

Current discussions at Village Council & Environmental Concerns Commission

Ken Lerner

During the July 16 village council meeting, the manager's report segment of the meeting included [a presentation](#) by Jason Michnick, Downers Grove Environmental Coordinator and Jay Womack of GZA about the initial conditions report for the Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP). The [69-page report](#) is available from the village website. The meeting page for the July 29 Environmental Concerns Commission (ECC) meeting (<https://www.downers.us/events?evtid=741>) has a link for the agenda, which includes the initial conditions report and a summary of other recent environmental discussions by the Council and ECC.

The [report's chapter headings](#) are: intro, community outreach, climate risk assessment, greenest region compact framework analysis, existing conditions analysis, greenhouse gas inventory, issues and opportunities. The presentation focus on key takeaways from each chapter, and an overall summary of issues and opportunities.

The presentation was in the committee room and there was much engagement, questions and commentary from the Council. Many of the Council comments addressed information from the report about how we compare to other DuPage County towns, our stormwater projects, water quality, greenhouse gas emissions (including residential vs. commercial properties), management of open space, village operations and energy efficiency, and public perceptions/engagement.

Commissioner Sadowski-Fugitt suggested a focus on village policies, village codes and incentives. She also had many other questions and comments on the report.

In response to a question, Village Manager Dave Fieldman mentioned the village is beginning the process of converting the remaining non-LED street lights to LED. Also, the village is planning to look at improving the energy efficiency of the downtown parking deck, including possible solar installation and more efficient lighting – the report pointed out it is a surprising energy hog.

Commissioner Davenport expressed concerns about climate projections and future extremely hot days – how resilient are we / can we be, including our electrical grid?

Commissioner Gilmartin asked if we can find out how many private solar installations we have in town? He also suggested focusing on actionable items and links to the other plans (bike/pedestrian plan, etc.).

Commissioner Tully noted the importance of highlighting our environmental successes as a way to build support for future efforts that may require financial outlays. He also noted that historic preservation can have environmental payoffs.

Commissioner Glover noted the importance of information/education to alert residents and businesses to the benefits of energy efficiency, waste reduction etc. He recently made upgrades to his business that he anticipates will increase efficiency and save money.

Commissioner Hose noted that investment in environmental quality has long run payoffs, analogous to the current long-running village stormwater project.

These are just a few highlights, there was a good 90 minutes of discussion – bottom line, the village council is very engaged and interested in environmental sustainability and eager to get some concrete plans and proposals to consider.