



Environmental Management Commission

Meeting Minutes – July 11, 2012

Meeting Location: Mid-America Regional Council – 600 Broadway

Commissioners present: Carol Adams, Bob Berkebile, Tom Brink, Elizabeth Fischer, Jim Hansen, Marty Kraft, Ken Kramme, Sal Madge, Robin Martinez, Jack Schrimsher, Tom Wyrsh

Staff: Dennis Murphey, Andy Savastino, Matt McKinley – OEQ, Matt Gigliotti and Amelia McIntyre – Law Dept, Mike Schumacher and Nathan Pare – Neighborhoods and Housing Services, Edgar Jordan – Economic Development Corporation (EDC)

Guests: None

Carol Adams, Co-Chair, opened the meeting at 4:05 pm; a quorum was present

A. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed commissioners, staff and guests to the EMC meeting. Everyone introduced themselves.

B. Tom Wyrsh made a motion, seconded by Jack Schrimsher, to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 13, 2012. The minutes were unanimously approved.

C. Sustainable and Beneficial Uses of Vacant Lots – Robin Martinez

Robin Martinez provided a brief background of the issue of vacant lots in Kansas City
Dennis Murphey reviewed the draft “Vacant Lot Program Proposal” developed in 2008 by Forest Decker of the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Decker asked Dennis to offer his regrets that he could not attend the meeting due to illness. The proposal offers suggestions for six alternatives to the historical method of dealing with vacant lots which has been for the City to take responsibility for mowing several times each year. The proposal emphasized partnerships/demonstration projects with neighborhoods.

Edgar Jordan noted that the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority (LCRA) holds about 200 vacant lots some of which could be used for a demonstration project. The two conditions for use of LCRA lots are (1) take LCRA out of maintenance, and (2) do not affect the ability to market the lots.

Marty Kraft noted a number of potential plants that could be good ground cover. He cautioned that availability of water is a critical issue.

There was discussion about appearances in terms of street frontages, creating a nice edge, preserving the pedestrian right-of-way, etc.

Mike Schumacher noted that the City has about 3700 properties held in Land Trust. The annual cost to the City to mow each lot 5 times each growing season is \$800,000 ... and this is growing as more lots are accumulated. The current approach is not sustainable. He believes neighborhoods will be a good partner in alternative solutions. He indicated the department is ready to move ahead with one or more alternatives.

Carol Adams would like to see this effort include the Water Services Department and to see if this can contribute to the green OCP strategies.

Bob Berkebile suggested developing a map to understand lot densities and possible inclusion in the process of Cultivate KC. He suggested that any pilots use attractive plantings rather than full native grasses for positive visuals and acceptance.

Tom Wyrsh indicated Jackson County might be a partner as the Soils and Conservation section is already working in schools.

Dennis Murphey suggested inclusion of GreenWorks in KC because they work with area youth.

Carol Adams asked if there were Commissioners interested in helping tighten the focus on the issue. Robin Martinez, Marty Kraft and Elizabeth Fischer indicated they are interested in participating in discussions with City staff and others, which could also include Scott Cahail, Water Services, Stuart Bullington and Mike Schumacher, Neighborhoods and Housing Services, Andy Bracker, Brownfields, Kristin Riott, Bridging The Gap, Kate Corwin, Green Works in KC, Molly Davies at UMKC, Forest Decker of Parks and Recreation, and someone from Jackson County, etc. Jerry Shechter, OEQ, is to help Robin Martinez and Marty Kraft convene the discussions.

D. Environmental Achievement Awards – Elizabeth Fischer

Elizabeth gave an update of the recommendations from the EMC sub-group who reviewed the 18 proposals received from City staff for consideration of Environmental Achievement Awards. The group had previously recommended awards for five of the 18 applicants. The committee is now recommending adding (1) the City Clerk's Office for their effort to go paperless with City Council by providing materials via laptops & electronic tablets vs. the former 3-ring binders, and (2) the Brush Creek Feasibility Study by the E-Team at Water Services & #2 (the Blue River Rescue & Coal Mine Road Enhancements).

Bob Berkebile made a motion, seconded by Tom Brink, to accept the recommendation of the committee for seven Environmental Achievement Awards in 2012. The motion was unanimously adopted.

The Environmental Achievement Awards ceremony will be held on August 8 at 4:00 pm at the Kauffman Foundation.

E. Office of Environmental Quality – Dennis Murphey

1. The City Plan Commission heard testimony on the proposed sustainability updates to the Development Code. The CPC unanimously approved the updates. The only concern was expressed by Vicki Noteis that there was insufficient public involvement in the process. Patty Noll, City Planning and Development accepted the critique and committed to one or more public meetings. The next step is presentation of an ordinance to the City Council. OEQ will send notices to the EMC in case anyone wishes to testify. Bob Berkebile made a motion, seconded by Jim Hansen, that the EMC formally endorse the proposed sustainability changes to the Development Code and authorize the co-Chairs to represent the EMC in support of the changes. The motion passed.
2. The newly appointed Climate Protection Steering Committee has had its first meeting with the new members. The Mayor has appointed five new members who participated in an orientation session before the meeting. Mid-America Regional Council made presentations about its various initiatives including: energy code upgrade adoption in the region, Creating Sustainable Places grant, Solar Rooftops grant. Dennis Murphey provided a write-up on implementation of the Climate Protection Plan. The next quarterly meeting of the CP Steering Committee will be in August or September. The highlighted issue is expected to be the KCP&L achievement of its commitment to reduce 6 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and renewable energy. This was a commitment made in an historic agreement with the Sierra Club and the Concerned Citizens of Platte County several years ago. The target date for achievement was 2012.

F. Liaison Updates

1. Air Quality – Carol Adams –
 - a. MARC has an upcoming workshop series on native plants – See the handout
 - b. Due to excessive weather conditions this year, the area will have air quality standards violation(s) that will need to be addressed in the future.

G. Follow up on Retreat Discussions & Planning for July Meeting – None

H. Old Business – None

I. New Business – Carol Adams – Parks and Recreation Ballot Issue

A request has been made that the EMC endorse the Parks ballot issue. Matt Gigliotti counseled the EMC about legal prohibitions and limitations the Commissioners have as EMC members – not as private citizens. After discussion, the EMC focused on the issues of integration of projects which support sustainable concepts. The

EMC could take a position supportive of integrated city projects, which is consistent with its decisions in the past, and the importance of repairing the city's water and sewer problems. It is also important to consider EMC responsibilities and its charter purpose to advise the Mayor and City Council on issues. In the past, positions have been taken prior to an issue being placed on a ballot while this issue is already on the ballot.

The Chair asked if the two points noted above – supporting integration of city projects and support for repairing the water and sewer problems – are important enough to express a formal EMC position?

After discussion, Marty Kraft made a motion, seconded by Ken Kramme, expressing the EMC support for integration of city projects and support for repairing the water and sewer problems and empowering the Chair to write a letter to the Mayor, City Council and City Manager expressing the position of the EMC. The motion passed.

J. Remarks and Announcements – None

The next monthly meeting will be the Annual Environmental Achievement Awards. The meeting is scheduled for August 8, 2012 at 4:00 pm at the Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm