

City of Dubuque
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

GOVERNMENTAL BODY: Resilient Community Advisory Commission

DATE: August 1, 2019

TIME: 5:00 pm

LOCATION: Circle Conference Room

Jules Operations and Training Center, 949 Kerper Blvd., Dubuque IA 52001

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dean Boles, Sara Booth, Lalith Jayawickrama, Robin Kennicker, Jake Kohlhaas, Laura Roussell, Leah Specht.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Adam Hoffman

STAFF PRESENT: Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator

Chair Specht called the meeting to order at 5:14 pm. Bell confirmed the meeting was in compliance with the Iowa Open Meeting Law.

TEST AGENDA

OATHS OF OFFICE: Commissioners Kohlhaas and Specht

PUBLIC COMMENT: N/A

MINUTES APPROVAL: Motion by Commissioner Boles to approve June minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Kennicker. Motion carries.

SUSTAINABLE DUBUQUE GRANTS – OUTREACH IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: Staff member Bell shared what has been done thus far to encourage more applications for Sustainable Dubuque grants.

- Farmers Market booth – August 17th
- Reach out to schools with suggestions/ideas
- Share an “Ideas List” of possible projects that an individual or group could do on website
- A printable poster & share widely
- Highlight - a broad swath of funded projects on the website
- KDTW radio spot
- City Newsletter – August/September 2019
- Facebook ads (Commissioner Boles wanted to understand if we are able to reach the folks we want to target. Bell explained that targeted outreach is being used but categories are too general to see exactly who we are reaching.)

SUSTAINABLE DUBUQUE COMMUNITY GRANT – REPORTS: Received and filed Fountain of Youth’s grant report and photos.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (CAP): Commissioners had conversations with community members and captured responses to share at August meeting.

Commissioner Roussell interviewed two people and both did not know about 50% by 2030 goal of the City’s. Because they know Laura’s work, a lot of talk was about trees; both had concerns about the changing environment; but limited personal knowledge about specifics. They think about it constantly because they worried about changing species and worried about our plants; and wanted to know what can we support here in our climate. They listed things they do to reduce their impact on the environment – they take personal actions; open to learning and doing more.

Commissioner Kennicker interviewed her niece and nephew; in their ~30s; they recycle but they don’t really do much else. Learned about the value of taking care of the planet but haven’t carried it through. They know the City has a recycling program but that is all. They have allergies, so a/c is always on, yet they don’t think about energy usage.

Additionally, she talked with people at her job, mostly aged ~40-60; and they showed concern around energy usage and water safety and pollution of the aquifers. Some employees have the attitude, "I don't give a bleep about it, because I'm not paying for it" and they don't care at all.

Commissioner Specht interviewed 5 people and found a general lack of knowledge about the 50% by 2030 Plan. They didn't know what it is; or, if that is the goal, how we will get there. She then reflected to the commission, "How do we get the knowledge to the public because there is a disconnect to the community what the city it is doing?" She also mentioned that those interviewed know her, so they made connections with the school system and then that city; but think starting with the kids and then supporting the parents is the way to address the lack of knowledge. She also heard that this needs to be a requirement in the school district - mandatory - whatever "it" is. The biggest concern for everyone is the extreme weather temperatures; which also impacts habitat and water. People try to reduce and reuse, but the weather extremes this year have really brought it to their attention. Those interviewed feel frustrated because everyone knows this is a problem, but they want to understand better what the city is doing. What can they do to make the city address climate change and how can they help?

The conversation moved to looking at what is happening in the school district regarding curriculum. Specht shared they have state core requirements; and questions should be directed at the School Board. Boles reviewed School District's strategic plan and shared that it doesn't appear they have a priority initiative related to sustainability. Bell offered that the commission could look at what the school district is doing regarding buildings and grounds and reminded the group that they are advisory to City Council and that the school board is a different entity.

Specht's final comment urged that whatever we do, we need to connect it to the carbon footprint - not just "turn off the lights" but "When you turn off the lights, you reduce your footprint by XYZ..."

Commissioner Booth stated that she hears a lot about despair and wondered how we can share the message of what we are doing to spawn hope.

Commissioner Jayawickrama interviewed his environmental science students, comprised of ~28 Saudi students and a couple American students. Generally, it is a group with a lot of resources. He found that the students did not know about the CAP, 50% by 2030 nor did it matter to them. The group didn't feel that food or extreme weather would impact them. He gathered more input when he shifted his question and asked about how climate impacts health. Regardless of personal wealth, climate related allergic reactions, cardiovascular issues, asthma, etc. still impact them. After the link was made, they were concerned about the health impacts of climate change. Overall, they knew very little about City of Dubuque and the CAP nor did they care very much. Commissioner Jayawickrama shared, "For wealthy countries, climate change is like watching cartoons on tv. It doesn't seem real because we are so isolated from what is actually happening."

Commissioner Boles interviewed folks who are, "old like him" and one of his takeaways regarded market forces. The interview he conducted said if market forces take care of this, it is fine. The person installed solar panels because they are cheap. The questions asked of the City was, "How much of the things the City has done, has it helped us economically? How much are we saving on our solar on fire stations? How much money are we saving because we put in LEDs in city buildings?" Concern related to weather changes but a general doubt, "I don't know if it is man-made or not..." followed by "What about the economy?" His second interview was with a local pastor whose response was, "Climate change: don't really care. What is important is taking care of the environment and we've lost track of caring for the environment by focusing on climate change."

Another key item from all interviews was this: "Tell me what to do! I don't want to have to think about it or figure it out."

In addition, Commissioners discussed the need to use common language – pick something or keep 50% by 2030 and stick with it.

Bell shared the upcoming steps for the CAP – paleBLUEDot, llc was chosen as a consultant to update the CAP. The most immediate next step is the community survey which will go live August 14th. Bell requests commissioners direct folks to fill it out on the website: www.cityofdubuque.org/sustainability for the chance to win gift cards.

[[The Telegraph Herald covered this discussion as well: http://www.telegraphherald.com/news/tri-state/article_d5fc99bd719-5388-9909-b0d5916db29b.html]]

COMMISSIONER REPORTS: Kennicker (Parks & Rec) shared Miller Riverview Park was hoping to open August 1st but recent rain delayed this. Saturday Aug 3rd is the boat parade and Art on the River.

Booth (Imagine Dubuque) shared there is a SharePoint site that is live; they are trying to recruit champions within the community to take on specific projects. Trail connectivity has a lot of champions early on which is exciting.

Boles (CDAC) shared at their last meeting major topic was recommended to Council which purchase of services grants should be funded and they award ~\$125,000. 10 grantees were chosen. There will be a public hearing on an evaluation on last year's use of these funds.

NEXT MEETING: The next commission meeting will occur on Thursday, September 5, 2019 at 5:00 pm. The location of the meeting will be at the Jule Operations and Training Center, 949 Kerper Boulevard.

ADJOURNMENT: The Commission adjourned at 6:41 pm.

Minutes approved by:


Leah Specht, Commission Chair

Prepared by:


Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator