Gira, Orland park Trustee; Hal Sprague, Center for Neighborhood Technology; Lynn Rotunno, Lower Des Plaines Ecosystem Partnership.

Chairman Ron Sly called the meeting to order at 9:08.

The minutes of the March 26th meeting were approved unanimously.

Potential Watershed Plan Recommendations

Mark Willobee presented a range of recommendations that will probably be addressed in the Watershed Management Plan. They can be categorized as Stream Habitat Restoration, Watershed Management Retrofits (including Green Infrastructure), Agricultural Best Management Practices, and Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades. The most important principle to be observed is to preserve the natural soil and water systems in the landscape. If this cannot be achieved, impacts upon these natural systems must be minimized as development or redevelopment occurs. Mark’s complete presentation will be included with these minutes.

Dennis Dreher then presented the various concepts represented in “Green Infrastructure,” or GI. Dennis’s complete presentation will be included with these minutes. Several definitions apply to the term GI, partly depending on the scale of the features being included. At the multi-county Chicago Wilderness scale, GI applies primarily to large land areas considered important to maintaining the biodiversity of the region. At this scale, Hickory Creek is considered critical because of the unusual quality of its resources. One way of illustrating the scale is that there are about 4,000 miles of streams and other greenways in the region.

The community scale of GI can be illustrated by the Joliet South Side Comprehensive Plan that includes aggressive requirements for stream/ditch buffers and infiltration features for stormwater management. There is even a Cedar Creek Protection Ordinance. The St. Charles Park District plan shows existing open space, natural features, potential greenways and a land acquisition plan.

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The neighborhood scale (some 100 acres) often refers to conservation development, where a developer works with public bodies to preserve open space while clustering homes to avoid unnecessary streets and lawn that cause runoff. A high quality of life is achieved while preserving and restoring nature.

The local scale GI can include green streets, where stormwater is infiltrated in the right-of-way, natural buffers along local streams, and native landscaping, permeable pavement and rain gardens on individual lots. Natural restoration of detention basins will increasingly be important. All of these scales can be taken advantage of by seeking opportunities for sustainable landscape features in the early phases of development or redevelopment planning.

Communications and Public Outreach

Bill Eyring reported that the website and Facebook page (both at www.hickorycreekwatershed.org), are up and running. The brochures should be distributed to city and village halls and libraries now. People are encouraged to sign up on the website for our meeting and event notices. Interesting places in the watershed and motivating case studies will be added frequently. If anyone sees something important that is missing or incorrect, let Bill know. A June 25th meeting may be called to discuss future workshops and events.

Bill was authorized to visit the Villages of University Park, Richton Park and Matteson to discuss the watershed planning group and invite them to join us. Each of these, while mostly in other watersheds, also include important land areas in the Hickory Creek Watershed.

It was generally agreed that a workshop in the watershed on effective regulation under the provisions of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program would be worthwhile. It will be planned for the summer months.

Hal Sprague encouraged group members to plan for continued, and hopefully improved, access to federal stimulus funds for green public works projects. The application period is likely to be in July. A June 25th meeting may be called to promote applications and prepare them for optimum appeal.

Hal emphasized and others agreed that if we are to succeed in changing development patterns and regulations we need to bring elected officials and private citizens to the table. This means that we need to include evening events in our schedule. We also, others asserted, need to begin working with homebuilders and their associations. Ms Gira and Mr. Schussler of Orland Park stated that it is better to know the nature of opposition to these changes than to learn about them later. Cindy Skrukrud said that, whenever evening events are planned she will promote them among local Sierra Club members.

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Project Charter and Potential Governance Structure

Jesse Elam introduced two draft documents that had been distributed with the meeting minutes. The Project Charter discussion was prompted from his experience that it is important early in the watershed planning process to understand that a representative of each governmental body needs to become prepared to go to his or her decision-makers and gain their official endorsement of the final watershed plan. The Potential Governance Structure was offered by Jesse to facilitate the early adoption of a formal structure for the Hickory Creek Watershed Group so that effective progress can be made. Both of these documents will be discussed further in future committee meetings.

Flooding

Art Mackay spoke about the history of flooding along Spring and Hickory Creeks in Joliet. He was concerned that flood control had not been mentioned in the meeting but absolutely must be a priority. Bill and others assured him that, while our funding is designed to achieve water quality improvement, flood damage reduction will also be an important part of the watershed plan.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the Watershed Group will be Friday, July 30th. No place was specified, but a volunteer village will be sought.

Committee meetings will be called for June 25th. Probable subjects will be:

- Communications and Public Outreach – evening workshops and events
- Policy Review – MS4 training
- Technical - stimulus projects

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10AM.

Tour of the Byzantine Catholic Parish

Following the meeting, members joined other guests at the church campus at 14610 Will-Cook Road in Homer Glen.