



Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, April 11, 2023 • 6:00 p.m.  
West Conference Room, Edward Schock Centre of Elgin,  
100 Symphony Way, Elgin, IL 60120

**A. Call to Order**

1. The meeting of the Elgin Sustainability Commission was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

**B. Roll Call**

1. Present: Chairperson Tom Armstrong, Commissioners Chris Flaherty, Dan Brosier, David Jurina, Dekovia Livingston, Jeff Biss, Katie Gronke, Sharene Gould Dulabaum. Student Representative Isabella Cheung. Council liaison Carol Rauschenberger. Staff liaison Mikala Larson.
2. Absent: None.

**C. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

1. March 14, 2023
  - i. *A motion was made by Commissioner Biss to approve the March 14, 2023, minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Livingston and passed unanimously.*

**D. Public Comment**

1. Sandy Kaptain attended and encouraged people to attend the April 22<sup>nd</sup> Hawthorne Hill Nature Center Earth Day event. The Shawnee Defenders will be speaking at Gail Borden Library to propose that Shawnee National Park become Shawnee National Forest.
2. Ross attended to learn more about the commission.
3. Angelina Guzman attended to learn more about the commission.

**E. Unfinished Business**

1. Earth Month and Arbor Day Planning: Hawthorne Hill Nature Center is holding an Earth Day event on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. It will be a family-friendly event, and the commission will be hosting a table.

The Sustainability Commission will be holding the Elgin Earth Summit on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Elgin Community College. Commissioners were asked to commit to being present at the event, and commissioners divided day-of-event tasks amongst themselves. Commissioners are expected to arrive on 4/29 at 8 a.m., with vendors arriving at 8:10 a.m. or later. The Sustainable Communications work group has put together handouts and promotional materials for the event and asks commissioners to support the event by sharing about it with

networks and the community. There are still three spots open for community organizations to have a table. There will be 15-minute speaker spotlights, dubbed “Green 15’s,” during the day, plus an hour-long climate action plan community input session led by Kane County and paleBLUEdot. Over 25 organizations will be present at the event to speak with attendees. Light refreshments will be served. A networking hour will be held afterwards at the Grumpy Goat Tavern from 1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. The social hour will be a space for people to gather after the event to eat, drink, and network.

The Izaak Walton League has some Arbor Day plans, and Commissioner Brosier has received some details for the events they are hosting.

#### **F. New Business**

1. Gail Borden Library VolunteerPalooza: The Sustainability Commission will participate in the Gail Borden Library VolunteerPalooza on Saturday, April 15 from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. The commission would like a handout and/or survey created to have at the table. Staff liaison will work on creating the document.
2. 2023 Spring Rain Barrel Sale: The City of Elgin will be holding the annual spring rain barrel sale. In 2022, Elgin was the second-best seller in Kane County. The 2023 sale will open on Thursday, April 14 and close on Wednesday, May 17. The rain barrel pick-up event will be Tuesday, May 23 from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. at Public Works, located at 1900 Holmes Road, Elgin, IL. The link to the sale will be posted at [cityofelgin.org/sustainability](http://cityofelgin.org/sustainability).

#### **G. Chair and Work Group Reports**

Chair Report: Jenni Kempf Schiavone from Friends of the Fox River (FOTFR) will be giving a presentation on Sunday, April 16 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m., at the Elgin Historical Museum and on Zoom, about her experience paddling the full-length of the Fox River. On April 20th at 6:30 p.m., Friends of the Fox River will be holding a community film screening event at the Ashbury, of a short documentary film that features FOTFR: Watershed Warriors.

Carbon Reduction: The Carbon Reduction work group meets monthly on the first Wednesday of the month from 6-7:30 p.m. in the West Conference Room at the Centre of Elgin, to address Renewable Energy, Transportation & Mobility, Zero Waste, and Building Efficiency. The group seeks more attendance at meetings and funding sources for Renewable Energy initiatives. Transportation and Mobility is developing bullet points for an Active Mobility Request for Proposals (RFP), and planning an electric bike rebate program for 2024. Zero Waste is discussing the single-use bag fee program, and Building Efficiency is assessing which property to recommend for energy upgrades through the ROPE house energy efficiency project.

Urban Resiliency: The Urban Resiliency work group meets the fourth Thursday of each month from 4-5:30 p.m. in the West Conference Room at the Centre of Elgin. The work group has been discussing the City Council-budgeted Climate Action Plan. They are working to organize

workdays for the native garden demonstration beds near the East Side Neighborhood Gardens and welcome volunteers. A funding request for plant tags and replacement plants for the demonstration beds will be made at the May meeting by the group. The parkway tree planting program request period ends on April 15, with the program reopening in the fall. The commission plans to promote the fall program more aggressively, including targeted outreach to neighborhoods and collaboration with the Chicago Region Trees Initiative.

