

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Agenda

Tuesday, August 14, 2012

6 PM, Hawthorne Hill Nature Center, 28 Brookside Drive, Elgin Illinois

A. Call to order (chairperson)

B. Roll Call (staff liaison)

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

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Minutes were approved.

D. Discussion Items

1. Hawthorne Hill Utilization Tour/Discussion

The commission reviewed a memorandum from Greg Bruggeman, manager of Hawthorne Hill Nature Center. Commissioner Anderson, who also serves as the city's naturalist and part-time administrator of the nature center provided a tour of the facility. Commissioner Martin asked about the use of the facility as a research lab for secondary education institutions. Based on the conversation Commissioner Martin developed a set of advisory recommendations for the nature center listed below:

- Make exhibits portable to allow flexibility between programming and rentals in meeting spaces.
- Create and distribute a 2-page document describing Hawthorne to local colleges & universities, scientists, post-grads, and professors. The document would be an invitation to conduct research, field investigations, and laboratory teaching.
- Complete the wildlife viewing center in front of the main building with feeders, water feature and bird houses. Add 2 viewing couches inside the facility and a webcam. Live-stream the wildlife and put the feed on the City of Elgin's website.
- Identify and use off-site storage for educational exhibits. Rotate exhibits quarterly with exchanges between the Elgin Public Museum, Gail Borden, ECC, Judson and other institutions.
- Revise Elgin's master plan to include pedestrian & bicycle access to Hawthorne (talk to BPAC).
- Increase the size of the signage directing visitors to Hawthorne.
- Collect wildflower seeds from Hawthorne for distribution or sale.

- Offer a summer internship to an Environmental Studies major funded by a Grant from the Elgin Sustainability Commission.
- Introduce new native plant and animal species. Diversity will improve the habitat and provide educational & recreational opportunities (turkeys, quail, turtles, bobcat, fox, etc).
- Encourage & educate amateurs to record and publish wildlife sightings & counts at Hawthorne.

2. Presentation from Conservation Foundation

Dan Lobbes of the Conservation Foundation presented to the commission outlining the organization's history and its services. The city of Elgin began working with the Conservation Foundation through the sale of rain barrels and watershed planning. The Conservation Foundation recently completed a Ferson/Otter Creek Watershed plan for the city. Mr. Lobbes noted that education and hands-on learning is important to the Conservation Foundation, and after reading Elgin's Sustainability Action Plan, found many partnership opportunities.

Mr. Lobbes spoke about the Foundation's *Mighty Acorns* program. The program allows students to learn about nature in a "hands-on" way as well as complete actual restoration work. The *Mighty Acorns* curriculum satisfies states requirements for science and spans three-seasons.

The commission asked about the cost for implementing the program at the nature center. Mr. Lobbes indicated that the Foundation could provide a proposal for commission consideration. The commission voted unanimously to have the Conservation Foundation provide a proposal as well as obtain quotes from School District U-46 about busing costs.

3. "No Mow" Conversion Project Proposal

Staff Liaison Cosentino described a project proposal converting the city's "no-mow" zones to native prairie plantings. A proposal was obtained from Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick (HLR) to convert six of the zones as well as maintain the sites through 2015. HLR has successfully naturalized one of the city's detention basins and was approached to provide a proposal for this similar project. Staff Liaison Cosentino proposed the commission fund the capital cost as well as the first year's maintenance costs for \$22,330. The commission had several concerns with the proposal. The commission felt that another proposal should be obtained for these services. The commission also was uncomfortable with spending such a large percentage of their remaining funding on one project. Commissioner Anderson questioned the necessity of "roto-tilling" the soil as she, and other commissioners felt that roto-tilling the soil would promote weed growth. Also the commission had concerns about the long-term maintenance of the sites once turned over to the city in 2016. The commission asked that more information be provided about the level of training city land management employees receive related to the care of native prairie species. Staff Liaison Cosentino noted that the sites would be planted to phase out broad leaf

native plantings over time, so that once turned over to the city, a single broad leaf herbicide could be applied, limiting the intensity of maintenance.

The commission voted unanimously to revise the proposal to fit within a budget of \$15,000 as well as obtain a second proposal from an ecological services firm.

4. Cool Cities Resolution Renewal

The commission voted unanimously to renew Elgin's Cool Cities membership/designation. The commission noted that almost all of the items listed under the "implementation" section of the Cool Cities have been completed by Elgin.

5. Senate Bill 3442 "Plastic Bag and Film Recycling Act"

Staff Liaison Cosentino described Senate Bill 3442, which as several communities have found, enacts arguably weak plastic recycling requirements and seeks to limit home rule powers by completely limiting the ability for communities to enact regulations banning the use of plastic bags or imposing a fee on their use. Other organizations including Champaign, Oak Park, the Illinois Municipal League, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, West Central Municipal Conference, Alliance for the Great Lakes and Illinois Environmental Council have expressed their opposition to this bill in writing to Governor Quinn. The commission voted unanimously to ask Mayor Kaptain to author a letter in opposition to this bill.

E. Working Group Reports

Megan Butler, field organizer from Energy Efficiency Illinois introduced herself, noting that she would be making a more formal presentation to the commission at their next meeting. She briefly reviewed some of the incentives available to Illinois residents for energy efficiency and weatherization upgrades.

Megan Butler
Field Organizer
Energy Efficiency Illinois
630-750-7726
Meg@energyimpactillinois.org

F. Old Business

1. Complete Streets Policy

Commissioner Jacox provided a nearly complete draft of a "complete streets" policy. Commissioner Jacox noted that he is seeking input on the policy. The commission recommended presenting the policy to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and engineering staff.

2. Solar and Wind Energy ordinance creation

Commissioner Martin updated the commission on the solar and wind energy ordinances. The wind ordinance is complete. Staff is reviewing the solar ordinance. Commissioner Martin also spoke to the possibility solar hot water for the Centre. Several weeks ago, Commissioner Martin, Wayne Carlstedt and Aaron Cosentino met with a solar energy firm. The firm looked at the building and has since declined to bid on the project citing three reasons, (1) the price of natural gas is falling rapidly, (2) the grant that could fund a portion this project a grant requires at least a 30 year payback, which this project would not have and (3) the roof is not well suited for solar collectors. The firm did indicate that the roof might be a good candidate for solar photo-voltaic. However the commission seemed to prefer supporting the existing initiative of the hydropower dam, which would completely power the Centre, over placing solar electric panels on the roof.

Commissioner Masterson also asked if geothermal is an option for the Centre in lieu of solar hot water heating.

3. ITEP Grant Application

Staff Liaison Cosentino noted that the city's lobbyist has been informed of the grant application.

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.