

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Minutes

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

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

A. Call to order (chairperson) – The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm

B. Roll Call (staff liaison) –

Chairpersons Frazier, Jacobs, Jacox, Knoerr, Martin, Masterson, Platt and Segel present. Commissioner Anderson arrived at 7 pm.

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Commissioner Segel proposed an amendment, that his activities be changed to the present tense. Commissioner Martin asked that his place of employment be changed from Patrick to Thomas Engineering.

Changes were unanimously accepted. Minutes approved.

D. Discussion Items

Informational Updates

1. Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant Program

Staff liaison Aaron Cosentino described the city's 2010 Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant application. The funded project consists of installing stormwater best management practices (BMP's) in the Southwest Area Neighborhood (SWAN). The total project cost is \$751,900 broken up as follows: \$117,900 (city share) and \$634,000 (state share). Sufficient funds to cover this match have been identified in the Combined Sewer Separation project funds. This project would occur throughout 2012 and primarily be constructed in 2013. Aaron Cosentino noted that beginning in January significant outreach efforts would occur, trying to find interested property owners that would like to have these BMPs installed on the parkway in front of their home. He asked the commission to help with those efforts. He also noted that the Girl Scouts have indicated interest in assisting the city perhaps during a planting day. Working group member Mary Alice Masonick noted that she knew of at least two groups that could help plant as well.

Commissioner Knoerr asked if the city had any contact names of residents in the SWAN neighborhood. Aaron Cosentino responded, saying that Michael Curtin, activist within the SWAN neighborhood recently met with the Mayor and indicated his interest. Commissioner Knoerr also suggested the city utilize its Code Red system to conduct outreach to the SWAN neighborhood, assuming it can be adjusted to only call a certain area. Aaron Cosentino thought defining a geographic call area was possible.

Commissioner Platt asked if any of these installations would occur along Adams Street. The city recently removed many Ash Trees along Adams Street, and residents are now calling asking for replacement trees. However, some of these locations are not well suited for trees. Commissioner Platt would like to provide these residents with an alternative. Aaron Cosentino noted that because Adams Street's sewers were recently separated they are not eligible for the green infrastructure installations funded by the grant, but that is not to say they could not pursue green infrastructure on their own. Aaron Cosentino went on to say that currently the city does not have a planting plan or green infrastructure installation guide. That is something that will be developed over the course of the project.

Christina Watson noted that Judson University has a number of bio-retention basins that the city could look at during the design phase of the project.

A topic of whether or not these installations would have native plants or non-native. Aaron Cosentino said that at this time, no decisions have been made and the city would look to model their options after Madison, Wisconsin, the city's model for this project. Commissioner Jacox said that utilizing native (or indigenous) plants is definitely something that should be done, as they are the best suited plants for our area. Mary Alice Masonick agreed, noting that using native plants would support the goals of the Green Infrastructure working group.

Chairman Masterson added that while the city should use native plants, it should also be cognizant that due to climate change, the types of plants that once thrived in Illinois' climate may change. Aaron Cosentino noted that Chicago has already incorporated this notion into their planting procedures, utilizing plants that thrive in warmer climates.

2. Electrical aggregation

Staff liaison Cosentino described another city initiative, electric aggregation. He described aggregation noting that Illinois communities have the opportunity to purchase electricity in bulk on behalf of its residents. Communities that have done this have seen a 20% reduction in electricity rates. To do this a community must pass a referendum, after which the city solicits bids from supplier and chooses a rate. Residents have the opportunity to "opt out" of the program with no repercussions. This initiative has an environmental aspect as well. Through aggregation, communities can purchase a percentage (up to 100%) of their energy from renewable sources. Depending on the percentage of renewable energy, the rate may increase, but will still most likely be lower than ComEd's current rate. The decision to receive a portion or all of the aggregated energy from renewable sources is ultimately a city council decision, but there will be at least two public hearings on the topic.

Communities engaged in aggregation typically use a consultant to help conduct outreach. The city's chosen consultant, BlueStar Energy has assisted many communities with similar initiatives. Most notably Aurora, where BlueStar helped the city become a EPA Green Power

Community. BlueStar's main task will be to conduct an extensive public outreach campaign so the referendum is passed.

The city is looking to contract with an alternative energy supplier for two years. In 2014, ComEd is renewing many of its supplier contracts; possibly resulting in lower rates.

Commissioner Segel asked if those that have already chosen to contract with an alternative energy supplier will be eligible for the city's rate. Per the materials given to the commission that those already under contract with an alternative supplier are automatically excluded from the city's aggregation.

Commissioner Segel also suggested the commission be mindful of any grant opportunities that would allow the city to continue its revolving loan program. Additionally he noted that public utilities recently lifted the cap on their "public benefit fund" which may mean increased funding for energy efficiency projects.

Commissioner Platt asked if ComEd would still maintain its infrastructure. Staff Liaison Cosentino said ComEd would still maintain their infrastructure, send bills and handle outages.

Commission operations

3. Meeting format

Aaron Cosentino proposed a meeting format outlined in the commission's materials. Commissioner Martin asked if there was time built into each meeting for the public to comment. Staff Liaison Cosentino noted that there is time during the "Working Group Update" portion of the agenda. The commission unanimously supported this meeting format.

The commission's 2012 schedule was presented for approval. Commissioner Martin asked if the February 14 meeting could be changed. The commission unanimously supported changing the February 14 meeting to February 21 as well as all other meeting dates.

