

City of Dubuque
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

GOVERNMENTAL BODY: Resilient Community Advisory Commission (RCAC)

DATE: February 3, 2022

TIME: 5:00 pm

LOCATION: Jule Operations and Training Center (JOTC) Circle Conference Room, 949 Kerper Blvd.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dean Boles, Katharine Connolly, Adam Hoffman*, Lalith Jayawickrama, Jake Kohlhaas, Craig Reber, Whitney Sanger

*Virtual

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robin Kennicker

STAFF PRESENT: Gina Bell

Due to Chair's resignation and co-chair absent, Bell called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

TEST AGENDA

MINUTES APPROVAL: Commissioner Boles motions to approve minutes from December 2021. Commissioner Reber seconds. Motion carries.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Paul Schultz gave public comment in opposition to the Public Works budget request. (Attached)

NEW BUSINESS:

- a) Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory discussion – Raki Giannakouros shared information and history regarding the City's GHG inventory to address an email Commissioner Boles had sent in December noting that based on the GHG inventory, Dubuque's 27% reduction of GHG emissions from the 2003 baseline is mostly a result of decreased carbon intensity attributed to electricity generation and usage. Without the cleaner electricity, Dubuque's total GHG emissions would have increased about 2%. He further suggested this view might be appropriate as an RCAC agenda item with the possibility of sending correspondence to the council to reframe GHG and Climate Action Plan discussions.

Raki shared his history working on the GHG inventory and stated that after the 2014 inventory, the numbers got less accurate and didn't address anomalies in later years. He shared some weaknesses in the inventory: vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is a state average so even if Dubuque sees a major reduction in VMT, we won't see a reduction to match in our inventory. A better model is needed to reflect the work we are doing. Opportunities to improve our inventory include the wastewater treatment plant, in which we account for diesel reduction and operational emissions, but not nitrification and de-nitrification. This is data we can get, and we can impact. Additionally, we have control over our trash and recycling operations in the city and we could do better tracking at the landfill. We also don't track fugitive emissions of refrigerants.

Raki also shared that while the city played a huge role in getting Alliant to close its plant (which was originally counted in 2003 inventory, but then removed from our 2003 levels to keep it accurate) the city doesn't get emissions reduction "credit" for the closure. The inventory also doesn't include John Deere (purposefully because the city would have met our goal almost immediately) but the city played role in John Deere's efforts which we don't get credit for in our inventory. The solar arrays don't count towards the community wide inventory, even though it is in our community.

Commissioner Boles acknowledged Raki Giannakouros' concerns about the 2018 GHG inventory and wants to make sure we are a) doing another inventory and b) sufficiently budget so we can get an accurate GHG inventory.

(Bell: GHG inventory is budgeted every 3 years)

To conclude Raki shared that the biggest missed opportunity to reduce GHG emissions in the city is to have and

implement a comprehensive complete streets policy, which accounts for more than just single passenger vehicles. It includes multiple modes of transporting throughout the city. Commissioner Kohlhaas expressed his dismay with attitudes from city engineering staff that wrote off complete streets by saying, "We can't put bike lanes on every street." The city should take a more holistic approach which makes the policy mandatory and includes a maintenance schedule and documentation on why streets were or were not included, perhaps not a bike lane on every street, but we can add signage. Complete Streets would have the biggest impact on GHG reduction. Commissioner Boles stated we should understand the main sources of the city's 27% reduction of GHG emissions. This could reframe the message to City Council and help prioritize initiatives in the Climate Action Plan.

- b) Public Works (PW) Department – Budget Request + Presentation by John Klostermann who gave a brief overview of the department, specifically focused on solid waste portions of public works. Questions about recycling cost recovery and education came up and Klostermann shared that we do, depending on the market, see cost share with recycling and the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency (DMASWA) has a full-time educator on staff. Klostermann then shared that in the FY23 budget, PW proposes hiring a consultant to help increase our recycling numbers and look at a variety of other issues and gather data. PW requested RCAC support for this budget request. Klostermann continued to share that PW took suggestions from RCAC last time and implemented the 34-gallon cart. He shared that 74% of routes / collection can be automated in current system and they now propose mandatory carts in all sizes. Klostermann asked RCAC to support both budget items - a consultant and mandatory carts and aim for automated collection (noting that trucks are already on schedule to be replaced). He went on to say that 80% of orders for new carts will be 34 gallon and there will be no rate change in FY23. This is a unique opportunity to use federal dollars, otherwise the \$1M cost would be passed along to rate payers.

