

CITY OF DUBUQUE - COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

GOVERNMENTAL BODY: Resilient Community Advisory Commission (RCAC)

DATE: January 5, 2023

TIME: 5:00 pm

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Josh Chamberland, Katharine Connolly, Steven Drahozal, Sandra Evans, Adam Hoffman, Lalith Jayawickrama*, Robin Kennicker, Jake Kohlhaas

*arrived at 5:57 pm

MEMBERS ABSENT: N/A

STAFF PRESENT: Gina Bell

Chair Kohlhaas called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

TEST AGENDA

MINUTES APPROVAL: Kennicker motioned to approve the December minutes. Evans seconded. Motion carried with Boles abstaining.

PUBLIC COMMENT: N/A

NEW BUSINESS

a) Marie Ware, Leisure Services (LS) Manager for the City shared about trees, tree canopy, tree replacement schedule and budgets and how LS budget interacts with Engineering's budget as it relates to trees. Together they worked on removal of ash trees for safety issues related to the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Tree removal, stumps removal and sidewalk repair all fell under one capital improvement project (CIP) but generally LS deals with trees and stumps and Engineering deals with sidewalks. To save time and money dealing with the 400 EAB impacted trees, stumps and sidewalks the two worked cross-departmentally to address issue. 306 stumps have been addressed. In a normal year, forestry can keep up with stump grinding. For years they were only removing dead trees – no replanting. Now they are focused on replacement (as removals are decreasing; those left have been treated) and budget CIP increases in coming fiscal years.

This budget request is RCAC can support in budget hearings. (There are 2 CIPS – street tree replacements and EAB replacements.) Costs have gone up with EAB/Derecho and pandemic – so fewer trees will be able to be purchased. Tree diversity is key, but availability is down. While a tree nursery is a good idea the city doesn't have staff to tend and care for it.

Engineering's only relevant CIP to trees is sidewalk related. At times, engineering is involved with trees that are project related (ex. Bee Branch trees or the Central Ave Corridor Streetscape) LS only manages canopy on city owned property. Forestry division in LS – received 2 improvement level packages in addition to CIP.

CR ReLeaf – could Dubuque have something like this? We have the 2011 urban forestry evaluation (first and only evaluation) and there are still items that need to be addressed. We have far too many maples in town. Challenges – staff is LS are workers out in the field. There isn't capacity to build out reports/collect data/evaluations.

Dubuque Trees Forever is our volunteer group related to trees. There are challenges to our tree canopy in certain neighborhoods – the North end has extremely narrow planting strips. Replanting in these areas need to address how to replant. If we can't plant there, city is trying to problem solve - could it be in front yard? "Right tree in the right place" is more important than just replanting.

Question: Will be another evaluation soon?

Answer: There hasn't been much progress on the 2011 urban forestry evaluation, especially because of EAB. Just beginning to think about what else we can do. No comprehensive tree plan has been created. Other challenges – 2014 we had hiring freeze with 6 openings and are only now filling those positions (one left to fill).

Question: In 2011 plan, is there a planting plan for every park like in ReLeaf?

Answer: Not exactly. Engineering does consult with LS (LS has review rights and bid specs) for tree selection and plants for project plants/trees. AS well as on development services / parking lot trees. Commissioner Boles offered that this be a student project – how to plant this park? And then hand it over to Parks/Trees Forever. He also shared that a University of Dubuque master's student did a 30 year look back on Dubuque tree canopy. There are companies that for \$5000 will tell you every tree and its species and sizes and dead v. alive in the city. Technology exists and it is cheap.

Question: The TH had an article about dead trees on private property – are they a problem on LMI households tracks?

Answer: We don't know. LS is complaint driven for this type of issue, but we don't know exact numbers.

Discussion: Next steps for CAP and tree canopy? We want to know tree canopy across the city. (Commissioner Boles offered to investigate cost to use technology for a tree canopy evaluation.) Should RCAC recommend to City Council that we do a tree census every 10 years to gather data with end goal to plant more trees? We can recommend City Council fund more trees. There is a Dubuque Metro Area Solid Waste Agency (DMASWA) waste minimization grant that can be used to plant trees (\$25,000 with match). Trees Forever is holding their annual meeting on January 28, 2023. Doug Cheever spoke with RCAC about supporting this work and RCAC could support that.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Climate Action Plan and Policy Work - Reports from Commissioners regarding Climate Action Plan (CAP) activities and City Ordinances

Livestock 2.0 – Commissioner Chamberland

Commissioner Chamberland gave an update on his findings and will email his report and resources. Did propose potentially making the ordinance information more user friendly and adding to website (City's or Sustainable Dubuque).

Beekeeping – Commissioner Kennicker

Commissioner Kennicker forgot her report so she will share via email with the Commission for their review.

HOW DID I SHOW UP? COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

- Kohlhaas – students working on bike trail report left something to be desired and deleted the report.
- Boles – will email Trees Forever meeting information. He will also find UD student research but must opt in if interested. Also asked if the commission could play a role to get the word out about the IRA home improvement tax credits. Shared his idea to have a booth at the home improvement show to get out the information. Different target audience but lots of money and get the word out! It could also be information put on Sustainable Dubuque website.
- Kennicker – Parks and Rec is working to get fully staffed, update/maintain city buildings that are long overdue
- Chamberland – Colleges Sustainability Coalition – solar for schools at next meeting January 19th 3-4 pm. 3 working groups of the coalition – pocket prairie; food access and recovery; and climate action at the colleges.
- Staff member Bell shared the date of the Growing Sustainable Communities conference will shift from October to April (in 2024 and beyond). She also offered to forward information about a book release by Benjamin Vogt related to prairies and lawn conversions to anyone interested.

NEXT MEETING: The next commission meeting will occur on February 2, 2023, at 5 pm at the Jule Operations and Training Center (JOTC) in the Circle Conference Room, 949 Kerper Blvd.

ADJOURNMENT: The Commission adjourned at 6:49 pm.

Minutes approved by: 

Jacob Kohlhaas, Commission Chair

Prepared by: 

Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator