

Valparaiso Environmental Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: July 7, 2025

Time: 5:02 PM

Member: Ellen Kapitan

1. Call to Order

Ellen Kapitan called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. Members Turman, Quartucci and Mckelvey were absent.

2. Roll Call

Members Turman, Quartucci and Mckelvey were absent.

3. Approval of Minutes

The Board tabled the approval of the June minutes due to lack of quorum.

4. Unfinished Business

a. Response to RFI: Bob Thompson, Planning and Transit

Director of Planning, Bob Thompson, provided an overview of the Department and his plan to update the 2013 comprehensive plan for the City. Mr. Thompson also noted that an update to the City's unified development ordinance will also occur to reflect the updates to the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Thompson fielded questions regarding the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), noting that the UDO deals with new subdivisions and other new developments, and it is the job of the planning department to approve such developments and give recommendations to the zoning board. Mr. Thompson further noted that any changes to zoning require city ordinances. As part of the development review process, the Site Review Committee (consisting of all City Departments) reviews a proposed development for compliance.

Mr. Thompson also explained the planning department's role in managing city transit and that the planning department is currently working on an active transportation plan for the City that strives to better connect residential, commercial, institutional, medical and employment areas of the city with various modes of transportation. Mr. Thompson also stated that the planning department administers grant programs like the facade grants for downtown buildings.

With regard to the comprehensive plan, Mr. Thompson stressed the importance of updating the plan to a usable and concise document around 50 to 60 pages in length. Mr. Thompson identified the Goshen plan as an example. Mr. Thompson stressed that the focus should be on goals and their implementation processes. The department has put out a Request for Quote (RFQ) for third party

consultants for the updates to the unified development ordinance, but has not yet done so for the comprehensive plan. Mr. Thompson stated that the goal is to dual track both the updates to the comprehensive plan and the ordinance amendments, but a firm timeline has not been set. Mr. Thompson stated the updates should take about a year.

With regard to public participation in the comprehensive plan updates, Mr. Thompson stated that there will be numerous opportunities (via public hearings and meetings with interest groups) for the public to weigh in on additions to the plan at the beginning of the planning process. In terms of the ordinance amendments, opportunities for public comment will occur at the end of the process. UDO amendments must be approved by the Planning Commission. Mr. Thompson stated that the comprehensive plan will be used to support re-zoning decisions. Mr. Thompson did note that the preservation of sensitive areas is something that can be included in the plan and provided examples of the Salt Creek corridor, the Little Calumet River, the Kankakee River Corridor and their preservation through the adopted watershed ordinance. Mr. Thompson welcomed recommendations from the EAB on both the content of the comprehensive plan as well as amendments to the unified development ordinance.

b. Subcommittee Status Updates

- 1) Community Outreach & Education – Ellen noted that Sara is leading the effort to organize an environmental roundtable in August and is in the process of writing a grant for learning gardens at the elementary schools.
- 2) Business Engagement & Incentives— The committee had no updates.
- 3) Policy, Operations & Review –Malorie stated that the committee members have been contacted and will be meeting the following week to begin work on the committee's goals.
- 4) Grants & Advancement –The Board reported that Maureen has been coordinating with the Parks Department and Public Works on potential grant opportunities.
- 5) Governance & Administration—The committee had no updates.

5. New Business

Ellen Kapitan discussed the newsletter and potential stories related to plastic free July, the upcoming EAB roundtable event and the VU ozone garden.

6. Public Comment

Walt Bretinger discussed the success of the recent Dark Waters screening.

Zann Wilson inquired as to whether the county is involved in EAB's efforts and whether the EAB intends to get involved at the county level.

Professor Leanne Blind-Doskocil discussed the ozone garden at VU.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:13 PM.

8. Next Meeting

The next regular EAB meeting will be held on August 4, 2025. There is the potential for a working session before then.

DRAFT