



Minutes • Tuesday, October 13, 2015 • 6 PM  
Robert Gilliam Municipal Complex, City Hall  
Second Floor South Conference Room  
150 Dexter Ct., Elgin, IL 60120

**A. Call to order (chairperson)**

**B. Roll Call (staff liaison)**

**C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes**

**D. Communications**

**1. Sustainability Honor Roll presentation**

***Mayor Kaptain will present the second award to Carl Missele***

Mayor Kaptain told a few stories about Carl that account for his character. He then presented Carl the award and the two posed for a few pictures. Carl gave thanks for the recognition.

**2. Freedom Field Trip presentation**

***Commissioner Masterson will provide a brief recap on the September 26 field trip***

Gary presented a slideshow of photos from the trip to Freedom Field, and described different aspects of the tour.

**E. Discussion Items**

**1. Presentation by Waste Management**

***Waste Management representatives will present to the commission on issues with recycling in the Elgin area, followed by time for questions and discussion.***

Vaughn Kuerschner and Sheila Sarovich, both representatives for Waste Management, presented to the commission. They showed a photo of an actual recycling load just taken off the truck to illustrate what the types of non-recyclables that are ending up in recycling. They discussed global trends in recycling and how the demand for recyclables is down in the Chinese market. Now, the recyclables they do take need to be really clean. Low oil prices makes raw materials cheaper to make than recycling right now. The recycling world has changed. The way we live has changed; we are using way more materials. Waste generation per capita is down. For example, there is much less paper. Why? One reason is there has been a 50% reduction in newspaper since 2006. People want to recycle, and when in doubt, they throw items in the recycling. The thinking needs to be the opposite, as this mentality ends up contaminating more recycling that it does helping. Product packaging has changed, and recycling is different in different parts of the country as well. Consumers can become confused. Containers have changed. Overall, the net impact is that consumers are confused on what can and cannot be recycled – they want to, but habits vary. Attitudes around recycling are good, but we need to change behaviors. Instead of traditional advertising campaign, they use community-based social marketing strategies. These strategies work best when there are lots of partners within communities. It allows

the opportunity to create community-wide education. To be effective, they simplify the message. Vaughn & Sheila said, "We don't just tell people what to do, we tell them why, so there is understanding." Recycle Often Recycle Right is the campaign, which suggests it's time to rethink recycling. Waste Management is asking people to make a commitment and only do 3 things: 1) Recycle all bottles cans & paper, 2) No food or liquids, and 3) No plastic bags. Commissioner Masterson mentioned we are trying to take a position on single-use plastic bags. Vaughn said, "While they are recyclable, its something Waste Management does not collect." Commissioner Segel asked if we have the campaign information is available in Spanish. It is not on website yet, but they can provide materials as we need. Commissioner Aagesen inquired as to how they measure success. Vaughn said, "We rely a lot on the drivers. You can look at the load when the truck gets back. You know what area of town they were in." Commissioner Aagesen asked if there are any ideas for incentives, like, if looking at my bin and all is correct, maybe I receive a discount on recycling. Vaughn agreed to share with Dan Ault feedback when contamination levels improve, and we could talk about doing something in the future. Right now we need to build on this and focus on education. That would be a great way to focus on the individual. Commissioner Segel said he would encourage integrating this education into the school system as much as possible. Commissioner Keare asked about the China situation regarding taking our recycling. Since they are a developing nation and they use a lot of the material to make goods, they're economy has slowed down and are thus more strict on what they'll accept. Dan Ault mentioned that Elgin's number one problem in waste is contaminated recycling. Dan Ault asked that the liaison send the RORR MythBusters to the commission. It is interesting how much that is recovered at a recycling plant actually ends up going to the landfill. The commission can take the lead on this locally and really make an impact.

## **2. Boys & Girls Club of Elgin garden**

***After recent theft from garden at the Boys & Girls Club of Elgin, we will discuss potential ways to assist & support.***

Commissioners questioned whether or not the Boys and Girls Club has cameras or any security. They suggested the neighbors get involved, as to have the community invested and keep an eye out. Around harvest time, increased police presence in the neighborhood could be requested. Maybe next spring, if they could organize a "donate a plant day" and have a list of what they want and need. The commission could set up a volunteer day to help with either the fence or planting next year. The commission could also look into providing a sign saying "Private garden" or a more educational sign describing why they have the garden.

## **F. Old Business**

### **1. Plastic Bag Ordinance**

***Continued discussion on the research and possibility of developing a plastic bag ordinance, or other methods of addressing the issue in the city of Elgin.***

Commissioner Jacobs had further investigated compostable bags and found them to be very expensive. A campaign to educate the public would be a good place to start. Asking businesses to have cashiers ask, "Do you need a bag for this?" or "Did you bring your own bag?" Commissioner Aagesen suggested we gather metrics and publish the information from Chicago, to show people that bans are terrible, and there is a reason for it. Liaison suggested drafting a letter to businesses asking them to try leaving boxes by the checkout and see if people use them. Commissioner Masterson suggested we partner with Waste Management to distribute reusable bags with both logos as well as their "3 things to

remember” icons. We should piggy back on the WM initiatives and ask people to make a commitment to recycling right or reducing plastic bag use. An audience member suggested a return “community Elgin bag” use. Commissioner Frazier suggested we have a presence at a Kane County event to help educate folks. Liaison will reach out to Jennifer Jarland of Kane County Recycling to inquire. Commissioner Masterson motioned we partner with Waste Management to create reusable bags. It may be best to reach local small shops first. The commission would like to distribute directly to residents. The bag could have an informational insert, with one side printed in Spanish, or have the message rely on icons. Liaison suggested we start with the neighborhoods that are bringing in the most contaminated recyclables first. The commission also discussed that we try to change habits by asking businesses, like Butera and other big box stores, to get involved in ways that would not cost them anything. One idea is to get cashiers to start asking, “Did you bring a bag today?” or “Do you need a bag?” Another idea is to ask businesses to do a bag exchange, or have boxes by checkout. It was suggested we ask Waste Management representatives to educate stores, and potentially have small sessions with employers to help them to both save money and help the environment. A motion was made to approach businesses and ask Waste Management to partner for a reusable bag program.

## **2. Solar ordinance**

### ***Discussion on potential changes to the City of Elgin’s current solar ordinance based on findings of other nearby community solar ordinances.***

Todd Martin attended the meeting, and said he would be more likely to install solar if it were less complicated to do so. Commissioner Jacobs gave some background as to how frustrated he was when trying to put solar on his new house. Liaison told commission that they need to determine exactly what changes they would like to see in the ordinance. Chairperson Knoerr suggested it should be like the City of Chicago, where they put all the liability on the installer and have a quick turn around time. Chicago suggests you choose a solar installer that is knowledgeable about grants. With the Chicago Ordinance, by eliminating engineering requirement, they save residents nearly \$2,000-\$3000, and its up to the installer to ensure that engineering is adequate. It was agreed there is a need to develop some framework, a publishable document, and have a reply for a reasonable amount of time. Commissioner Jacobs made a motion that due to the late collection of commissioner research, it would be best for all to take home the spreadsheet of information and come back next months with a list of priorities in what changes are to be requested.

## **3. Partners for Places grant proposal**

### ***Continued discussion on project idea, requirements, and timeline.***

Commissioner Segel inquired as to why this discussion item isn’t listed as the “water issue” project. Liaison responded that no specific project, related to water or not, has yet been agreed upon. Chairperson Knoerr said water is huge and abstract; we need to do something we can wrap our hands around. She suggested we need to find out from departments what projects they have going. Commissioner Hernandez suggested the group look into doing a project related to community composting. A motion was made for to each commissioner to bring an idea/project that would be beneficial to the community at the November meeting.

## **G. Commissioner comments/announcements**

Commissioner Masterson announced that Wanxiang Energy has invited the commission to tour their manufacturing plant. He also announced that the Northern Illinois Renewable Energy

Summit & Expo is on Thursday, November 5. He will be driving and can accommodate 4 passengers.

Todd Martin announced that he is part of the pilot chicken program. He discussed the possibility of an Elgin sustainability tour to view the chicken homes. Some members of the community are still afraid of chickens, and it's a great way to educate them. The tour could include open houses at sustainable homes, LEED buildings, rain gardens, etc. Todd would be willing to coordinate and get the idea off the ground. He requested we add this idea as a discussion item to the next meeting. It could be planned over winter, and launched in the springtime.

## **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.