

CITY OF DUBUQUE - COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

GOVERNMENTAL BODY: Resilient Community Advisory Commission (RCAC)

DATE: 10/03/2024

TIME: 5:00 pm

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jake Kohlhaas, Dean Boles, Lalith Jayawickrama, Robin Kennicker

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sandra Evans (excused)

STAFF PRESENT: Gina Bell, Michelle Kim

Chair Kohlhaas called the meeting to order at 5:01pm

TEST AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Paul Schultz - Deer management program in the city - City staff reported that the deer herd is not declining in the city, it is excessive. There is a lot of talk among neighbors that this is becoming beyond okay. There are anecdotes of bikers almost getting into collisions because of deer. Paul shared his desire that there should be more outreach, especially about potential diseases. The deer population is affecting other wildlife, and thinks that we shouldn't be allowing the deer to desecrate our wild spaces.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Representatives from various religious groups share current efforts and concerns

Dubuque Interfaith Green Coalition: Mary Jo McDermott with Church of the Resurrection and Dubuque Interfaith Green Coalition shared problems with sustainability in the parish including:

- Composting plates, cups, and utensils have been difficult after parish events. A lot of these items still end up in the landfill and there seems to be a disconnect between buying compostable goods and actually composting them
- We need to get the word out about "best practices" about waste in the city. What is safe to dispose of into the landfill and where to put hazardous waste. How can we educate folks to know how to properly dispose of certain materials.

- Church is also considering solar, but raising the capitol for that project will be difficult.

Dave McDermott from Sisters of the Presentation shared goals and challenges with sustainability at the religious institution level including:

- The goal in the next couple of years is to implement more solar on their property
- They also struggle with composting; this is an area where they could use some help from the City.
- The Sisters need support and education from the city.

Paul Schultz from Mt. Carmel Bluffs shared:

- The building committee moving towards zero waste. There is more recycling than trash by volume and weight. They are now in the process of moving to the continuum to care side: enhanced living, assisted living, memory care. The recycling on this side of the operation mostly seems to be happening by the janitorial staff.
- Habitat committee - Outdoor habitat: There are too many deer that eat the flowers that people are planting. This doesn't incentivize people to plant pollinator gardens out of fear that the deer will destroy it. Indoor habitat does not have too many issues. There is opportunity to do environmental education using indigenous knowledge especially regarding the deer issue.
- Christian values strongly align with environmental issues including -feed the hungry: grow and provide nutritious food and give drink to the thirsty by taking care of our water sources.

Discussion included Kennicker suggested for Interfaith coalition to reach out to folks at DMASWA about "re-think" waste initiatives. Possible look for grants that are available through the solid waste agency that are for waste education.

Paul Schultz wants for the City to consider how to expand the composting program to local businesses and restaurants.

Kennicker suggested that for the Parish festival to have volunteers to take recycling down to the recycling stations themselves.

Jayawickrama suggested that perhaps churches can start their own composting programs and use the produced soil in their gardens.

Paul Schultz thinks that churches should give back to the community somehow to make up for the fact that churches are not taxed. What can churches do to help the well-being of the community?

Boles asked if in these conversations about sustainability within the church if they are considering other measures for sustainability (i.e., going electric, implementing more energy efficient utility measures)

Catholic Climate Covenant - Churches need to have the money up front to pay for the solar and the Catholic Climate Covenant would reimburse them for ~30%

b. Budget Input – Draft Letter of Support for RCAC-proposed CAC position

- Kennicker motioned to draft a letter of support from RCAC for the Climate Action Coordinator position, Jayawickrama seconds.
- Staff have submitted three climate action projects every year in budget, and each year only one has been funded, in addition to the Climate Action Coordinator position. The position was developed in tandem with the 3 per year climate projects.
- Boles dissents, thinks we need to refocus on goals and priorities and doesn't think the focus of the letter should be focused on the permanency of Climate Action Coordinator position. Discussion ensued regarding goals and priorities, workload and positions associated with greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Kennicker asks if the letter of support can contain both goals and priorities and the request for the CAC position. Kohlhaas feels the commission should advocate for the position as the RCAC initially proposed it. Motions carries, 3-1.

c. Recommendation for Sustainable Dubuque Grants to City Council

- Kennicker spoke as the subcommittee representative: Some applications were fully funded and some were only partially funded. The reasoning behind this decision was that the projects that had funding reduced scored lower than the fully funded applications and that these reductions were based on feasibility and matching funds of the projects. Kennicker motions to accept the recommendation and pass to City Council. Jayawickrama seconds. Motion carries.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. State and Federal Priorities discussion (ongoing) Staff will provide updates in coming weeks.
- b. Policy Work – Review ordinances and policies as they relate to Climate Action Plan and determine subcommittees as needed
 - a. Plant height ordinance was approved but never drafted. All the recommendations are back with legal and hopefully it should be on the Council Agenda this month or next. Boles would like to hear the extra

costs to build the energy efficient house they are building to the standards of the new energy code.


HOW DID I SHOW UP? COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

Boles asked the City Attorney about a grant about Latino businesses, this seems to be contrary to what was previously decided that these opportunities should be open to all. Also with the Sustainable Dubuque grants, should we add more groups in the grant application. There isn't guidance about treating minority groups equally during the scoring process.

Kohlhaas shared there is some conversation about composting and specifically about donating food from the dining hall at Loras College.

NEXT MEETING: The next commission meeting will occur on November 7, 2024, at 5pm at the Jule Operations and Training Center (JOTC) in the Circle Conference Room, 949 Kerper Blvd.

ADJOURNMENT: The Commission adjourned at 6:26 pm.

Minutes approved by: 
Jacob Kohlhaas, Commission Chair

Prepared by: 
Michelle Kim, Climate Action Coordinator