

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Minutes

Tuesday, December 18, 2012

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

A. Call to order (chairperson)

B. Roll Call (staff liaison)

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

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Minutes were approved.

D. Discussion Items

1. Proposed 2013 Meeting Schedule

The commission agreed on the following meeting schedule for 2013.

All meetings held at 6 PM, at the Centre of Elgin's West Conference Room

- January 8
- February 12
- March 12
- April 9
- May 14
- June 11
- July 9
- August 13
- September 10
- October 8
- November 12
- December 10

2. Purchase of Service Agreement with ReStore for Rain Barrel and Compost Bin Services

The commission reviewed a memorandum from Solid Waste Coordinator Dan Ault dated Dec. 10, 2012. The memo outlined the city's existing relationship with Habitat for Humanity Restore. The memo recommended, "continuing the partnership with Habitat ReStore as is and add CFL distribution. Staff recommends continuing to sell composters and rain barrels at cost. For CFL bulbs staff recommends that each Elgin patron of Habitat ReStore receive a free bulb. Staff recommends that attached to each bulb is a flyer that contains information about homeowner environmental best practices."

The Sustainability Commission agreed with this approach and recommended entering into a purchase of service agreement with Habitat for Humanity ReStore.

3. Tree Conservation Ordinance Review

The Sustainability Commission reviewed the proposed Tree Conservation Ordinance. The commission generally supported the ordinance but reserved endorsement until after reviewing responses to the following. Their comments are summarized below.

1. 19.16.080 of the ordinance provides for removal of certain dangerous trees without a permit and provides that the city may give verbal authorization to remove a tree which poses a threat to health, safety or property and which requires immediate removal. Examples include a tree which has been blown over or has been struck by lightning.

The Commission asked if the ordinance contemplates any documentation of the verbal authorization. The commission cited an example where an employee gives verbal authorization, but once the tree was removed another employee cites the property owner for removal without a permit. Without documentation of the verbal authorization, this scenario could turn into a property owner's word against a city employee(s).

2. The commission recommended a mechanism be placed within the ordinance that allows for the removal of invasive species of trees without a replacement requirement. The commission cited a scenario where a homeowners' association removes an invasive species such as a Buckthorn from an area such as a native prairie (according to the commission, the Reserve Townhome development on the west side of Elgin has such an area). A requirement for replacing trees in this area would retard efforts to restore the prairie.
3. The commission recommended a mechanism be placed in the ordinance that allows property owners to suggest trees not on the replacement list, assuming city approval of the suggested tree. The commission cited a Pecan Tree, which is native to this region, but did not appear on the replacement tree list.
4. The commission recommended the tree list be amended to include columns indicating (1) if the tree is native to the region and (2) the species' suitable hardiness zone. The addition of this information provides property owners additional information to assist in making tree replacement choices.

4. Neighborhood Improvement Grant Application for educational video production – Judson University

Architecture Professor Robin Randall applied for funds to produce an educational documentary about designing sustainable buildings and teaching sustainability to school age children. The proposed project is to create a short (8 – 15 minute) documentary educational video capturing the multiple layers of teaching sustainability as explored through design, planning and execution. This is accomplished by highlighting the design process as students develop a school sited on the parcel of land just north of the Gail Borden Library. Students were tasked with design the “ultimate” learning environment for 500 students in a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school and community outreach facilities. The project must meet or exceed the *Living Building Challenge* and provide community education for sustainable practices.

Living Building Challenge (www.livingbuildingchallenge.org) is akin to LEED certification but more rigorous. To achieve full certification projects must meet a series of ambitious performance requirements, including net zero energy, waste and water. Professor Randall’s studio is the only studio in the nation designing to this standard.

The grant application was originally \$24,600. This sum included funds for traveling to a conference to present the documentary, video equipment, editing software, student stipends and a project manager.

The Sustainability Commission raised several questions related to the proposal. Concerns about the proposed cost were raised as well as the fact that the proposal included several line items related to travel expenses and capital equipment. Professor Randall acknowledged these concerns and amended her proposal to only include the line items associated with the four student stipends at \$2,000 each and one project manager at \$8,000.

Commissioner Martin asked how much time had already been expended on this project. Professor Randall responded that about 70% of the filming was complete, which equated to about 50 hours of footage.

Commissioner Laura Knoerr expressed concerns that this video is meant for multiple audiences and creating only one version might limit its effectiveness at reaching a particular audience. It was also noted that organizations and educators have limited time, so producing 3 to 5 shorter videos, each with different subject matter, as opposed to one 15-minute video was recommended.

Commissioner Anderson asked if Judson University was supporting this project. Professor Randall indicated that like many other organizations, Judson University was under going financial hardships and is not funding this project. It was noted that the project is not a “class project” but rather an endeavor by a student group and professor.

Commissioner Jacobs raised a number of concerns and felt that public funds should not be used to fund a private institution’s projects or pay its faculty stipends. Commissioner Jacobs inquired if the program would even permit Judson University to apply. Staff Liaison Aaron Cosentino indicated that Judson’s not-for-profit status made Judson eligible.

