



Minutes • Tuesday, November 17, 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)

Chairperson Knoerr and Commissioners Aageson, Frazier, Hernandez, Jacobs, Keare, Masterson, and Segel are all present.

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

The October 2015 meeting minutes were approved.

D. Discussion Items

Chairperson Knoerr expressed the need to review Roberts Rules of Order and adhere to them to help respect everyone's time and keep our meeting running smoothly.

There is also a need to review the Open Meetings Act. Liaison will send out a copy of rules and main points to remember for Open Meetings Act to commissioners.

E. Old Business

1. Solar ordinance

Continued discussion on potential changes to the City of Elgin's current solar ordinance based on findings of other nearby community solar ordinances.

The commission reviewed Commissioner Jacobs' suggested modifications to the solar ordinance. Commissioner Masterson reviewed the original spreadsheet along with these for his analysis. Both said that screening solar panels from view seems logical. Commercial buildings were not specifically addressed regarding screening in the suggestions, as Commissioner Jacobs stated they are on property that is zoned as commercial, and therefore has different building requirements.

One suggested modification of Commissioner Jacobs' is to require that contractors installing solar must be licensed by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP), which seemed like the prevailing organization. This related to the "E: Additional Regulations" section of the ordinance. Commissioner Frazier said if this becomes ordinance, it could create issues when requiring a specific certification of a organization/body, for example, if the organization went out of business. Commissioner Commissioner Keare suggested they installer be a certified electrician. Chairperson Knoerr suggested the text be changed to say installer is certified or industry-recognized. "She suggested we look up another ordinance that governs electrician certifications.

Commissioner Frazier stated that the City of Elgin requires contractors provide proof of license and insurance. Commissioner Masterson stated that the Rockford ordinance says it shall adhere to the national electrical code. Commissioner Frazier suggested we rephrase the language to say, "Certified by an industry-standard organization such as NABCEP."

Commissioner Ageson stated that while looking over Chicago's ordinance, all solar systems are subject to review by the city and it's a policy, not an ordinance, meaning they withhold the right to decide whether or not each installation is feasible. Commissioner Frazier suggested we do not have the staff to do what Chicago does, and we want to make it simpler, not as burdensome for citizens.

In one modification recommendation, Commissioner Jacobs suggested offering residents a rebate of a percentage of the installation cost. The cost of installation is much more expensive than the solar panels themselves. Liaison suggested with the current state of the budget, it would be difficult if not impossible to fund such a rebate program. If there's no way to fund a rebate, maybe we could waive the permit fee.

Commissioner Masterson mentioned he was unsure of what tree ordinance is referenced and how it's relevant in the solar ordinance. Liaison agreed to find additional information. Commissioner Frazier made a motion to present these ideas to the Planning and Zoning commission. Commissioner Jacobs seconded the motion. Commissioner Hernandez suggested that Andy Urbock (solar teacher at ECC) could be a great resource for additional information on the topic. Chairperson Knoerr asked if he would be able to provide feedback on the suggested ordinance modifications. Commissioner Frazier rescinded her motion and made a revised motion to have the mentioned Andy Urbock, if available to, review our modifications & Commissioner Hernandez facilitate such a dialogue. The motion was passed. Liaison would reach out to Sarosh Sahar of the Community Development department to see if he can attend December 8 meeting to answer any questions.

2. Partners for Places grant proposal

Continued discussion on project idea, requirements, and timeline.

Commissioner Segel stated it was not sensible to get a proposal together by December. He suggested the need to focus on Elgin, and not worry about other entities. He stated that the commission has quality ideas, but the best thing to do is taking a different approach, and plant the seeds for a project, not make up a project. He suggested the commission try to get organizations in partnership, and work on the things that are important related to water quality and sensibility for the future. People need to be engaged, and this could give groups a reason to meet together. He suggests we need to make a toolbox available to such groups and organizations.

Commissioner Masterson said one project example he was interested in was urban agriculture, but would need to first find if it would be feasible. Some questions include are there empty lots that weren't ground sites, and if they happen to be in neighborhoods where there is an association, would the city allow that neighborhood to use it for neighborhood gardening? The commission could support materials & tools for such a project. Chairperson Knoerr commented that having a visible project is the best way to spread the message. Commissioner Masterson went on to suggest there could be a pilot program with two or three lots, in an area where an organization is already in place and they are more likely to succeed. After a year, the program could be evaluated and potentially expanded.

