

CITY OF URBANA, ILLINOIS
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMISSION

City Council Chambers

Tuesday, March 1, 2011

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Marya Ryan, Jean Ascoli, John Marlin [7:20pm], Kirstin Replogle, Todd Rusk, Stephen Wald

Commissioners Absent: Gary Cziko

Staff Present: Bart Hagston, Jeff Engstrom

Additional Present: Reece Golz, Jourdan Nash, Thomas Almeda, Trevor Jack, Terrance Hall, Caitlin Hale.

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Declaration of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Bart Hagston called the roll and a quorum was present.

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda submitted.

Review of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Motion by Ms. Replogle, second by Mr. Rusk, to approve the minutes from the February 10, 2011 meeting as corrected by Ms. Ryan and Ms. Replogle. Motion carried.

Public Input

There was no public input offered at this time.

Communications

Monthly Staff Report

Bart Hagston provided the March Staff Report that gave updates on the following items:

- Ongoing Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant projects;
- Truckload sale of compost bins and rain barrels on April 9;
- Electronics recycling collection event on March 5;

- Addition of plastic grocery bags and #6 rigid plastic containers (except expanded polystyrene) to the list of materials accepted in the U-CYCE program as of April 1;
- Development of a proposal for a City Inter-Departmental Green Team; and
- Update on the development of strategies for the Urbana Climate Action Plan (UCAP).

An updated document was distributed that summarized public input received during development of the UCAP. A preliminary version of the document had been provided to the Commission in December 2010, but that version did not contain all input.

Discussion was held on the topic of developing a Green Team made up of staff from various City departments. Ms. Ascoli suggested the City could look toward adoption of a more stringent energy code, such as upgrading from the ASHRAE 90.1-2007 version to the 2010 version, or moving to the ASHRAE 189.1 Standard for the Design of High-Performance Green Buildings. Mr. Rusk suggested that alternate building materials that meet commonly accepted standards could be approved for use by the City. Ms. Ascoli stated that the City has been accommodating of such uses, citing the approval of straw bale construction and structural insulated panels (SIPs) in projects. Ms. Ryan noted that the SAC's recommendation for the City to develop policies for use of energy and water at City facilities was adopted by the City Council as part of the common goals. Ms. Replogle asked what level of involvement the Commission might have with a City Green Team. Mr. Hagston stated that such involvement had not been considered at this time, but would be given thought during development of the Green Team.

Additional Comments

Mr. Engstrom provided an update on the proposed Kerr Avenue development. In 2004, the City acquired 3.2 acres on Kerr Avenue with Federal grant funds. The City Council adopted a goal of developing the property with residential units featuring green design and energy efficiency elements. In 2006, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued for design of the development and Farr Associates was awarded the contract. In 2008, a RFP was issued to select a developer and E-co lab was chosen. Due to the concurrent economic downturn, financing for the project did not get off the ground. Thus, in 2010, Newhouse Development came on board as a partner with the idea to build energy efficient low-income housing on the site. Recently the Illinois Housing Development Authority denied a low-income housing tax credit application for the development, citing a high local housing vacancy rate as the determining factor. The funding denial is being appealed.

Mr. Hagston also informed the Commission that the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission will be holding a meeting with local stormwater engineers on March 10 to find out ways in which they are working together toward common goals and to encourage such cooperation.

The Commission discussed possible presentations to the SAC on the use of landscaping to lower energy use and on storm water management.

New Business
Water Resource Issues

Commission members followed up on their intent from last month's meeting to begin discussion of water resource issues and which ones they would like to further investigate.

Mr. Marlin discussed issues of stormwater quantity and quality. The public generally thinks about stormwater quantity in relation to flooding after heavy rain events. The quality of stormwater runoff is receiving more attention, because this runoff picks up various substances and debris from parking lot and streets before making its way into waterways. In construction areas erosion leads to runoff pollution as well. Efforts to install rain gardens and rain barrels can help improve stormwater quality, but do not have sufficient capacity after heavy rains to make much difference. Soil health is also needed to help retain stormwater and developers too often do not consider that in their construction.

Mr. Marlin also pointed out the City's current consideration of development of a stormwater utility fee and how such a program might work. A portion of the fees generated by such a program could be used to implement sustainable stormwater projects.

Mr. Wald stated that he would like to look at enhancing recreation opportunities around water resources. He indicated this was currently being considered in relation to the Boneyard Creek Improvement Plan and would like to see more of this type of development.

Ms. Replege discussed research she had conducted regarding how cities have addressed water resources in their municipal sustainability plans or reports. She looked at eight communities across the country. Common themes amongst the municipal plans reviewed were: facility audits; upgrading fixtures to improve efficiency; minimizing waste and runoff; protecting wetlands and floodplains from development; supporting and enforcing surface and groundwater protection regulations; developing "waterwise" demonstration gardens/xeriscaping tours and workshops; recycling greywater for irrigation or toilets; and building public awareness and support for conservation.

A few cities included water use reduction targets: Claremont, CA - 20% reduction by 2012, 40% by 2017 (municipal and community); Fort Collins, CO - 10% reduction (normalized for weather) over 5 years; Lake Oswego, NY – decrease municipal use 2% per year for 5 years and decrease community water use 1% per year over the same time span.

Other highlights from these municipal plans included: Claremont, CA has adopted the Ahwahnee Water Principles, which are part of the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities; Evanston, IL participates in USEPA's WaterSense program; Fort Collins, CA has rebate programs for efficient dish and clothes washer purchases; Madison, WI provides residents with water efficiency upgrade kits for \$10, which includes items such as a faucet aerator and low-flow shower head. The \$10 is refunded on a resident's water bill once the upgrades are installed.

Ms. Ryan stated she had looked for water conservation planning tools that might be of use. She had not found much after an initial search, but would continue to seek out such tools.

Mr. Rusk stated that all sectors (residential, industrial, commercial) use a significant percentage of our water supply, so as we look for ways to conserve water, we must look at reductions in all sectors. He cited the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium and East Central Illinois Regional Water Supply Planning Committee as resources on this issue. Wastewater reuse is another option to be considered for helping draw down water demand. Such reuse could include irrigation, industrial cooling, and other non-potable uses. Mr. Rusk also suggested that the Illinois State Water Survey could probably speak to the Commission about water supply planning.

Commission members agreed that they should be looking at both water conservation and stormwater management issues, and not focusing merely on one topic or the other.

It was suggested that Brad Bennett from Urbana Public Works be asked to speak at the April Commission meeting regarding the City's efforts to develop a stormwater utility and how such a program could be used to help fund sustainable stormwater projects. Mr. Hagston stated that he would make the contact.

Announcements

Mr. Marlin stated that the Naturally Illinois Expo, sponsored by the Institute of Natural Resource Sustainability, will be held on March 11-12 and recommended it as a worthwhile event.

The next regularly scheduled SAC meeting will take place Tuesday, April 5, 2011 at 7 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. Mr. Replogle will chair in Ms. Ryan's absence.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m. This meeting was recorded.