

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: June 6, 2019

TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm at the City Hall Misato Room

PRESENT: Bruno Borsari, Dan Hall, Lynette Power, Julie Fassbender, David Schmidt

STAFF: Assistant City Planner Luke Sims, GreenCorps Member Sarah Bruihler

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order by Chair Dan Hall at 4:35p.m.
2. **Review and approval of May 2019 meeting notes:** Minutes from May, 2019 meeting approved unanimously after a motion by Bruno Borsari and second by Julie Fassbender.
3. **SolSmart Update and Planning:** Assistant City Planner Sims provided an overview of the SolSmart project and the presentation to the Planning Commission. Mr. Sims informed the CEQC that the discussion revolved predominantly around potential glare off of the solar panels. Any changes to the UDC that may need to be accommodated for any SolSmart goals would likely be incorporated in a second round of amendments to the UDC following the first round this summer.

Julie Fassbender asked for more information regarding the glare from solar panels. Mr. Sims responded that there were general considerations about glare off buildings in historic districts and the technical benefits of solar panels to capture as much light as possible and only the framing reflecting any light.

Lynette Power asked for more specific regarding SolSmart. Mr. Sims responded that the goal is for greater compliance with zoning language that will allow for more by-right solar development in communities. Mr. Sims noted that much of the current regulations for the City of Winona are already quite flexible. Dan Hall mentioned that it seems to be similar to the GreenStep Cities Program.

Lynette Power asked if there were any steps in the SolSmart program related to building permits. Mr. Sims responded that there are some steps that are focused on Inspections but a lot of it is in planning and zoning as well. Lynette Power mentioned that building permit fees seem to be disincentives and suggested removing building permit fees for solar or even providing a financial incentive.

Dan Hall asked whether freestanding solar installations were still allowed. Mr. Sims responded that freestanding, in-ground solar installations were allowed and primarily have to comply with accessory structure requirements. General discussion of required building permits in the state of Minnesota ensued.

4. **City Energy Efficiency project update:** Ms. Bruihler informed the CEQC that the previous discussion revolved around either joining GESP or LEEP programs in the Minnesota Department of Commerce, which are energy contracting services. She informed the committee that she is gathering information on City buildings to track use, maintenance, hours, personnel, and other information. She assumed that she may be done in the next

week. Her GreenCorps mentor will provide guidance on whether to join GESP or LEEP. GESP is preferred by the City because of better financial support.

Lynette Power asked whether the City was saving money. Mr. Bruihler responded that money would be saved through the life cycle of the project and no money needs to be put in up front.

Dan Hall asked about the kinds of projects that could be parts of these programs. Ms. Bruihler responded that a company comes in and audits the buildings that the City asks them to look at. General discussion of lightbulbs, insulation, windows, and different companies and cities programs for energy savings ensued.

Julie Fassbender expressed appreciation for the City going through the process.

Dan Hall asked what the lowest hanging fruit was based on the current analysis. Ms. Bruihler responded that the water and wastewater treatment was appearing to be the best candidate.

Lynette Power asked if there was any room for something truly innovative in these programs. Ms. Bruihler responded that the programs primarily focus on building efficiency so these may not be the right programs to try something off the wall.

5. **Unified Development Code Review – Article 6:** Dan Hall opened the discussion of the Unified Development Code Article 6 and recommended focusing on Division 5 within Article 6.

Julie Fassbender asked if any of this section reflected on work being done by Healthy Lake Winona. David Schmidt responded that unless any development comes to abut the lakes, it's doubtful anything will come up.

David Schmidt asked if the City was the first line for any wetland determination. Mr. Sims responded that depending on the project and whether there were any determined wetlands and the proposed course of action, whether banking or otherwise was to be pursued. The City would work with other agencies as much of the rules are determined at the state level.

Julie Fassbender asked if exchanges of property for wetlands went through City Council. Mr. Sims said he would have to check closer in the code but suspected in was at the state level.