Commissioner Jacox asked about the useful life of the video once created. Professor Randall noted that once complete, the video will be shared with local and professional organizations the video will have many educational venues including the 2013 Architectural Research Conference at the University of North Carolina, March 27-30, 2013. It will also be shared with the city, local neighborhood groups and most importantly local school districts. In addition the *Living Building Challenge* organization has agreed to place the video on their website.

Staff Liaison Aaron Cosentino asked for clarification on project's proposed budget. It requests four \$2,000 stipends for students calculated at \$10/hour, equating to an additional 200 hours per student left to work on the film. Staff Liaison Cosentino noted this seemed high considering 70% of the filming was already complete.

Staff Liaison Cosentino suggested using a professional editor as doing so provides a cost-effective and professional product. One quote had already been sought, yielding a price of \$4,000. Professor Randall was supporting of this idea. Judson University would provide matching funds in the form of volunteer time, both filming the documentary and conducting pre-editing prior to submitting the film to the professional editor.

The commission scored the grant application.

1. Municipal Compatibility
 - a. Project integrates with the City's Sustainable Master Plan and is consistent with City policy and ordinances (0 to 20 points) *15 points*
 - b. Project or activities require minimal maintenance and staff time (0 to 10 points) *10 points*
2. Community Benefit
 - a. Project proposes a creative approach to a neighborhood need or enhancement that helps meet the SMP goals (0 to 15 points) *8 points*
 - b. Project activities address a highly recognized need within the neighborhood (0 to 15 points) *8 points*
3. Participation
 - a. Project includes opportunities to involve neighbors in shaping and carrying out the project (0 to 10 points) *5 points*
 - b. The project promotes opportunities to form partnerships with other groups or organizations to complete joint projects or activities (0 to 10 points) *7 points*

4. Project Feasibility

- a. The proposal demonstrates excellence in design, planning, and execution of the proposed project or activity (0 to 10 points) *7 points*
- b. Budget reliably represents the projects expenses and revenue (0 to 10 points) *7 points*

The commission voted to approve the grant application in the amount of \$4,000 pending city council approval. Commissioner Jacobs voted against funding this project.

5. Neighborhood Improvement Grant Application for Lords Park Farm Animal/Sustainability Garden Pilot Project

This item was discussed generally but tabled until the January meeting.

6. Housing Authority of Elgin “Pick it up” Anti-litter campaign Neighborhood Improvement Grant Application

HAE Executive Director Damon E. Duncan and Deputy Director Monica Smith applied for funds to help prevent litter through education, outreach and hands-on beautification activities. The proposed litter prevention program is part of the Housing Authority of Elgin’s ECO initiative and focuses on the collaboration between the community and HAE’s residents to create a cleaner, safer environment for the Clifford Court/Owasco Court community. The project proposes to partner with Century Oaks Elementary School to develop and facilitate educational opportunities.

The grant application was originally for \$7,500. This included funds for developing educational presentations for children, developing outreach materials, supplies for cleanup activities and purchasing a recycling container mascot. Serendipitously the city of Elgin had previously purchased two refuse can recycling costumes for outreach during the conversion to a modified-volume based solid waste program. The city on occasion lends these costumes to community groups. Lending the costume to the HAE allows for \$4,000 to be removed from the project budget, leaving \$3,500 in program expenses. The HAE is providing matching funds in the amount of \$13,100, primarily consisting of staff time and administration costs.

Commissioner Anderson asked if the recycling coordinator of Kane County had been contacted. Deputy Director Smith noted that she had not contacted the recycling coordinator but was not opposed to doing so. Commissioner Anderson also felt that it was contradictory to the program’s “anti-litter” intent to produce paper brochures distributed to children, as in her experience those sort of publications become littler themselves. The commission agreed and asked that the Housing Authority of Elgin create displays of a permanent nature to be placed in prominent locations in the project area.

Commissioner Segel noted that he sees litter as the end of the cycle of education. It is important and it is a piece of it but education should begin with waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting and then discuss littering. The commission too agreed with this comment and recommended that the Housing Authority seek to address the problem more holistically by not just focusing on the enforcement of litter (i.e. tickets issued by police) and focus more on the larger educational topics of reduce, reuse, recycle. Commissioner Knoerr agreed and felt that the proposal did not feel engaging as it was presented.

The commission scored the grant application.

1. 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*
2. Community Benefit
 - a. Project proposes a creative approach to a neighborhood need or enhancement that helps meet the SMP goals (0 to 15 points) *10 points*
 - b. Project activities address a highly recognized need within the neighborhood (0 to 15 points) *15 points*
3. Participation
 - a. Project includes opportunities to involve neighbors in shaping and carrying out the project (0 to 10 points) *5 points*
 - b. The project promotes opportunities to form partnerships with other groups or organizations to complete joint projects or activities (0 to 10 points) *8 points*
4. Project Feasibility
 - a. The proposal demonstrates excellence in design, planning, and execution of the proposed project or activity (0 to 10 points) *7 points*
 - b. Budget reliably represents the projects expenses and revenue (0 to 10 points) *8 points*

The commission voted unanimously to approve the grant application in the amount of \$3,500 pending city council approval.

Working Group Reports

None.

E. Old Business

1. Solar and Wind Energy ordinance creation – No Update
2. No Mow Conversion Proposal Status – No Update
3. WaterSense Toilet Rebate Program Proposal – No Update

F. Commissioner comments/announcements

None.

G. 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.