

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Agenda

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

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

A. Call to order (chairperson)

B. Roll Call (staff liaison)

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

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Minutes were approved

D. Discussion Items

1. Presentation from Robert Morris University Students on Sustainable Opportunities for Elgin

Dr. Shashank Atre from Robert Morris University and his student, Robert Dubal presented information on solar and wind power opportunities in the city of Elgin.

Dr. Atre noted that at present, the solar and wind industry is not really taking "foot." He attributed this to a lack of sharing of information about the technology that each firm has created, "nobody wants to share their trade secrets."

Dr. Atre's student, John Dubal then presented about solar and wind energy. Mr. Dubal noted that his class visited Suzlon Wind Energy, a local Elgin wind turbine manufacturer. From this visit, Mr. Dubal and his class found that wind energy is not feasible for single-family homes, due to the high cost and long term payback. For this reason his class mostly focused on solar power.

Mr. Dubal mentioned the advantages and disadvantages to solar power. Noting that solar energy is abundant. However solar panels have a high capital cost. The return on investment, according to Mr. Dubal is 10 to 20 years.

Mr. Dubal then recommended the city of Elgin pursue solar thermal water heating for the Centre of Elgin. This would not only save the city operating costs, but also serve as a tangible example of Elgin's commitment to sustainability.

Mr. Dubal noted that entities could also lease solar panels. His class also looked into solar powered streetlights. The class found a community in Colorado that is currently implementing solar powered streetlights. It was recommended by Dr. Atre that Elgin contact the city manager

of Wary, Colorado to learn more about the costs and benefits of solar powered streetlights. Commissioner Masterson asked if the panels collect sunlight during the day, then use it at night. Dr. Atre responded that yes, during the day the panel collects light and stores it as electricity. Then, at night the light turns on and provides light for 5 – 6 hours. The cost of a solar powered streetlight is about \$3,000.

Mr. Dubal then spoke to wind energy. Once again he noted its large initial cost and that small residential wind installations are not cost-effective at this time.

Mr. Dubal then suggested a number of ways Elgin could reduce its environmental impact. It was suggested that in conjunction with sending leaf bags to each household, include a coupon for a free reusable shopping bag.

Commissioner Martin noted that he feels a solar thermal water heating system should be reviewed by the city. The installation of such a system would reduce the tax payer subsidy to the Centre, which commissioner Martin feels, would garner support for the initiative.

A copy of the presentation is attached.

2. Elgin Harvest Market Small Green Project Review

The commission reviewed the small neighborhood improvement grant program application submitted by the Downtown Neighborhood Association Harvest Market. The project requests \$1,000 to develop educational signage for use during the Elgin Harvest Market. The applicant applied for several signs outlining where Harvest Market food comes from, a seasonal guide to local food, a visual explanation of how to use the market's LINK card and the benefits of shopping locally.

- Municipal Compatibility
 - a. Project integrates with the City's Sustainable Master Plan and is consistent with City policy and ordinances (0 to 20 points) **20 points**
 - b. Project or activities require minimal maintenance and staff time (0 to 10 points) **10 points**
- Community Benefit
 - a. Project proposes a creative approach to a neighborhood need or enhancement that helps meet the SMP goals(0 to 15 points) **15 points**
 - b. Project activities address a highly recognized need within the neighborhood (0 to 15 points) **10 points**
- Participation

- a. Project includes opportunities to involve neighbors in shaping and carrying out the project (0 to 10 points) **10 points**
- b. The project promotes opportunities to form partnerships with other groups or organizations to complete joint projects or activities (0 to 10 points) **10 points**
- Project Feasibility
 - a. The proposal demonstrates excellence in design, planning, and execution of the proposed project or activity (0 to 10 points) **5 points; fewer points were awarded as the volunteer match was not explicitly spelled out. The commission committed to asking applicants to be more explicit about matching funds in the future. The commission also recognized the amount of volunteer labor that goes into the Harvest Market in general and saw this signage as part of the overall effort.**
 - b. Budget reliably represents the projects expenses and revenue (0 to 10 points) **5 points**

Total: **85/100 points**

Funding amount: **\$1,000**

Match: **In-kind contributions to develop signage and hold Harvest Market weekly during the summer**

Decision: **Approved**

E. Working Group Reports

Staff liaison Aaron Cosentino reported that working group member Janet Poyner has passed away. The commission asked staff to send the family a condolence card.

F. Old Business

1. Resource Conservation Kits

Staff liaison Aaron Cosentino reported that 65 resource conservation kits were distributed at the Green Expo. He reported that ComEd was in attendance to look up each recipient's account number, which will allow the city to track energy reductions. Staff will also monitor natural gas and water use.

The commission suggested that the kits also be distributed at the Public Works Open House, May 12. Commissioner Martin also volunteered to distribute kits at his upcoming Northeast Neighborhood Association meeting, May 10. Aaron Cosentino said those are appropriate

locations, and will need to follow-up with each recipient to obtain their electricity and natural gas account number.

2. Complete Streets Policy

Commissioner Jacox mentioned that he intends to work on this policy over the summer. His time up until now has been spent on developing an ITEP grant application for the pedestrian bridge across the Fox River.

3. Solar and Wind Energy ordinance creation

Commissioner Martin briefly spoke about the creation of a solar and wind ordinance. City of Elgin does not currently have an ordinance that permits solar and wind power installations on residential properties. Instead residents must go through a conditional use process, which can be cumbersome. Commissioner Martin spoke with staff and found that the wind power ordinance was largely complete and therefore focused his efforts the solar ordinance. Commissioner Martin contacted individuals in the solar panel industry and found that the city of Naperville has solar panel regulations worth emulating. He presented a draft ordinance for the commission's review.

His draft was based on Naperville's ordinance and contemplated items such as set back requirements and permitted height above the roof. Commissioner Martin then noted that he feels additional language should be included to account for Elgin's historic districts. He suggested giving the Heritage commission full authority to hold to their guidelines. He suggested that in the historic districts, solar panels could be limited to the back of the home, invisible from the street.

Pat Segel from the Heritage commission was in attendance and offered her input. She does not believe that the Heritage commission's design guidelines contemplate roofing materials and therefore any improvements to the roof may not be under the purview of the Heritage Commission. She advised that the commissioners check with city staff to determine to what level solar panels conflict with the Historic Preservation design guidelines. Once determined, she noted that the Heritage Commission would most likely not need to review solar panel requests. Staff typically issues certificates of appropriateness; only if a project requires a departure from the guidelines would the Heritage Commission review it.

Commissioner Martin then committed to having a formal draft ordinance written for the commission's review for the June meeting.

G. Commissioner comments/announcements

H. Adjourn

The City of Elgin is subject to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting or the facilities, are requested to contact ADA coordinator, at (847) 931-6076, or TTY/TDD (847) 931-5616 promptly to allow the City of Elgin to make reasonable accommodations for those persons.