4. Open Meetings Act Review/Structuring operations moving forward

Aaron Cosentino summarized a legal memorandum related to the Commission and the Open Meetings Act. He noted that as a public body whenever more than two commissioners meet to discuss public business it implicates the Open Meetings Act and requires 48-hour notice to the public. However the working groups do not constitute a public body, meaning that up to two commissioners can meet with working group members on a topic and then report back to the commission.

Per the Open Meetings Act the commission must also choose at least one of its members to complete an online training about the Act. Chairman Masterson was chosen to do this.

5. Reinvigorating the working groups

Chairman Masterson observed that the lack of working group members at this meeting clearly demonstrates the need to reinvigorate the working group members. There has been a great deal of attrition amongst the groups; many used to have at least six members.

Several ideas were proposed:

Adopting a working group

Commissioner Martin suggested that each commissioner adopt a working group and try to reignite their interest as well as find out why they left in the first place. Commissioner Frazier noted that people are more likely to attend if they have something specific to work towards. Chairman Masterson agreed, saying that each time a project is decided the commission should publicize it.

Commissioner Segel liked Commissioner Martin's idea of adopting an existing working group but also wanted to ensure that the commission remains open to new members. He suggested the commission reach out to service groups within the community such as Kiwanis and children groups.

Commissioner Knoerr motioned that working group assignments be made, seconded by Commissioner Segel, the motion was unanimously approved. Working group assignments are as follows:

Commissioner	Group 1	Group 2
April Anderson	Green Infrastructure	Healthy Living
Toni Frazier	Recycling and Waste Mgmt.	Economic Development
Mitch Jacobs	Water Resources	Recycling and Waste Mgmt.
Ryan Jacox	Transportation and Mobility	Urban Design
Laura Knoerr	Healthy Living	Economic Development
Todd Martin	Transportation and Mobility	Water Resources
Gary Masterson	Alternative Energy	Green Building Technologies
Jason Platt	Urban Design	Green Infrastructure
Dave Segel	Green Building Technologies	Alternative Energy

Staff Liaison Cosentino will forward each group's contact information to the applicable commissioner.

Focusing efforts towards children

Commissioner Knoerr encouraged the commission to reach out to children. She pointed to the fact that the Girl Scouts have already indicated an interest in helping and wondered about the other, school and non-school related groups that would also have an interest.

Chairman Masterson suggested the commission use the Green Expo and focus on getting the word out to children. Commissioner Knoerr agreed and proposed creating a contest amongst school children to create a 30-second video about sustainability.

Commissioner Martin suggested the commission invite representatives from each school to attend commission meetings. To do this he suggested the commission put together a general information sheet about the effort.

Commissioner Anderson said she is intrigued by the possibility of child participation. She suggested the commission come up with a plan on what they can do to help the commission or how they can lessen their environmental impact.

Commissioner Platt suggested the commission reach out to home schooled children. His past experiences have been overwhelmingly positive and he has found them to be very motivated volunteers.

Developing a timeline and project submittal deadline

Commissioner Platt suggested that the commission simply create a deadline for project submittals. Then publish the commission's 2012 project list and solicit volunteers for those projects. Commissioner Frazier agreed with this approach and noted that timelines are effective motivators and the commission's role is to facilitate implementing the plan, bringing working group member's desires to fruition.

Providing a meeting space for working groups

Chairman Masterson suggested creating an informal meeting space for the working groups as they help implement the projects. He suggested the library or the Centre.

6. Evaluation criteria for proposed projects

Commissioner Todd Martin raised this issue. He noted that as of right now, the commission is operating on "first come first serve basis." He suggested the commission not do this and instead develop criteria by which all project submittals can be evaluated. He noted that there are several measures the commission can use including: kilo-watt hours, dollars saved, gallons conserved, continuing education credits earned or number of people being reached. He asked the commission agree upon a set of criteria adopt them in writing. Developing these criteria will allow the commission to make defensible decisions.

Chairman Masterson noted that the commission should ask the working groups how they think projects should be evaluated. He also said that many of what the commission may be involved with is very broad and may not lend to quantification. Audience member Mary Alice Masonick also suggested the commission look at "number of species supported" as a criteria.

Commissioner Platt asked if commissioners may also suggest projects. Staff Liaison Cosentino noted that both working groups and commissioners can submit projects for commission consideration.

The commission unanimously agreed that Commissioner Martin develop a list of criteria by which project requests can be submitted. Commissioner Martin will present his list to the commission at their January meeting.

7. U46 participation in sustainability efforts

Aaron Cosentino noted that his contacts at Abbott Middle School are working on getting the name of someone within U46 administration that would be well suited to attend commission meetings. He will notify the commission once his contacts respond.

Commission Initiatives

8. The role of sustainable landscaping on city properties (Commissioner Anderson)

Commissioner Anderson asked about the role of native plants and sustainable landscaping on city property. Aaron Cosentino provided a brief explanation of how the city's land management department coordinates its plantings; namely through site characteristics and plant availability.

Commissioner Platt noted that the city has no planting specs and as the arborist he is not consulted on planting plans. The commission felt this could be something to explore further and indicated an interest in developing planting guidelines for the city.

9. Facilitating food co-ops (Commissioner Platt)

This item was tabled.

E. Working Group Reports

1. Reader's Digest We Hear You America program (Healthy Living and Community Education working group)

Staff Liaison Cosentino described the program and announced that Mayor Dave Kaptain was chosen to be the Mayor of the Week. He encouraged the commission to log onto the site and vote for Elgin. If Elgin were to have the largest number of votes it would receive \$50,000 to use on a project of the community's choice (although the decision would ultimately be made by the city council). The contest page allows all voters the chance to describe what they would use the money for or to simply share stories about Elgin. Aaron Cosentino encouraged the commission to log on and vote.

F. Old Business

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.