

# **Valparaiso Environmental Advisory Board**

## **Meeting Summary | April 7, 2025**

### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at **4:34 PM**.

### **2. Roll Call**

All Board members were present.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting on March 3, 2025, were approved without updates or corrections.

### **4. Unfinished Business**

#### **a) Report from City Department Leadership**

- i) No department representatives were present.
- ii) Maureen Turman provided an update. The Board distributed a list of questions to all City Department Heads to gather information regarding existing sustainability and environmental initiatives.
- iii) Although initial contact with the City Administrator resulted in a preference for written responses, in-person meetings will still be scheduled with multiple departments in upcoming meetings.
- iv) The Board emphasized the importance of understanding existing city efforts to avoid redundancy and set achievable, complementary goals. Confirmation of goals is pending.

#### **b) Review Draft List of Committees**

- i) The Board reviewed and approved the formation of cross-collaborative and flexible subcommittees.
- ii) Key actions included:
  - (1) Assigning a Board member as a point person for each subcommittee.
  - (2) Identifying potential volunteers from previous applicants and initiating outreach.
  - (3) Updating the website to include an interest form.
- iii) Motion: Sara McKelvey moved to approve subcommittees; Greg Quartucci seconded. Motion carried.

#### **c) Review Draft List of EAB Goals**

- i) The timeline and structure for finalizing EAB goals will be addressed in the upcoming working group session.
- ii) Key items:
  - (1) Post the draft to the website after the next working session.
  - (2) Incorporate input from subcommittees and City departments.
  - (3) Present finalized goals to the City Council following public comment and revisions.
  - (4) Additional notes:
    - (a) The board will begin coordinating collaboration with special interest groups.
    - (b) Initiative 8.3: Consider joining the Greenest Region Compact, already adopted by cities like Naperville and Rockford.
  - (5) Grants & Advancement
    - (a) The Board discussed opportunities to leverage and adapt existing community and neighborhood grant programs for sustainability initiatives, such as:
      - (i) Pollinator gardens
      - (ii) Prairie restorations
      - (iii) Stormwater improvements
    - (b) Other points:
      - (i) Evaluate whether a dedicated city staff member supports grant administration.
      - (ii) Explore creation of a “Clean Community Program” modeled after Hobart and Bloomington’s initiatives.
      - (iii) Investigate Tree City, Monarch City, and potential green golf course certifications.
      - (iv) Encourage oversight of environmental compliance among industrial users in coordination with MS4 regulations.
  - (6) The Board raised several exploratory questions:
    - (a) Can underutilized city-owned properties be converted to sustainable landscapes? What brown fields and unused spaces are available/owned by the city?
    - (b) Are lessees of city-owned land in compliance with environmental standards?
    - (c) What properties might qualify for Indiana’s Wildlife Classification tax incentive?
  - (7) Committee Interest / Environmental Concerns
    - (a) Discussion included the need to:
      - (i) Review and potentially revise code enforcement and ordinances.

- (ii) Investigate the City’s environmental fund managed by the Redevelopment Commission (RDC).
- (iii) Address budgeting for long-term maintenance of sustainability projects (e.g., rain gardens).

**d) Special Interest Group Contacts**

- i) The Board will begin compiling accurate contact information and initiate introductory outreach emails. Members are encouraged to send any relevant contacts to the Board.
- ii) The Board will begin coordinating discussions with each group representative to begin collaboration efforts.

**e) EAB Newsletter**

- i) The Board discussed newsletter content categories, such as:
  - (1) Upcoming events
  - (2) Project updates
  - (3) “Hot Tips”
- ii) The Board will draft newsletter templates and discuss further at the April 14, 2025 working session.
- iii) Target release: Earth Day 2025.

**f) Data Center Project Status**

- i) The proposed data center project has been officially canceled.
- ii) While previous commitments tied to the project are no longer required, the Board agreed to:
  - (1) Remain engaged in the development process of the property.
  - (2) Follow up on documents related to hydrologic testing and environmental impact (Greg Quartucci and Ellen Kapitan).
  - (3) Schedule a meeting with George Douglas to clarify EAB involvement in city development planning.

**g) No Mow May**

- i) The Board discussed mixed findings around “No Mow May.”
- ii) Concerns include:
  - (1) Negative impact on pollinators due to poor-quality floral resources once the event is completed.
  - (2) Potential fire and pest risks.
  - (3) Greg Quartucci will further investigate the research and the board will begin researching alternative options.

**5. New Business**

**a) New Community Center – McGill Property**

- a. Valparaiso has acquired the former McGill industrial property for conversion into a community center.
  - i. Discussion included:

1. Opportunities for EAB involvement.
2. Active remediation concerns.
3. Green building standards.
4. Potential role in project planning and environmental review.

ii. Next steps:

1. Determine current departmental involvement.
2. Add checklist of relevant documents to request.
3. Ensure liability and environmental issues are tracked.

**b) International Compost Awareness Week**

- a. Motion: Ellen Kapitan motioned, Greg Quartucci seconded, to request that the City Council recognize International Compost Awareness Week through an official proclamation. Motion passed unanimously.

**6. Public Comment**

- a) Walt expressed concern over "No Mow May."
- b) He also referenced the original Energy Task Force (2007) and the City's Quality of Life Plan (2009) as valuable resources to the board's planning.
  - a. The board will scan and upload these documents to be added to the website.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM.

**8. Upcoming Dates**

- **Next Regular Meeting:** May 5, 2025
- **Next Working Session:** April 14, 2025, 5:00–7:00 PM