Commissioner Hernandez suggested that schools would be a great place to start.

Commissioner Masterson commented that there could be issues with that related to the summer when kids are out of school. Commissioner Hernandez said it'd be a good activity for kids during the summer, and since it'd be voluntary, there wouldn't be cost for kids to enroll. Commissioner Knoerr suggested that to move that forward, another organization would need to be involved and buy into it. Soil in lots would also need to be tested. The land by Gail Borden is visible and gets a lot of sun, but commissioners suggested that land

was a prior recycling area, and the soil is not healthy. Potential partners for such a program include the Elgin Community Garden Network, the Boys and Girls Club of Elgin, and the Gail Borden Public Library. The liaison said the city currently has an “Adopt a Garden” program, but that is for city-owned garden beds. This project would be Community Use of Public Land for Public Gardens.

Elgin Community College has a summer program for children. Commissioner Jacobs said the money from the grant would provide money to hire people to carry out such a program and teach; there’s no need to find volunteers to run programs. Commissioner Keare has a friend in Chicago that bought a lot of land for an urban farm, and he may be a good resource for both community-level gardening and school/neighborhood gardening. Commissioner Aageson looked at idea bank and found one to be most all encompassing projects was Charlottesville, VA’s project to reduce energy consumption by increasing efficiency. By getting people to see their costs go down, they can be more inclined to change habits. Retrofit homes, outreach (encouraging behavior changes), and deliver targeted outreach to the hard-to-reach segments (low income, renters) are some examples.

Commissioner Frazier wants to keep stay in line with our strategic goals and plans, and especially how economic development relates to sustainability. She would like us to work towards Shared Harvest coming into fruition. Chairperson Knoerr suggested, since they are a for-profit organization, we cannot help them. Partnering with Waste Management to educate the public on sustainable issues is a good option. We could have a very broad request for funding. We are losing a stream of revenue, and we are looking for money to help support our goals/initiatives.

Commissioner Keare suggested having rooftops gardens or community gardens would be a nice project for the commission to look into. Chairperson Knoerr said even when you give out fresh produce, not all know what to do with it. Many people are used to eating out of cans or having prepackaged foods. Commissioner Aageson suggested community dinners with expertise from ECC’s culinary department could help address that issue.

Cooking classes and pop-up dinners could support community gardens, and they could feed off of each other. It could talk about nutrition in general and sustaining a new, healthy generation and population.

Commissioner Hernandez suggested a composting facility could help with economic development. Liaison will look into grant writing and whether there is someone on staff that can help or if someone can be hired to do such. As Commissioner Masterson mentioned the need to first find out if its feasible, liaison also mentioned the need to find out what parcels are available and suitable before looking at grant writing and applying.

Commissioner Masterson mentioned his interested in doing some sort of reusable bag program. He described how ACE Hardware does a “20% off anything you can fit in a reusable bag” promotion. If we can partner with an organization/business we could share the cost of the bags.

Chairperson Knoerr commented the city should consider creating an ordinance so that the city can only order/purchase local supplies, and supplement it with a “buy local” campaign.

Commissioner Hernandez discussed a documentary called, “Just eat it” and suggested the City of Elgin have a store that sells bruised fruit and food that grocery stores would normally just throw away. Commissioner Aageson suggested outreach with different food establishments and offer them solutions to food waste, like donating to the Crisis Center,

etc. Commissioner Jacobs described a pickup program Waste Management has for grocery stores that is specific to food.

3. Waste Management partnership

Update on collaborative efforts/ideas with Waste Management related to plastic bags and promoting proper recycling.

Liaison updated the commission on Waste Management route audits and cart hangers.

F. Commissioner comments/announcements

1. Update related to Wanxiang New Energy tour possibility

The Open House was moved to Tuesday, December 8. Gary, Laura, and David will carpool.

2. 2016 Sustainability Commission meeting dates

Commissioner Jacobs made a motion to change the meeting start times to 6:15 p.m., and the motion was passed.

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. —