



Minutes • Tuesday, August 9, 2016 • 6:15 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 Agesen, Frazier, Hajek, Hernandez, Masterson, and Segel are present.

Commission passed a motion to alter agenda, and allow JoAnn Armenta, president of Shared Harvest Foundation, to introduce herself and share some quick information. She mentioned how Elgin was deemed the most obese city in Illinois. She suggested that having a grocery store in walking distance from neighborhoods and in the downtown area could be very beneficial to the area, and to help curb this statistic. The store would be open to all, not just members. She is looking to form partnerships with the Sustainability Commission and other community groups that have the same vision. She wishes to retrofit a van or bus into a mobile food truck that sells subsidized produce to neighborhoods. The foundation just became a 501c3 non-profit, with a focus on education. JoAnn left contact information with the group.

C. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

July 2016 minutes were approved.

D. Discussion Items

1. SunPeak Solar will present it's solar feasibility study for select city owned buildings

Matt Bellehumeur, Sales Director for SunPeak Solar, discussed that they are interested in putting together a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), which allows a non-profit to take advantage of tax incentives when getting solar, without paying money upfront for installation and equipment. The company is interested in setting up a PPA with the City of Elgin, to provide solar on some city owned facilities. Through discussion with the liaison, the group is looking at the feasibility of installing solar the Riverside Water Treatment Plant, at 375 W. River Road in Elgin. The idea is to purchase the power at a fixed cost for 20 years. Saving could be nearly \$16,000 in year one with the locked rate at .071 versus the current .084. This would cover 15% of all the energy at the site. Over the entire 20 years, the site could acquire about \$650,000 in energy savings, plus the environmental benefits that come with it. Tax equity investors put up the lump sum, and get their payback within 6 years. Investment groups provide the maintenance, monitor, and insure the equipment. As they own it, they basically would be selling us the energy. We get immediate and stable energy costs. PPA can be set up with different rates. Some numbers are variables. Commissioner Frazier mentioned concern over the security risk of having people out at a facility that could impact resident's safety, like a water treatment facility. The commission passed a motion to have liaison get input from Water Director Kyla

Jacobsen on issues such as water safety, and how it aligns with critical responder responsibilities she has at a facility of that magnitude, or if she has other suggestions of locations that would be successful, such as the ERC or the Slade Water Treatment Plant.

2. **Mighty Acorns budget 2016-2017 School Year**

The Commission passed a motion to support the proposed budget and fund it the same as last year. The commission requested the Mighty Acorns provide a presentation and year-end report.

E. Old Business

1. **Partners for Places grant proposal & Community Gardens**

Continued discussion on community gardens projects in Elgin & meeting grant requirements.

John Bordsen, Bob Bedard and Mary Roberti were all present from the Elgin Community Garden Network. In addition, residents Paige Fitton and June Franz were present. The group discussed the timeline for the Partners for Places grant. The Request For Proposal (RFP) goes out in December, with a due date in January. Grants would then be awarded in April or May. It would be wise to apply for the 2-year grant, given we could not receive the money until the beginning of a gardening season, and it'd be difficult to put all the funding to use in one year. The intent over the last month was to approach the groups at the five potential sites and confirm interest, prior to performing a cost analysis. Bob and his team visited all the sites, and found they are all ADA compliant. The following describes each site:

- **Kiwanis Park-** This park is owned by the City and there is parking, which is helpful. There is, however, no water source. Bob talked to Kyla and there is a water main close, and it would cost about \$5,000 to bring a feeder line off of it. This park could have a tiered garden, so the perimeter would still ADA compliant. A solar panel could run a timer for a water box. This is good site for the grant as we are using different areas of sustainability. It's also right next to Section A housing. This would be a highly visible project, as it's located near Villa and National. We could put native plants along the back retaining wall improve aesthetics. Interpretive signs would be added for education as well.
- **ERC-** This site will be undergoing a new park renovation soon. Raised boxes and then a teaching area off the walkway would be appropriate. There would be a canopy over the teaching area. They could make the food available to the members that come.
- **AID-** AID was not interested in anything being built on their Bowes property, but they have 13 acres adjacent to the DMV on Route 31. North of the house on the property, there is a lot of land that ties into the sidewalks. The group has an unfunded mandate to go out and show they are engaged with the community. With the state's budget impasse, they haven't been able to accomplish as much. They were thrilled about the proposal. They want a teaching area in the middle, and possibly some benches. The rest would be built out around it. This entire project would be handicapped accessible, with all raised beds. There's no limit to the size of this garden area and it could produce an enormous amount of food. This site hits a lot of the criteria for the grant. AID assists 18-90-year-olds.
- **Food for Greater Elgin-** The ECGN group is looking to visit Garfield Conservatory in Chicago, to help get ideas for this location. Norm and Michelle would be working on this. They also want a center area for teaching. The people that use their facility would have access to the garden. Master Gardeners from the Extension Office can

teach classes at this site. Each section of this would involve urban farming. They would love fruit trees on this site, too.

- **Print Pack-** Since this is considered a hazardous materials site, no volunteers or teaching would be available. The company would build everything, maintain and water it. They would let Food for Greater Elgin come in weekly and collect anything that's harvested. They would need a landscape architect draw up plans, and that's basically all the work needed on our end.

In regards to the grant score sheet, the second bullet point gives points if the project is a multi-issue plan endorsed by mayor or city manager. It's important to incorporate parts of the Sustainability Action Plan in writing the grant proposal.

Mary noted that typically when we talk about gardens, we are talking about a season. This project plan doesn't provide for any type of harvest in the winter months. More work is being done with hydroponic growing, to provide fresh vegetables year-round. She hopes to visit places doing this in Aurora and see what options there might be for Elgin. John is working on the infrastructure plans.

Resident June Franz was also present. She introduced herself and described her passion for helping feed people. She suggested getting homeless people involved in this project would help to give them a sense of purpose and encourage healthy eating. She wants to get involved and eventually get her own plot of land to help feed the homeless.

Next steps: The group needs to find a grant writer to collaborate with other organization grant writers. Liaison will contact Grand Victoria Foundation. Liaison will continue efforts to get a USDN membership, have liaison send out STAR Community information.

2. ComEd's proposed demand charges policy discussion

Liaison will update commission on letter

3. Sustainability Honor Roll

Review nominations and vote for October awardee

F. Commissioner comments/announcements

Liaison will provide an update on rain barrel sales

As of August 4, 33 subsidized rain barrels have been sold through the program, marking one-third of the commission's 100 subsidized rain barrel goal.

Commissioner Masterson will announce 2016 Northern Illinois Renewable Energy Summit

Liaison reminded that the commission has two free entries this year, as a refund was not available last year for the two spots we had purchased. Gary plans to drive and has room for others wishing to carpool. Liaison will provide another reminder of this event at the September meeting.

Commission Frazier announced a Bring Your Own Bag campaign put on by other groups. This is something the commission can help promote year-round.

G. Adjourn