



DU PAGE COUNTY

Environmental Committee

Final Summary

421 N. COUNTY FARM ROAD
WHEATON, IL 60187
www.dupagecounty.gov

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

8:30 AM

Room 3500A

1. CALL TO ORDER

8:30 A.M. meeting was called to order by Chair Sheila Rutledge at 8:30 A.M.

2. ROLL CALL

Other members present: Yeena Yoo, Greg Schwarze

PRESENT Cronin Cahill, Evans, Haider, Honig, LaPlante, and Rutledge
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3. CHAIRWOMAN'S REMARKS - CHAIR RUTLEDGE

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following individuals made public comment:

Jacqueline Casazza, president and co-founder of Go Green, Glen Ellyn, and an advocate for reducing plastic pollution, spoke about the dangers of single-use plastics, particularly in terms of health and environmental impacts. She emphasized that plastic contains harmful chemicals which can accumulate in the food chain and in our bodies. While she acknowledged that a plastic-free world is unrealistic, she advocates for reducing single-use plastic products where alternatives exist.

Casazza supports the county's consideration to eliminate single-use plastic water bottles from vending machines, citing research that found significant microplastic contamination in bottled water. She also highlighted the environmental cost of bottled water production, which is much higher in energy consumption compared to tap water. She suggested alternatives, such as water bottle refill stations and the use of recyclable aluminum bottles, encouraging the county to ensure proper recycling systems are in place. Casazza voiced her strong support for any actions taken by the county to reduce single-use plastics.

Wendy Vernon, the Plastic Reduction Chair for the River Prairie group of Sierra Club in Carol Stream, spoke in support of eliminating plastic bottles from vending machines in DuPage County government buildings. Vernon emphasized that plastic production emits harmful toxins and contributes to microplastic contamination in the environment and human bodies. Exposure to microplastics has been linked to various health issues, and the burden affects communities near plastic production sites.

She highlighted the high hidden costs of plastic waste management and health care expenses, estimating that plastics contribute \$250 billion annually to U.S. health care costs. Vernon also

noted the inefficiency of recycling plastic, with less than 6% being recycled in the U.S. She wants DuPage County to act by removing plastic bottles from government buildings, setting a positive example for businesses and institutions while fostering a cleaner, healthier community.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.A. [25-0554](#)

Environmental Committee Minutes - Regular Meeting - Tuesday, February 4, 2025

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Cynthia Cronin Cahill
SECONDER:	Saba Haider

6. DISCUSSION

6.A. Dining Services Plastics Alternatives

Diane Borske, the Manager of Support Services at the Care Center, shared an update on the center's efforts to reduce plastic usage. Key initiatives before 2023 included switching to compostable cups, using unbleached napkins, and providing refillable thermoses for coffee creamers, paper bags and plates. This was not successful due to most customers taking their food to their offices. A discount was offered for bringing refillable cups, and food scraps were recycled to help Animal Services feed small animals.

In 2023-2024, they made more changes, including eliminating foam cups, switching to paper cups and recyclable plastic containers, and biodegradable straws. A trial of aluminum cans for drinks was also implemented. They are now working on eliminating single-use condiment packages.

These changes have had a financial impact. The Care Center's efforts to cut back on plastic have led to an extra \$50,000 in expenses annually. The Care Center's vending contract may be affected because vendors anticipate a decrease in sales due to the shift to cans. Some customers prefer plastic bottles over the canned options. Sales have already decreased significantly and there's concern that reduced revenue from the cafeterias and vending will directly affect residents' activities and services. Diane is seeking direction from the committee on how to balance environmental goals with customer preferences and financial impacts.

Member Greg Schwarze inquired about the revenue the care center generates from the vending company. The care center receives \$5,500 plus 29% of the sales from the vending company in the first year.

The revenue from the vending company last year was close to \$100,000, plus the \$5,500. Each year, the revenue structure increases, with both the percentage and the flat fee rising. The largest revenue comes from the cafeterias.

Member Schwarze asked about the disadvantages of using cans for water at the Care Center. Diane explained that plastic costs are a concern, as well as safety issues for residents. Cans are harder to manage because they create a spill hazard for residents using wheelchairs or walkers.

Diane also mentioned limited housekeeping staff to manage these issues.

Diane explained that bottles are better for residents because they are less likely to spill and can be stored in the refrigerator. She also mentioned that nursing staff prefer bottles as they can take them back to the nurse's station. However, due to a recent COVID/Norovirus outbreak there are additional concerns influencing these decisions. She said the twist bottles are always better. Diane mentioned that for some residents, drinking from cans poses a safety risk, as they might cut their mouths or hands.

Member Saba Haider asked about the \$100,000 revenue and how much is from the water bottles that are being sold? Diane stated that she would have to get more details from vending company as it's hard to get estimates.

Member Haider stated when we look at the number of cans we have sold in the month of February which was 5, but don't know in comparison to how many water bottles were sold in previous months, we don't have that comparative number to decide if we are going in the right direction.

Member Haider mentioned that a cultural shift takes time, effort and doesn't happen in an instant. She added it's important to see numbers in comparison to cans and how many water bottles are selling every month and what that revenue looks like. Member Haider asked about refillable water dispensers and suggested a campaign to encourage people to use refillable water dispensers and bring their own water bottles, as this could significantly help in achieving the environmental goals.

Member Cahill inquired about potential revenue losses from vending machines and cafeterias due to a shift from bottles to cans, asking if there's an estimate of the decline. Diane explained that the trial of selling only cans is currently happening only in the 421 building, and making this change is a complex process. Member Cahill mentioned that there was an 81% decrease in water sales, and Diane clarified that sales between bottles and cans are roughly 50/50, but cans are cheaper.

Member Cahil emphasized that a reduction in revenue would be detrimental to the Care Center. They suggested alternatives like refillable stations or giving each person a personalized cup, but also noted the sanitary concerns. Member Cahill expressed that she is inclined not to remove all plastic bottles.

Member Evans clarified that she does not want to negatively impact the Care Center. She emphasized that it shouldn't create additional work or difficulties for the staff or residents. Her primary worry was about the products sold in cafeterias and vending machines. Member Evans also voiced concern that if plastic bottles were removed, no one would be willing to bid on the vending contracts if plastic bottles aren't included.

Diane says there are 50 machines in all the county buildings and the scope is big. Chair Rutledge asked Diane to have the numbers the members asked for and the discussion will be continued.

7. PRESENTATIONS

7.A. SCARCE

Kay McKeen from SCARCE presented several successful initiatives in DuPage County. The "Pumpkin Smash" event had the highest participation with three locations in Naperville and growing involvement from scout groups. The vegetable cooking oil collection saw over 200 gallons collected in one morning, and efforts are being made to expand collections in underserved areas. Other achievements included successful holiday light collections, recycling of over half a million pounds of paper and metal, and increased reuse of books for literacy projects.

There were 89 programs offered, including energy conservation and composting, reaching 1,252 participants. Medinah schools had a STEM night and 80 kids participated in energy conservation projects. The fifth Repair Fair saw 90 attendees and 190 items repaired. Collaboration with sustainability specialists in towns like Naperville and Downers Grove is ongoing, and there were educational initiatives, such as a hazardous waste site tour for teachers. Kay highlighted the importance of the Green Your Gig program and how much growth has occurred.

A design challenge will take place on April 15, and the Earth Flag ceremony will be held on Earth Day, April 22. The Sheriff's department is adding a fourth location for syringe and medicine collection, and Downers Grove is reintroducing a Recycling Extravaganza after a decade. Other upcoming events include Lisle Sustainability Saturday on March 15 and 27 scheduled events for the year.

8. STAFF REPORTS

8.A. [25-0621](#)

Switch Together Solar: Northern Illinois 2025

Joy Hinz mentions that her team is collaborating with Citizens Utility, the Midwest Renewable Energy Association, and the collar counties on a group-buy initiative for solar energy. This program involves soliciting reputable solar firms to offer discounted group pricing, which has saved residents about \$0.24 on solar installations. Over the years, the initiative has resulted in 80 solar installations.

8.B. [25-0622](#)

Waste Hauler Survey

Joy discusses the waste hauler survey, noting that an ordinance was passed requiring waste haulers to report their commercial, industrial, and residential numbers. This data will be used to implement the solid waste management plan in the future, providing a clearer understanding of the commercial sector's waste activities.

9. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

10. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

11. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 A.M.