



Village of Westchester

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MARIANA NICOLAE
KARI ROBERG
ALEX SILVA
NIKKI WAY
ELIZABETH WISEMAN-CHASE
WALTER WOJCIK

GROW Ecological Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2026 @ 6:30pm

Village Hall Board Room

1. **Call to Order 6:34pm**
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call-**
Commissioners Present: Nikki Way, Elizabeth Wiseman-Chase, Walter Wojcik, Demitrus Evans, Mariana Nicolae, Kari Roberg, Alex Silva; Liaison: Evie Slavic; Public: Konnie Prohaska, Julie Orr
Absent: Annie Canavan
4. **Inspiration –**
Commissioner Evans read about the 7th Generation Principle which calls us to think about how today's decisions will affect people seven generations ahead (150-200 years into the future); they will have to live with the results of our decisions. Locally, prairie restoration is an example of positive action to support biodiversity and plant deep ecosystem roots for the future.
 - a. Next Month: Mariana Nicolae
5. **Review of Minutes –**
 - a. Feb minutes – deferred to next month; Demitrus Evans to send
 - b. March minutes – Kari Roberg
 - c. Next month: Alex Silva
6. **Old Business**
 - a. Quarterly Report
 - Q4 2025 Nikki Way to send
 - Q1 2026: Alex Silva
 - b. Updates from Village Staff and Board Liaison - Evie Slavic provided the following updates:
 - Wedgewood Restoration Project - \$55,000 project (\$25,000 reimbursed by grant) will be conducted by a DeKalb company in business for over 50 yrs with wealth of experience. Alex asked what they will treat buckthorn with; Evie to look into answer. Includes 3 years of ecological maintenance in annual grant, 20 native trees, native seeds. **ACTION:** GROW might want to put on agenda annually to suggest ecological work (Sept agenda item)

- Community Energy Plan – Draft will be open online for public comment March 9-April 2; presented to Village Board March 24; Community meeting March 25 for public comment (**ACTION**: GROW Commissioners try to attend); final plan presented to Board April or May
- Request for Walt to reach out to Annie next week with needs for upcoming event
- 2026 Westchester events for GROW Tabling:
 - o June 20, Juneteenth
 - o July 31 & August 1, Party in Park
 - o August 4, National Night Out

c. Energy Report – Elizabeth Wiseman-Chase reported the Energy Plan has been 12 months of planning with over 310 community members engaged, 2 community meetings and events, 2 community surveys, and research documents

d. Strategic Plan – tabled by Nikki Way

e. Metrics – Mariana Nicolae reported metrics on EVs in town, solar panels (has an email out and waiting for results on permits), Reuse-a-Palooza (info to come). Let Mariana know if there are other metrics to track.

f. SBC Grant – Discussed current fiscal year proposals for FY26

- Alex Silva proposed a \$10 or \$20 subsidy for purchasing native plants thru West Cook Wild Ones; they have 100 species of different levels of growth; discount code would be provided; would cover requirement for Mayors for Monarchs pledge if Westchester participates in the future possible. GROW Commissioners approved a \$20 subsidy for 25 households for FY26 or FY27.
- Demitrus Evans – awaiting sample of shirt and then will place order (should be two weeks to receive)
- **ACTION**: Liz Chase needs help with Water Efficiency, Home Electrification and Wildfire storyboards
- **ACTION**: Add 'GROW Approved' and 'Board Approved' columns to budget tracking spreadsheet
- Proposed to spend additional FY26 money on promotional items for tabling. Approved by GROW. Nikki Way to write up proposal.
- Kari provided update on SCARCE Consulting services for FY26; awaiting response from SCARCE

g. Communications & Events

i. Event Needs

- i. WW reported 6 people currently signed up to people present at Green Success Story event, Walt to contact Annie about needs
- ii. MN reported Argonne Tour attendance is almost full
- iii. KR reported Repair-a-Palooza event has been approved for Sept 26 at Village Hall
- iv. NW asked all to start thinking about how to represent GROW in 4th of July Parade (**ACTION**)

ii. Newsletter

- i. KR will send draft of April article for comment
- ii. Curbside composting not yet flushed out
- iii. Village is looking at changes in frequency and logistics of newsletter for future

7. New Business

- a. GROW page on website – Alex Silva suggested a Sustainability page under the Community dropdown; build out a new section of website with recycling info, stakeholder specific

resources (i.e. guides for businesses, resident resources, native plant guidelines, etc.) as easy go to for information. As advisory to the board ES mentions this is a great resource idea. GROW approved the idea to move forward.

8. Public Participation

Julie Orr thanked GROW for a fascinating agenda; suggested Grassroots Garden Group (GGG) as a partner in native plant sale, mentioned GGG's sale is the Saturday before Mother's Day

Public was thanked for attendance and were welcomed to return after Executive Session. EWC moved to enter Executive Session, KR second. Entered Executive Session at 7:58pm.

Regular Meeting reentered at 8:31pm

9. New Business cont.

- a. Voting to Release Executive Session Minutes from 2021-March 2026 - KR motion to approve, EWC second. Approved by all.
- b. Succession Planning – ES reviewing procedures with Village; majority agreed to ask LeeAnn Kruszynski to fill a one year term that will be made vacant by Nikki Way and hold open interviews for a September opening that will be made vacant by Mariana Nicolae.
- c. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

10. Adjournment – DE motioned to adjourn, WW second. Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION: GROW might want to put ecological grant on agenda annually to suggest work (Sept 2026 agenda item)

ACTION: GROW Commissioners try to attend Energy Plan Meeting March 25

ACTION: Liz Chase needs help with Water Efficiency, Home Electrification and Wildfire storyboards

ACTION: Add 'GROW Approved' and 'Board Approved' columns to budget tracking spreadsheet

ACTION: Start thinking about how to represent GROW in 4th of July Parade



2026 Planning Calendar (One event per month, plan 3 months in advance)						
Month	Event	Point Person	Date	Location	Status	Notes
Jan-26	<i>Save Money and Energy this Winter</i>	Liz	January 17 @ 9am	Village Hall Board Room	Completed	Event was recorded and placed on Village website

Feb-26						
Mar-26	Share your Green Success Story	Walt + Kari	March 28 @ 1pm	Village Hall Board Room	Approved	
<i>Tabling</i>						
TBD	SBC Field Trip (Commissioners Only)	Spring	Need Date		Approved	Can we take videos for the new media idea? - Nikki
Apr-26						
<i>Tabling</i>						
May - 26	Argonne Lab Tour	Mariana	May 7 @ 9am	Argonne Lab	Approved	Need to know what will be covered
<i>Tabling</i>						
Jun-26						
<i>Tabling</i>	Juneteenth		Need Date			
Jul-26	July 4 th Parade		July 4th			
<i>Tabling</i>	Party in the Park		Need Date			
<i>Tabling</i>	Native Plant Education at GGG Garden Walk	Liz	July 18th			Follow-up needed
Jul/Aug - 26	Tour Sustain DuPage	Kari				Proposal in Review
Aug-26	Home Electrification	Liz				Proposal pending
<i>Tabling</i>	National Night Out		August 4th			
Sep-26	Reusa - Palooza		Sept 19th/20th?			
	Repair (and Collect?)-a-Palooza		Sept 26th/27th?			Proposal in Review
<i>Tabling</i>	Prairie Fest					
Oct-26						
<i>Tabling</i>						
Nov-26						
<i>Tabling</i>						
Dec-26						

Tabling						
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Newsletter Calendar		
Month	Article Topic	Author
Monthly	Plant Based Recipes	Kari
Monthly	Monthly Green Fact	Walt
March 2026	Composting – SBC update	Nikki
April 2026	Earth Day Actions	Kari
May 2026	Native Plants / Wildlife	Alex
June 2026	Environmental Justice	Demitrus
July 2026	Water	Mariana

2026 Agenda Calendar (for reference)		
Month	GROW Business	Education topics
January	SBC Stipend Kick-Off	home efficiency
February	SBC Stipend; Energy plan feedback (overview other plans)	veggie comfort foods;
March	Energy Plan final recommendations and next steps	composting
April	Juneteenth + Fourth of July Planning	Earth Day actions
May	Party in the Park Planning	Native plants; wildlife
June	National Night Out Planning	water; plant-based meals
July		water;
August		electric vehicles; plant-based eating
September		reuse and recycling;
October		composting pumpkins;
November	Strategic Planning	sustainable holiday planning;
December	Strategic Planning	Native plants