Commissioner Kohlhaas asked where this proposal fits with the goals and priorities of City Council. Staff explained that this fits into the management priority list and falls under high performance government. Commissioner Boles expressed concern with linking this request with path towards zero waste. He expressed the opinion that carts probably don't have an effect much one way or the other. Commissioner Reber stated agreement. Commissioner Jayawickrama asked if there is an education program for path to zero waste and Klostermann shared this is what the consultant engineer can help with as staff doesn't have expertise.

Discussion among staff, Commissioners Boles and Kohlhaas continued related to waste tonnage increasing, data on equity impacts and how to relate this work to the City's 50% by 2030 Community Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (CAP). Kohlhaas expressed that concerns from the Commission the last time this proposal was brought to RCAC still have not been addressed: community engagement, equity, climate action (waste reduction) and fee structures. He noted that cart size was addressed. He also stated the RCAC discussion around the issue was mischaracterized to City Council by the City Manager. There was also discussion about how fee structures are set and if they could be shifted to be both equitable and incentivize producing less trash.

After discussion, Commissioner Boles motions to support the PW budget request for a consultant engineer. Reber seconds. Motion carries.

Kohlhaas motions to table the second PW budget request recommendation for discussion in March. Reber seconds. Motion carries.

- c) Appoint new commission chair – Reber motions to appoint Commissioner Kohlhaas as commission chair, Boles seconds. Motion carries.
- d) Budget Recommendations & discussion – Commissioners requested that staff highlight budget items that meet CAP goals and resiliency goals and the RCAC will discuss during March meeting and make recommendation at that time.

OLD BUSINESS

- a) N/A

HOW DID I SHOW UP? COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

Commissioner Kohlhaas has been working with Josh Chamberlain at University of Dubuque on higher education climate action plans and trying to get group to focus on high impact/GHG reduction actions. He also expressed dismay

that Public Works says they want to work with the RCAC but only show up when they need support of a budget item.

Commissioner Boles gave an update on the Community Development Advisory Commission (CDAC) – exciting news that HUD and EPA combined forces and finally has a system of single eligibility aka “if you qualify for one, you qualify for the other” for multiple programs. He asked if the city could implement something similar, noting the low numbers of residents that receive reduction in solid waste fees. Can they universally qualify for all the city programs or if HACAP has their qualifying information, can they not have to apply again for city programs? Another option would be to offer broad strokes - if you’re in this census tract area, you receive the benefit which would include the majority of folks who need it.

NEXT MEETING: The next commission meeting will occur on Thursday, March 3, 2022, at 5 pm at the Jule Operations and Training Center (JOTC) in the Circle Conference Room, 949 Kerper Blvd.

ADJOURNMENT: The Commission adjourned at 7:14 pm.

Minutes approved by: 
Jacob Kohlhaas, Commission Chair

Prepared by: 
Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator

Attachment – Public Input from Paul Schultz

Consequences on our stated City goals PTZW, PAYT, and CAP:

PTZW: PW has not promoted or proposed implementing initiatives and recommendations based on actionable data delivered in the Foth Report.

PAYT: Destroyed: The Fee structure is no longer incentivizing diversion from landfilling. Recycling dropped from 24% of total collected tonnage to 17% down 41% in 8 years. In the earlier 2000's, COD collection had reached a 39% diversion from landfilling. The Proposed FY23 Rate structure is neither Fair nor Equitable.

It burdens smaller vol generators, renters, elderly with disproportional higher fees

CAP: Waste Minimization is one of the best ways to engage residents in Climate Action

Plan First

I learned from both my Mother and Father "Measure Twice, Cut Once!"

To Develop a City Solid Waste Mgmt Plan was approved by City Council. Never started. Committing to Mandatory Carts before Ratepayer input has been gathered is failure.

There is no fiscal reason why Mandatory Carts must be committed to for FY23.

ARPA funds can be allocated by DBQ until 2026 in my understanding. Table for a year.

A Resource Mgmt Coordinator has been hired with experience in Waste Minimization. Give him a chance to first review operations, the Foth Report and hire a consultant.

A DNR DMASWA Landfill Waste Sort is scheduled this summer. It can assess contents from 5 City trash trucks, one from each day of the week, and identify the % of and types of recyclables trashed in each of the 5 loads including ASL loads. This is actionable data. Dubuque captured this specific data 10 years ago.

MANDATORY Trash Carts for 30% of HH not scheduled for ASL????

I cannot understand why ratepayers that are in overly challenging areas for ASL should be required to get carts.

What is more "antiquated" is the inadequate provision of recycling tipper carts. A small FY23 Improvement Increment to spend \$11K to recycling tipper carts is not currently recommended by the City Manager.

ARPA Funds

ARPA Funds are not only included for use in the ASL / Mandatory Carts Improvement Increment. A \$652K item is also largely hidden in the proposed Operating Budget under Replacement Equipment for an unspecified number of Trash Tipper Carts. There are no "Replacement Carts". These are reducing the \$ "ask" in the improvement increment to look like less. However, Operating Budgets are denied doing this because it takes away the policy decision making responsibility from the designated policy makers: City Council and surrenders it to City Mgmt. Delay ARPA fund considerations until FY24.

Work Comp Injuries

The lost work hours in the previous PW PPT shown amount to 6.5 hours per year per San Driver. The hours or cost are not significant in a \$4M Budget.

**Public Works – Resource Management FY23 Draft Budget Proposal:
Paul Schultz discussion with RCAC 3-3-23**

Key Issues: Why FY23 is not the right year to approve this Big Change from our PAYT system

PAYT 1990’s Iowa law (7,000 programs nationally)

Initially required DBQ re poor recycling. Must be Fair. Econ Sound, Environ Sustainable

FOTH 2019 reported (but unshared) Survey data:

“Does a 35g trash bag or can meet your needs? Yes 78%”

“Paths Toward Zero Waste Ratepayer Interest: VIP 40%; IMP 29%; Somewhat IMP 21%”

“Most important COD PTZW Goals: Increase recycling tonnage and participation. 64%”

Reduce Landfill tonnage. 60%”

Increase PTZW promo and education. 31%”

Increase Food Waste recycling users and tons. 22%”

“How willing are you to separate food scraps and set out separated from Trash?

Very Likely 36%

Likely 26%

“Which activities do you already do or would be willing to do?

Recycle more products from my home 83%

Add food scraps to your yard debris container or yard waste bag 47%

Use a backyard compost bin 37%

“Foth Recommendations:

Appoint a PTZW Implementation Team working with RCAC in FY22

Use GHG metrics to create a baseline in FY21

Implement glass recycling drop-off program in April 2020 **DONE**

Develop, Implement, and continually Update community engagement/education

“Foth Conclusion: The primary cornerstone of any ZW plan is a PAYT fee structure. It creates an incentive to save money by diverting materials from landfilling. Foth believes that this is a strong reason behind the City being significantly below the national average in pounds of solid waste landfilled per household.”

Eroding PAYT incentivizing Rate Structure

In FY12: 35g base fee (90 % HH) @\$10.72; 64g cart @\$21.00, 96g cart @\$30.00

For FY23 34g (77% HH)@\$15.38; 48gcart@17.22; 64g@20.65; 96g@\$29.00

A major reason for the base rate increases is the phased in \$1M/year transfer from these fee revenues to The General Fund with the stated goal to reduce property taxes. This \$1M if applied to the projected smallest container customers in the proposed fee structure **equals \$6.67 per month** with no cost burden to larger cart users in current or prior years.