Lynette Power asked who specifically the "city planner" referred to in the UDC. Mr. Sims clarified that it was Carlos Espinosa when the City Code specifically calls out the City Planner or the Zoning Administrator. Mr. Sims mentioned that only cities of more substantial size would have a fulltime conservation planner or a similar role.

Dan Hall asked what the designated wetlands in Winona were. Mr. Sims mentioned that there are typically wetlands in new developments but much of the older core of the city was paved over well before wetland delineation became common practice. Julie Fassbender asked when delineation of wetlands would come into play. Mr. Sims mentioned that new developments or annexed properties would typically be the more usual case in Winona because of the existing developed status of the city.

Dan Hall asked about the dredging of Lake Winona and filling in the portion of land near Target and Walmart and whether that was determined to be a wetland. Mr. Sims said he wasn't certain about how that happened. General discussion of that retail area ensued.

David Schmidt asked who was responsible for the delineation of wetlands. Mr. Sims responded that the documentation is submitted to BWSR for applications requiring Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) determinations. The developer is required to find a hydrologist or engineer to prepare the documentation. David Schmidt elaborated that if there is a suspected wetland then they have to perform a survey to delineate which areas are actually wetlands in relation to specific guidelines.

Dan Hall asked what kinds of restrictions or protections must be considered. Mr. Sims responded that how the surrounding runoff is controlled, whether there are surrounding Natural State Areas or considerations go into any conditions that may be applied and are taken on a case by case basis.

Julie Fassbender asked about the appeals process and whether the citizenry is allowed to appeal. Mr. Sims responded that it can be initiated by the landowner, the surrounding people who received notice, or by petition of 100 residents.

6. **Tree Planting in 2019:** Ms. Bruihler mentioned that most of the trees on the maps in front of the CEQC are already planted. Dan Hall noted a quaking aspen and asked how the trees were chosen. Ms. Bruihler responded that she was not involved in tree selection. General discussion of quaking aspens ensued.

Dan Hall asked if all of the trees are indigenous. David Schmidt responded that they are all indigenous to the United States but some are out of their typical ranges. General discussion of zones and ranges for tree ensued.

Lynette Power mentioned that she would like to see community gardens put in and that it is important for the city to grow its own food. She noted that there are some viable areas like near the baseball diamonds that could be community gardens. She also mentioned that a lot of areas of the parks have been planted with trees but she would prefer to see people interacting with community gardens. General discussion of the East End Rec community gardens and other community gardens ensued. Julie Fassbender asked if there could be an agenda item added for the next meeting to discuss community gardens. Bruno Borsari suggested the idea of edible landscaping throughout the community.

Bruno Borsari asked whether the trees were being inventoried. Mr. Sims responded that the City does maintain a tree inventory. Ms. Bruihler mentioned that every tree is recorded by GPS. Bruno Borsari suggested utilizing iTree, like Winona State University, which tracks information on every tree and also shows air quality and the financial value of the trees. He mentioned that for every dollar invested by WSU, \$4.95 was saved according to the iTree software.

David Schmidt asked if some of the more detailed information was already being recorded. Mr. Sims acknowledged that the City currently measures diameter, type of tree, height, and whether it has been treated. He suggested it could be expanded for GIS story maps or other vehicles to better convey the information. Bruno

Borsari suggested utilizing iTree as it is becoming more important in the field and also provides that additional dollar value.

Ms. Bruihler mentioned that most of the trees are replacing former ash trees. General discussion of treating ash trees and Dutch elm disease ensued.

7. **Other Business:** Lynette Power asked whether plantings in public spaces were neonicotinoid plantings. She suggested that City Staff ask Chris Kramer.

Dan Hall mentioned that he wasn't thrilled about the Bay State Milling decision and hoped the community would dream bigger. General discussion on reuse and land near the waterfront ensued.

8. On a motion by Bruno Borsari and second by Lynette Power, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 5:47pm.

Minutes prepared by Mr. Sims.