

CITY OF DUBUQUE - COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

GOVERNMENTAL BODY: Resilient Community Advisory Commission (RCAC)

DATE: May 4, 2023

TIME: 5:00 pm

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Josh Chamberland, Jake Kohlhaas, Katharine Connolly, Lalith Jayawickrama, Adam Hoffman, Steven Drahozal

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robin Kennicker, Sandra Evans, Dean Boles

STAFF PRESENT: Amanda Lewis, Gina Bell

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

TEST AGENDA

MINUTES APPROVAL: Connolly motioned to approve the April minutes. Jayawickrama seconded. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Revision of Grant Recommendation to City Council for March 2030 Sustainable Dubuque Grant
 - a. Tri-State Christian School site location for grant moved to Asbury. Last year, there was also a concern that site was outside of City limits, but it was accepted because the site was just within the City limits and serves mostly Dubuque students. City Manager determined that Tri-State Christian School should not qualify for grant because grant guidelines clearly state that grantees should be within City limits. This issue was reviewed by City Council and brought back to Resilient Community Advisory Commission. Discussion to use \$2,500 to redistribute funds to other grantees. Decision was made to reallocate funds to grants that were already chosen for an award. Suggested to revisit discussion of adding leftover money to the Fall grant pool of money. Motion to approve by Drahozal, seconded by Connolly. Chamberland abstained. Motion carried.
- b) Loras College Student Reports
 - a. Native Plantings
 - i. Students are concerned with misusing outdoor spaces are eliminating ties with nature and want to advocate for better ecology. Project goal is to combat climate change and lack of native plants through creation of the Loras College Community Arboretum. Location of arboretum will be near field house and include tree species and flowering/fruiting plants. The outcomes will be to encourage a better wildlife habitat by removing some space that currently contains grass. Some disputes are that this arboretum area will take away lawn space for other activities, but students have suggested that people usually walk on pathways rather than use the lawn space. If area is visually improved, more students might attend events located nearby. This also benefits professors to be able to use this arboretum space for their classes.

Questions: What are next steps?

Answer: This is a student project and students are hoping that with more support from outside organizations (possibly obtaining a grant) will make this a possibility.

Question: Have you talked to maintenance staff about this?

Answer: Not directly and Kohlhaas has said this shouldn't be an issue. Workload for maintenance workers might improve by changing up tasks, such as time spent watering native plants.

Question: Is Loras participating in a pocket prairie?

Answer: Yes, but this is a different location than the pocket prairie.

Question: What is the feedback from students?

Answer: Environmental science students are hoping clubs like LEAF and CAB will help fund events in this space. There is a planetarium close to this area to show videos as well as the field house that might appreciate this.

Question: Have you reached out to organization like LEAF?

Answer: One of the group members is the president of the LEAF program.

b. Bicycle Safety in Dubuque

- a. Students did some field research and talked with experts in the community. Most pressing issue was the lack of uniform bike signs throughout the bike network in Dubuque. Students documented various bike signs in Dubuque and noticed that there is disconnect between signage, as there are 4 different types of signage within the city. One of the signs is circular, mimicking the bus stop signs. Bike signs and bus stop signs are almost identical if you are driving in a car and are not aware of the difference between the signs. Students discussed sharrows, which many studies show is less safe for cars and bikers because cyclists think they are more protected and cars don't necessarily pay attention to cyclists. Many places have no signage at all, such as along Highway 20. There are also many instances where there are no arrows demarcating which direction cyclists should bike. Students showed an example of a handmade sign that shows bike images, route direction, and time (in minutes) to get to certain places. Additionally, there is a QR code someone can scan to understand where other routes are located. Since 2007, there have been recommendations to increase universal bike signage within the City. Signage is just the first step in making cycling better in Dubuque.

Question: What happened to halt the universal bike signage?

Answer: Committee changed chairs, height of Covid.

Question: Where will people park the bikes?

Answer: Wouldn't be difficult to chain bikes to trees or install bike parking spaces. Places that are bike friendly, many bikes come with a locking device that will lock the bike to itself. Another possibility would be to park bikes in parking ramps.

Question: Does this include scooters too?

Answer: Yes, might be beneficial to include.

Question: Does federal government control bike signage?

Answer: Unclear if universal signage is controlled by federal government.

Question: Can the City suggest bike signage?

Answer: Bike signage is controlled by the Engineering Department.

Question: How do we move this conversation forward?

Answer: Suggestion is to go to City Council and say that there is a budget for signage to start with core routes. Could also send a letter to City Council and can resend the original recommendation.

c) Engagement Efforts with Vulnerable Populations:

- a. In Inflation Reduction Act, there is a lot of money that is for the Justice 40 Initiative, which means that 40% of the money is committed to funding vulnerable populations. Most of downtown Dubuque, due to racial demographics, income disparities, and superfund site proximity, is considered a Justice 40 area.

There is funding within Sustainability Department to help residents within vulnerable populations.

- i. Some of the questions for RCAC to think about: How can we support building front line communities in Dubuque? Who could we potentially start building conversations with? How do we assure that we are grounded in the lived experiences of communities of color and LMI communities to prevent harm?

Question: What happened to the pollution money the federal government allocated?

Answer: The State of Iowa rejected 3 million worth of funds. The money is then allocated to the 3 largest municipalities in the state. Cedar Rapids asked if Dubuque could be included in their application, but were told that Dubuque is too far away. Giving money directly from the federal government to cities is difficult.

Discussion:

Look at City contracts for City owned spaces for vendors who operate out of those spaces.

Send letter to City Council about bike signage and include prior documentation of bike signage.

Future possibility is to send a symbolic letter to Loras College about native plant arboretum.

OLD BUSINESS

Policy Work –

Letter of Support – Drafted letter to clarify interpretations for City code. These interpretations are not in contradiction to what is stated within City code, but City code has been interpreted rather than written down. Compiled document that states information for urban agriculture in Dubuque. Document includes best practices checklist and violations of residential uses. Document also includes restricting animals to 120 pound animals. Trying to guide the interpretation of the code. Care standards of animals already exist within code. Motion to approve by Chamberland, Steve seconded to send letter to Planning, Public Health, and Ben Pothoff. Motion approved.

Concern: Need to have waste management includes for animals, especially for animals that produce a lot of manure.

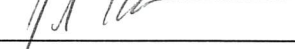
Discussion: It is possible to put animal waste in the trash in a plastic bag. Some cities do a square footage for animal density, but could enforce this as a judgement call if waste is piling up.

HOW DID I SHOW UP? COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

- Lewis – Discussed Park(ing) Day – September 15-16th where anyone can rent curbside parallel parking spaces in specific areas of downtown Dubuque for 1-2 days and turn it into a miniature park. Relates to Climate Action Plan community outreach goals to promote greenspaces, alternative transportation, and creativity.
- Chamberland – Mowing to Monarchs initiative date is May 10th for native plant plug delivery to the colleges.
- Bell – City is applying for Urban Forestry Grant from USDA.

NEXT MEETING: The next commission meeting will occur on June 1, 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 6:25pm.

Minutes approved by: 
Jacob Kohlhaas, Commission Chair

Prepared by: 
Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator

