



Village of Westchester

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KARI ROBERG
ALEX SILVA
NIKKI WAY
ELIZABETH WISEMAN-CHASE
WALTER WOJCICK

GROW Ecological Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

August 7, 2025 @ 6:30pm

Village Hall Board Room

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM by Commission Co-Chair

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Mariana Nicolae, Kari Roberg, Nikki Way, Walter Wojcik, Alex Silva

Absent: Commissioner Demitrus Evans

Note: Commissioner Evans arrived at 6:35 p.m.

4. Inspiration – Mariana Nicolae

Commissioner Nicolae shared the below quote:

"Water is one of the most basic of all needs. We cannot live for more than a few days without it. And yet, most people take water for granted. We waste water needlessly and don't realize that clean water is a very limited resource. More than 1 billion people around the world have no access to safe, clean drinking water, and over 2.5 billion do not have adequate sanitation service. Over 2 million people die each year because of unsafe water - and most of them are children."

Author Robert Alan Aurthur

Next Month's Inspiration (9/4/25): Commissioner Wojcik volunteered.

5. Review of Minutes – Nikki Way

- May 1, 2025** – Approved unanimously.
- June 11, 2025** – Tabled; not all commissioners had received or reviewed.
- July 10, 2025** – Approved unanimously.

6. Quarterly Reports

- **Q1 2025** – Pending updates on commissioner bios/accomplishments.
- **Q2 2025** – Completed draft awaiting Q1 updates and commissioner term dates from staff.
- **Q3 2025** – Pending.

7. Updates from Village Staff and Board Representatives – Annie Canavan & Trustee Evie Slavic

- **Energy Plan Subcommittee:** Consultant Pale Blue Dot is in the data collection phase. Survey is live; engagement sessions expected Sept–Feb. Plan completion targeted for March 2026.
- **OneDrive Training:** Shared folder created for agendas, minutes, resources. Additional guidance and one-on-one support available.

8. New Business

a. Meeting Minutes Process:

Co-chairs will not take minutes; rotating responsibility among five non-chair commissioners. Trial use of recorded meeting + AI transcription to streamline process.

Trustee Slavic will do this month's minutes using the recording and AI as a trial and present next month.

b. Event Planning Protocol:

- Aim for one major event per month, planned at least 3 months in advance for adequate promotion. There currently are 10 events/ initiatives in discussion over just 4 or 5 months. Too many to be properly marketed and planned. Larger events promote better participation
- Event request form to be created for consistent information gathering and approval process.
- Materials requests due 2 weeks prior to event.
- Discussion on consolidating events and focusing on quality over quantity.

c. SBC Stipend Allocation Process:

- Annual \$2,000 allocation (FY 2025–2029).
- \$1,500 allocated this year FY 2026; \$500 remains for "slush fund" to finance events in this FY.
- Consensus to begin planning for FY 2027 allocations in December 2025, with strategic planning beforehand.

d. Zero Waste Guide Proposal – Kari Roberg:

- Proposed online resource for residents with practical waste reduction tips.
- Group feedback: Keep concise, locally relevant, link to further resources; explore collaboration with SBC for recycling education.
- Add to website as a resource.

9. Old Business

Greenest Region Compact (GRC) & Subcommittee Updates:

- Water – No meeting.
- Municipal Operations – No meeting.
- Climate – No meeting.
- Energy – No meeting; will integrate with forthcoming Energy Plan.

Upcoming Event Support Needs:

- **Reuse-a-Palooza** – 46 sign-ups to date; goal 100–150. No additional needs at this time. Discussed pairing with Scarce event - not enough time to advertise, better to schedule in spring possibly with April Spring Clean up or Shredding event.
- **Pumpkin Smash** – Scheduled Nov 8–9; bin placement confirmed at Mayfair Park; seeking second site confirmation at Community Church and need confirmation from SBC
- **Prairie Fest Tabling (Sept 6)** – All slots filled.
- **Tabling at the Farm** - Liz - Farm agreed to some tabling and/or composting or Pumpkin Smash with pumpkin sales
- **Waste Collection/Repair Event** – To be moved to Spring 2026 to allow adequate promotion.

Planning Calendar Ideas

- Cub Solar event - IL Solar for all - 2nd week of November? Liz in Oct and Nov newsletters
- Community Solar Clearinghouse Solution and Energy Efficiency together - possibly Jan. Liz
- Waste Collection event - possibly with Spring Cleanup in April? Kari
- Home Electrification - spring 2026 Liz possibly a flyer instead of an event?? in Enews and newsletter
- Climate Action Presentation - was to be a presentation by Kari, discussions of a town hall style meeting with speakers and open mic - if off site are special requirements. Also suggested to make it a private event and not thru GROW and can't mention you are part of GROW or any affiliation with the village.

Newsletter Article Ideas:

- September – Reuse-a-Palooza prep, waste reduction and garage sale tips by Nikki
- October – Pumpkin Smash by Kari
- November – Zero waste holiday ideas by Kari and Demitrus
- December - open
- Federal energy/EV incentive updates to appear in multiple months by Liz

Commissioner Comments:

- Ideas discussed: potential videocast/podcast series to coincide with newsletter topic to reach a broader audience; review of curbside compost program (what's allowed etc. Liz commented on lack of labeling and instructions) and communication improvements; future SBC recycling/composting education event (Evie commented that SBC has already said they would be a partner in this event); importance of strategic planning (Nikki, Evie and Annie)

Public Participation:

No public comments.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn at 8:16 PM approved unanimously.

Action items:

Trustee Slavic

- do the Sept. Meeting minutes using AI for second trial

ASC Annie Canavan

- create guidelines protocol for proposing future events
- Provide commissioner term updates for quarterly report

Commissioner Roberg

- Confirm availability of Westchester Community Church for a 2nd Pumpkin Smash location.