

CITY OF DUBUQUE - COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

GOVERNMENTAL BODY: Resilient Community Advisory Commission (RCAC)

DATE: September 7, 2023

TIME: 5:00 pm

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dean Boles, Sandra Evans

STAFF PRESENT: Gina Bell, Amanda Lewis

Commissioner Kohlhaas called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.

TEST AGENDA

MINUTES APPROVAL: Kennicker motioned to approve the July minutes. Jayawickrama seconded. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

NEW BUSINESS

1. Paul Schultz – Concerns regarding food scrap composting program

Schultz is the Green Dubuque President and has been involved with waste diversion and composting for many years. Schultz is advocating for support to expand curbside collection of food scraps and composting at Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency (DMASWA) compost facility. Currently, the food scrap program is used by more than 500 customers with a waiting list of 97 people. The City of Dubuque has had a food scrap collection program for 15 years and there are 200 full scale composting programs in United States. The City of Dubuque estimates about 102 tons of foods scraps comingled with yard waste is collected each year. Without a formal composting permit from the Iowa DNR, DMASWA can only collect 104 tons combined yard waste and food scraps. No new food scrap collection was permitted after the limit was reached because it violated the permit. DMASWA agency applied to renew the permit for the landfill but did not apply to be a permitted compost facility. DMASWA applied for a permit in June, but the permit was not accepted, and the Iowa DNR sent a cease-and-desist letter for the composting facility. DMASWA requested a delay to assess the feasibility, cost, and timeline to become a permitted facility. In order for the City to continue the composting program, DMASAW will need to apply to operate a permitted compost facility in October 2023. Schultz stated that many City plans address the desire to increase landfill diversion, including the Climate Action Plan, which has a goal of “50% landfill diversion of recyclables/compostables by 2030” and a “50% food waste reduction and diversion”. Green Dubuque is requesting DMASWA to assess the feasibility of applying for permit to expand/update food waste diversion. Green Dubuque is asking the commission to act in a timely manner pending the DNA permit deadline.

Question: Is there a current permit right now for food scraps?

Answer: Currently the facility is operating without a permit, as the DNR changed their regulations.

Question: How much of current program can be maintained if there isn't a permit?

Answer: 104 tons per year, combined yard waste and compost.

Question: What is going on with the permitting process?

Answer: Compost facility was a permit by rule facility (if you meet the conditions, it is permitted.) DNR initially included a landfill permit if you had a composting facility. Now, there are many compost by rule facilities and it is difficult for DNR to manage. DNR now requires facilities to apply for a permit by rule or to apply to be a permitted facility. Interpretation of rules by DNR staff was that you could take up to 2 tons of food waste and unlimited yard waste per week. DMASWA has collected food waste and yard waster for the past 12 years. Rules are now interpreted differently by DNR. To allow time to notify citizens and participants, DMASWA asked for a 30-day extension. DMASAW contacted DNR again to ask about the feasibility of making it a permitted facility. It would cost \$7,000 to cover the cost of installing a pad for compost. Additionally, DMASWA has started a study about the feasibility of becoming a permitted facility. Environmental reporting has never shown negative impacts from what DMASAW is currently doing. DNR determined that they would give a 90-day extension to continue to accept food waste until October 19th. DMASAW needs clarification on DNR's interpretation of how to manage feed stockpile. DMASWA will ask DNR for continued enforcement discretion to have time clarify this issue and the costs associated to upgrade the facility to manage the feed stockpile. The earliest recommendation will be in October.

Question: How much money is going to be invested to expand the landfill in the next 20-30 years?

Answer: DMASAW does not currently have a design for expansion and only rough estimates for costs because without a plan, it is difficult to estimate cost.

Question: Have other municipalities been impacted by the new regulations?

Answer: DMASAW is not privy to DNR's information. Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Des Moines are permitted facilities, but most smaller facilities are not permitted.

Hoffman motioned to send a letter to City Council in support of a permitted compost facility. Kennicker seconded. Motion carried. Hoffman will draft letter.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Policy Work – Review ordinances and policies as they relate to Climate Action Plan and determine subcommittees and where to focus plane height, urban agriculture, and tree canopy Reports from Commissioners regarding Climate Action Plan (CAP) activities:

Bell discussed that the Planning and Health Department are reviewing the urban agriculture document. Bell proposes that City staff meets to discuss this document and that the Planning and Health Departments get added to the agenda when appropriate.

Next Steps:

Follow up to invite DMASWA and Public Works with meeting updates.

HOW DID I SHOW UP? COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

Jayawickrama is going to a conference in Ohio discussing microplastics in elephants.

Lewis mentioned that Park(ing) Day is happening, and people can volunteer online through Dubuque Main Street on Volunteer DBQ or attend the event.

Kennicker discussed that Parks and Rec commission sent letter to City Council to get clarification for names of City Parks. Commission was not aware that old park was under 'Sister City' guidelines and commission will get more clarification.

Hoffman mentioned that there is a Hungarian soil scientist in Dubuque who will be working with University of Dubuque staff and students.

Bell stated that over \$10,000 in tree vouchers were given away. Dubuque Trees Forever will meet to discuss their planting days in the fall. City of Dubuque's Sustainability Department was one of 12 chosen cities to participate in Cities Forward Initiative and was paired with a Latin American city.

Motion to adjourn by all.

NEXT MEETING: The next commission meeting will occur on October 5, 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 6:20pm.

Minutes approved by: _____

Jacob Kohlhaas, Commission Chair

Prepared by: _____

Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator