

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: January 2, 2020
TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm at the City Hall Misato Room
PRESENT: Dan Hall, Julie Fassbender, Lynette Power
GUESTS:
STAFF: John Howard

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at 4:36 pm by Chair Hall.
2. **Review and Approval of December Meeting Minutes:** Lynette moved for approval, Julie seconded. All in favor.

3. **Goal Discussion: Energy:**

Julie suggests adding piece about CEQC advocating or advising on City energy policy. Agreement amongst CEQC. Julie asked about Partners in Energy (PIE). John described that this is an Xcel Energy program, with formal work concluding about nine months ago. Dan added that much of the PIE work was about business programs. Julie suggested using the word "monitoring" rather than "implement". Julie asked if the workshops listed in the goal are being done, and who is doing them? John stated that this was not assigned to a particular group or staff member, and the City has not been very active with workshops since the goal was developed. Under the measurable section, City should add piece on City policy.

Lynette shared about a letter she received this summer that advertised a solar garden or farm. She has not seen these large installations in the area, but has seen them elsewhere in her travels. Lynette wondered about advising on solar, and if this is a City function. John shared that the city did include information about community solar in presentations, and he gets calls from the public. John suggested CERTs has good information to educate about community solar and aspects to consider with subscribing to a garden. Lynette recalled good attendance at a local event about community solar.

Julie wondered about the time bound nature of the goal. Lynette suggested the climate crisis requires full effort, and thus expedience. Julie likes the term of expedience.

Julie asked for clarification about the City's community solar subscription. John said the City is a subscriber to community solar for about 50% of the City government's energy usage. John described the City rationale for not going with 100% community solar. Lynette likes the idea of having locally controlled solar as a backup energy for critical infrastructure. CEQC suggests exploring opportunities for a solar microgrid as part of the goal.

4. **Community Garden Locations Discussion:**

John said that he included an abundance of options to be thorough, even though some may be dismissed out of hand. John suggests starting with one location that seems favorable and using it as the benchmark to compare to others. Julie likes the Sobieski Park location, and began the discussion. The park has been getting upgrades

and the nearby neighborhood has received home improvement funds, so there is renewed energy in the neighborhood. Lynette confirmed that the new park pavilion is very nice. Dan enquired where the plots would go.

Julie also likes Belmont- Whitten for gardens.

Dan likes the area near the aquatic center in terms of being a central location, but available areas are sparse. John described that the grassy area by the Central Garage was deemed too traffic congested by the Central Garage Superintendent. Julie likes the idea of putting gardens in areas where yards are small, and homeowners do not have the ability to garden on their own property. Lynette brought up bridge area and comments from December about them not being suitable. John added that much of the bridge park area is walkways or stormwater infrastructure. Lynette feels it is important to locate gardens away from drinking areas because bar patrons can be destructive towards property. John believes a fence will be a necessary aspect for any garden to protect it from vandals.

Lynette brought attention back to Sobieski Park, and noted the high tree coverage. Julie thought many of these trees would be removed due to emerald ash borer. Lynette shared her experience with shade detracting from her garden's productivity.

Julie shifted the discussion toward Lions Park. John gave some updates on this site that were not visible in the satellite image: An outdoor rink takes the place south of the gravel parking area, and a stormwater pond utilizes much of the green space previously north of the ice arena paved parking lot. Dan asked about the northeast section of the park that looked unused? John believes these areas are now being used by sewer utility infrastructure.

Julie again voiced her thoughts on the merits of Sobieski Park. Julie asked about Tillman Park? John did not have it on the initial list, but brought it up on the projector. Dan wondered where Tillman Park is located. Julie explained it is near St. Mary's University, somewhat behind Mango's restaurant by the creek. This site likely would have water access from the park pavilion. Julie believes Tillman would also be a good location. Lynette stated this would be out of the vandalism circuit. This park abuts the Gilmore Creek levee, but does not seem to flood.

Lynette would like to see a more centrally located garden, such as at Lake Park. Julie believes Lake Park could be filled to raise the gardens out of the water, but would add cost to the overall project. John recalled Chad's concerns about West Lake being too wet, and stated that many of the areas west of Dakota St. were saturated this past summer. The CEQC looked at the area east of the Dakota St. entry. Seemed like some of this area would be dry enough, and would not interfere with park use. John thought there might be an old water fountain that could provide water. Dan asked if the Sobieski, Tillman and the West Lake site should be the CEQC's recommendation? CEQC concurred.

John suggested it might be good to consider some East Lake Park locations, as these may avoid the wetness found in the West Lake areas. These areas include open space near the Willows disc golf course. Julie liked the eastern open areas of the Willows area. The presence of porta-potties may also be an added benefit.

One additional site is by Hamilton St. and Sarnia intersection in the area vacated by the old jungle gyms and playgrounds. The benefits of this site are its central proximity, high visibility, complementary use potential, no standing water and geese deterrence. Parking is also generally available. The CEQC decided to add this to their recommendation list.

The CEQC reviewed the pros and cons of the three other sites on the recommendation list:

Sobieski is good for water accessibility, near small lot neighborhood, is an area getting renewed investment, near new park building, and has the ability to comingle activities.

West Lake site: pros: walkable, central location, parking, and likely water access. Cons: potentially soggy.

Tillman: Pros: few trees, not saturated, water access. Cons: accessibility, but would serve neighborhood.

5. **Other Business:**

Dan asked about a webinar opportunity that Lynette shared about air monitoring at the December meeting, and whether it was still available. Lynette said it already occurred, but may be on website. She will share it with Dan.

Meeting adjourned at 5:37 PM by acclamation.

Notes prepared by John Howard.