

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Agenda

Tuesday, March 13, 2011

6 PM, Centre of Elgin, 100 Symphony Way, West Conference Room

A. Call to order (chairperson)

B. Roll Call (staff liaison)

Commissioners Anderson, Frazier, Knoerr, Martin, Platt, Segel and Jacox present.

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Minutes approved.

D. Discussion Items

1. Complete Streets Policy

The commission reviewed the "Complete Streets Policy" project form submitted by Tom Armstrong of the Urban Design working group. Staff Liaison Aaron Cosentino led the commission through each scoring category.

Municipal Compatibility (20 of 20)

Commissioner Martin indicated that the project fit into the Sustainability Action Plan perfectly and the project should be awarded the full 20 points. The adoption of the ordinance is straightforward. The commission agreed.

Community Benefit (40 of 40)

The commission awarded the application the full 20 points under the "addresses a community need" section of Community Benefit.

The commission had several questions related to the educational aspects of the project. Specifically the commission asked about what the \$1000 noted in the application would be used for. Tom Armstrong noted that the funds would go towards printing flyers, outreach materials and a holding a complete streets workshop. Mr. Armstrong also noted that there is a PowerPoint presentation that is free for public use. An educational item could also be placed on the city's sustainability webpage.

Audience member Dave Jurina asked how a complete streets policy would be applied to a suburb. For instance, does this sort of policy dictate developing at a certain density? Mr. Armstrong said that this policy does not require certain densities but is more of an opportunity to develop new guidelines. He also noted that it is already Elgin's comprehensive plan to adopt a complete streets policy.

The full 40 points was awarded in this category.

Participation (10 of 10)

The project proposal lists many partnering organizations including Cyclists, Walkers, Neighborhood Reps, Elgin Area Organizations, Elgin Area Educators , Elgin Area Businesses, city staff and other government agencies. Commissioner Martin asked if any organizations have committed to partnering on this initiative. Tom Armstrong indicated that no formal partnerships have been formed. Other commissioners felt that the scoring criteria is based on the projects “opportunity” to promote partnerships, not on having partnerships finalized. The commission agreed that as the language in the scoring criteria only refers to partnership opportunities, the full 10 points should be awarded.

Project Feasibility (10 of 15)

Commissioner Martin noted that the project is feasible. However, there is some question as to how the funds listed in the proposal are going to be used. Commissioner Anderson agreed, and asked about the policy’s “teeth,” more specifically she asked how the city can implement the policy. Tom Armstrong responded noting that, the city’s focus now should be on adopting a complete streets policy. He admitted that it is more difficult to retrofit existing developments. Mr. Armstrong feels that Elgin is falling behind other communities in this area. He estimated that 15 other Illinois communities have adopted a complete streets policy. Mr. Armstrong also noted that he thinks most of Elgin’s streets are already bike-able. He noted that the first step in implementing a complete streets policy is to review Elgin’s street design standards so that when improvements are made, the city takes all modes of travel into account. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory committee member Chris Manheim noted that his committee is moving forward with a sidewalk gap analysis study. The results of this study will also help implement a complete streets policy. Tom Armstrong concurred noting that such a study could help identify a network of complete streets within Elgin.

Commissioner Knoerr asked if a complete streets policy would also address parking requirements. Staff member Aaron Cosentino noted that the city regularly adds bike lanes to streets when they are resurfaced, rehabilitated or reconstructed, if no on-street parking exists. When adding a bike lane would require the removal of on-street parking, outreach is performed to determine neighborhood preferences. Commissioner Anderson then asked Tom Armstrong to provide the names of communities that adopted the policy, then successfully implemented its recommendations. Tom Armstrong noted that the policy serves as a formal commitment that essentially says, when the city considers altering a street, all modes of travel are considered.

The commission also questioned the project’s budget. Commissioner Martin advocated for awarding zero points for the budget. The commission agreed that the budget was vague, but felt that this project is something important enough to dedicate funds to. Commissioner Anderson voiced a dissenting opinion, noting that she did not feel this was a wise use of commission funds at this stage of the project. She advocated for getting the policy adopted

first, then considering using funds to conduct outreach. Commissioner Segel felt that funds should be spent on engaging the community as the policy is developed, not after. He noted that developing the policy is an opportunity to reach out to the various stakeholders and connect the public to local government activities.

Councilwoman Tish Powell spoke at this time, noting that the city is considering sending out hard copy newsletters again to reach a wider audience. She indicated that this item could be something worth noting in a newsletter.

Tom Armstrong then suggested that his proposal be revised and eliminate the \$1000. He noted that the amount is a rough estimate. The commission however did not agree that should be done and that awarding funds shows a “stamp of approval” for the project. The commission agreed to award 5 of 10 points to the budget.

Cost Effectiveness (5 of 10)

Decision

Based on the scoring criteria, the commission voted to move forward with the complete street policy project.

2. Sustainability Display Discussion

Staff member Aaron Cosentino reviewed drafts of possible sustainability displays for the Green Expo. He asked the commission for their assistance in developing the displays. The commission felt that more focus should be on large images and less focus on text. Text and educational elements can be used as handouts accompanying the displays.

The commission felt that rather than trying for nine displays, perhaps only three or four displays should be created. Commissioner Martin volunteered to create a display related to backyard chickens.

Instead of trying to decided which banners to create, Commissioner Platt suggested waiting until the next meeting, and seeing what progress has been made. The commission agreed. In general, there was consensus on creating a sustainable landscaping banner, complete streets, backyard chickens, energy efficiency and “being a green kid”.

3. Southwest and Near West Neighborhood Green Infrastructure Kick-off meeting

Aaron Cosentino announced that a kick off meeting for the city’s green infrastructure grant program would occur March 19, at 7 PM a the Zion Lutheran Church, 330 Griswold Street. This meeting would introduce the city’s parkway rain garden program and solicit volunteer property owners to have these landscape features installed on their parkway.

E. Working Group Reports

F. Old Business

1. Resource Conservation Kits

Aaron Cosentino updated the commission noting that Home Depot and Ace Hardware agreed to work with the city on providing the items for the kits, Menards had declined. Aaron Cosentino also noted that he is working with ComEd to obtain a waiver so that participant's energy use can be tracked efficiently.

2. Backyard Chicken Ordinance

Commissioner Martin noted that he would provide a draft ordinance to Aaron Cosentino in the next few weeks.

G. Commissioner comments/announcements

1. Elgin Green Coalition meeting re-cap

H. Adjourn

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