Sustainable Communications: The work group meets the third Wednesday of each month from 6-7:30 p.m. in the West Conference Room at the Centre of Elgin. The work group is planning the Elgin Earth Summit and is continuing efforts to developing a newsletter.

## H. Staff Report

1. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory: Data collection for the city's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (GHGI) is complete. The next step is completing the report. The project is targeted for completion in May. Sustainability Analyst Mikala Larson will speak about initial findings from the GHGI at the Elgin Earth Summit.

Members of the community in attendance asked about the community solar program. Staff liaison responded with information about the MC2 business model, which includes no door-to-door promotion and alerting partner communities when a project is energized, so communities can promote the program to residents with a good expectation of when residents may get subscribed to a project. Staff liaison shared that although the city partners with MC2 on the program, MC2 is the program administrator and promotion of the program largely falls on the municipality and Sustainability Commission. The community solar program is ongoing and provides an additional solar option to Elgin residents and small businesses.

2. paleBLUEdot: The city of Elgin is working with consultant paleBLUEdot to create a waste, recycling, and organics community survey that will inform the waste hauler contract Request for Proposals (RFP). paleBLUEdot will attend the May 9 Sustainability Commission meeting to lead an input session with the commission to help inform the development of the community survey. Commissioners are requested to attend the May 9 meeting to share input and dialogue with paleBLUEdot.
3. Single-Use Bag Fee Program: The Sustainability Commission discussed the Single Use Bag Fee Program and City Council's decision to table the topic at the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Committee of the Whole meeting. The commission identified City Council's main concerns of the program as: establishing a bag fee versus a bag ban, how to split the fee between the retailer and municipality, gaining buy-in from retailers, a grace period for retailers, and exempting food assistance program participants. In answer to City Council concerns, the commission: supports a fee, not a ban at this time, and supports the 10 cent charge with half being remitted to the city and half being kept by the retailer. The commission feels that although retailers may not like the bag fee, now is the time to do it to reduce single-use waste. The commission is on board with

retailers being engaged to hear how retailers see it impacting them. The commission supports a short-term grace period, where retailers will be expected to remit the five cents to the city, but will not be penalized if the report is late or incorrect. The commission discussed that all members of the community are part of the single-use waste problem, and therefore everyone should be part of the solution. It was agreed that although participants in food assistance programs could be exempted during their recommended Phase I of the program, participants of food assistance programs would be included in the Phase 2 recommendation from the Sustainability Commission, which would also extend the reach of the ordinance to retail establishments 4,999 square feet and smaller.

As next steps, the commission suggested reaching out to communities that have already implemented the program to learn from their experience, hear from retailers who have implemented a bag fee and share those experiences with Elgin retailers as part of the conversation to engage retailers, and create an outline for the community outreach and education campaign that would lead up to the effective date of the single-use bag fee. The commission touched on the idea of providing reusable bags to the community and low- to moderate-income residents to minimize pain points, using the collected money from the 5 cent remittance from retailers. The commission reiterated that the single-use bag fee is not a tax or a new revenue source, but a disincentive fee meant to drive behavior change, that will, ideally, eventually become extinct once behavior changes. The Sustainability Commission emphasized that while the fee is collected, the idea is to reinvest it into the community through sustainability programs. City Council would ultimately decide how to allocate collected money during the budget discussions. Using the direction from the Sustainability Commission's conversation, staff liaison will continue to do the legwork and lead the efforts to answer City Council questions and concerns and return to City Council at a future date with the information for Council consideration. Staff liaison shares that identifying a clear way to track important metrics of the program, if the program is approved, will need to be a future conversation; Chairperson Armstrong reminds everyone that the Surf Rider Foundation has helpful resources.

#### **I. Announcements**

1. Parkway Tree Planting Program: April 15<sup>th</sup> Deadline: The spring parkway tree planting program deadline is Saturday, April 15. Residents are encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible by visiting [cityofelgin.org/treeplanting](http://cityofelgin.org/treeplanting). The program will reopen later in the year for the fall season; the fall deadline will be August 15.
2. The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) will be holding meetings for strategic planning.

#### **J. Adjourn**

1. *A motion was made by Commissioner Brosier to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Biss and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.*