

Valparaiso Environmental Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: June 2, 2025

Time: 5:03 PM

Chair: Maureen Turman

1. Call to Order

Maureen Turman called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. All members were present.

2. Roll Call

All members of the board were present for the meeting.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the May 5 and May 27, 2025, meetings were presented for approval. Ellen made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Malorie. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Unfinished Business

a. Report Out: Response to Request for Information from Valparaiso Departments

The board discussed ongoing work with the RFI responses, initially received at the May 5 meeting. Members have been reviewing the submissions and identifying priorities and follow-up questions. The board agreed that engaging department heads in upcoming meetings is essential. Ellen will reach out to schedule these visits, with priority given to Planning, Engineering, Parks, City Services, and the Building Department (in that order)

Additionally, the board discussed leveraging RFI responses to support existing environmental initiatives and public volunteer opportunities, to include the IDEM recycling grant and litter picking with the Parks Department.

All follow up questions should be collected on the sheet that was sent out by Sara. These will help guide the meetings. If the department heads cannot meet in a timely manner, they will be sent via email. The board expressed a willingness to meet based on the department heads schedule as soon as possible.

Ellen noted that several of the new Parks Department initiatives included taking down several trees. Maureen was asked by public members of the neighborhood adjacent to the new Midwood Terrace annexation about how to support and advocate for the large Burr Oak at the development.

b. Status on Posting of Reports/Documents to the EAB Webpage

Malorie compiled and uploaded a list of EAB-related documents to SharePoint. The board expressed interest in making these materials publicly accessible. Ellen will coordinate with Sam Camp to post the RFI responses and resources online. She will also ensure the page is updated according to the site map. Malorie will send Sam Camp the resources to be added to the page in a folder. A motion was made by Ellen to add the RFI materials to the public website, seconded by Sara, and approved unanimously.

c. Environmental Roundtable (Logistics)

The Environmental Roundtable is tentatively scheduled for August 21, 2025, pending venue availability. Potential venues include Forest Park, Butterfield Pavilion, and Meadow Brook, with Ellen and Maureen responsible for exploring availability. Preferred time windows are either 4:00–6:00 PM or 5:00–7:00 PM. Sara will send out an official invitation by the end of June and begin developing the agenda in July.

d. Newsletter

Ellen reported that the latest newsletter post on her City Council page was well received. The board discussed spotlighting local parks and goals in upcoming editions. A meeting with Kevin Nuppnau is scheduled to discuss relevant updates. The board also would like to include information for the Pollinator Friendly Summer series and a callout for subcommittee volunteer members.

e. Request for Members for Subcommittees

Malorie has begun recruiting subcommittee members and received confirmations from:

- Mike Filipidis (Business Engagement & Community Outreach)
- Katie Hobgood (pending time commitment and residency clarification); Ellen confirmed that residency did not have to be in Valparaiso
- Sophie Ho and Walt Breitingner (Community Outreach & Education)

Subcommittees are encouraged to begin meeting in July and will provide reports in August. The board also discussed initiating a contact database and creating a call-out graphic for recruitment to be posted on the newsletter, on the webpage, and via individual social media accounts.

Malorie will send an email connecting the subcommittee chair and volunteer. Sara will send the subcommittee call-out to the various special interest groups to circulate amongst their volunteers.

[There was a side discussion on the value of promoting native landscaping in the city, including signage, recognition for sustainable businesses, and developing design guidelines for new developments such as the new community center. Ideas included:

- Implementing permeable paving as used successfully in Griffith.
- Advocating for mandatory green infrastructure (e.g., green roofs, walls, alleys) as practiced in Chicago.
- Planning a meeting with city representatives to align on strategies.

This feedback is intended to inform updates to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and Comprehensive Plan. Ellen and Maureen will meet with Greg to continue the conversation. Examples from cities like Oak Brook, Naperville, Fishers, and Carmel will be researched.]

f. Local Environmental Board Outreach

Sara found a list with the contact information for other environmental boards in the region. Their developments and policies could be helpful for informing UDO updates. The board will reach out to the boards in the fall to start those conversations. This could be completed earlier, depending on how soon the UDO and Comprehensive Plan will be updated. Ellen will reach out to inquire about the status and timeline.

[There was a side discussion on Stormwater Policy and Enforcement. Discussion continued improving local enforcement mechanisms and aligning with stricter standards in counties like DuPage, Kane, and Lake. Ideas included requiring developers to post environmental bonds, expanding local oversight/auditing, enacting fines, and enforcing the policies we currently have.]

g. School Learning Gardens

Discussion included beginning a gardening project in local schools, specifically at Memorial Elementary School to start. Malorie and Sara will meet to discuss further.

h. 2025 Goals - Next Steps

Subcommittee chairs were asked to finalize updates to their respective goals by the end of the week, with the intention of posting them publicly by mid-June. These will be opened for public comment at the July 7 meeting and then presented to the City Council.

i. Application for IDEM Grant

Malorie shared information on the IDEM Recycling Grant, which supports projects from \$50,000 to \$500,000 with a 50% cash match. The deadline is June 18. The board is exploring whether smaller projects may qualify and noted the need for a grant writer. Maureen is speaking to the Parks Department Head this week to inquire if any of the grant qualifications may match any current projects he has ongoing.

Walt suggested a grant writer to act as a volunteer on Maureen's subcommittee. Ellen will explore potential partnerships with local recyclers such as Pratt Industries for cardboard collection.

Because the grants are annual, the board discussed having proactive packages ready for when grants become available.

5. New Business

a. Pollinator Friendly Summer

The board plans to promote pollinator-friendly practices through the summer newsletter. While paper-based signage is cost-prohibitive, the board is seeking donations and business sponsorships to support this initiative for future initiatives and events.

b. Litter Picking

Maureen will connect with Kevin Nuppnau to coordinate volunteer litter cleanup opportunities with the Parks Department.

6. Public Comment

Walt Breitinger brought forward several concerns:

- He received a letter from IDEM encouraging public feedback on potentially burdensome regulations. The board discussed drafting a letter to represent the city's environmental interests and expressing concern that profit may be prioritized over environmental science.
- Maureen suggested a newsletter call-to-action inviting residents to submit feedback during the comment window (approximately 30 days).
- Ellen will inquire whether the EAB can submit feedback independently or if City Council approval is required.

Walt also announced the upcoming 25th Annual "Living with Lakes" Seminar on June 21 at Rogers Lakewood Park. The event will feature expert lectures on topics such as microplastics and water quality. The EAB has been invited to introduce its subcommittees at the event.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:34 PM.

8. Next Meeting

The next regular EAB meeting will be held on July 7, 2025. There is the potential for a working session before then.