

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: Thursday, February 4, 2021

TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm (Virtual Zoom Meeting)

PRESENT: Dan Hall, David Ruff, Niki Ciulla, Lynette Power and Julie Fassbender

GUESTS: Jim Worthley, Kelsey Ocello, Jeanne Franz, Deb McClellan, Bonnie, Chris Meyer, Pam Eyden, Tom Kujawa, Bruno Borsari, Lea Karlssen, Liz McCheel, Jan Taylor, Amy Koehler, Alex Leschisin, Emilie Falc, Patrick Byron.

STAFF: John Howard, Chad Ubl, Patrick Menton, Malia Fox, Laura Hoberg, and Katie Grannes (Community Forestry Corps)

1. **Call to Order:** Call to order at 4:31 PM by Dan Hall (Chair)
2. **Review and Approval of Jan. 2021 Meeting Minutes:** Motion by Julie, second by David. Approval unanimous.
3. **Community Garden Discussion:**
Dan asked for an update. John said he spoke with the Park and Rec department following the January meeting, and they are in attendance to discuss future plans. Chad introduced himself as the assistant City Manager who oversees the Parks Department. He turned the meeting over to Malia Fox, who oversees the Friendship Center.

Malia shared a video of a Gretna, LA community garden near New Orleans:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox1nrBAsaKQ&feature=emb_l

Audio was not working so Malia provided narration. The garden has nice raised beds. The garden does educational classes, has ample space for walking, and butterfly gardens. Malia sees this as a good model for the proposed Community Center. Laura shared about the experience of the Friendship members who volunteered at the East Rec. Center City garden and programs they helped coordinate. The more multi-functional the garden can be, the better in their opinion.

Lynette asked whether the activities Laura described are in the past or planned for this year. Laura indicated the intent is to retain these features. Dan asked about retaining a garden at the site of a new Community Center. Laura affirmed that this the goal.

Lynette asked about the number of plots at the garden presently. Laura described there are 53 plots, some managed by groups or the community, but principally individuals. There is a variety of sizes from 4x4 feet to 4x16 feet.

Lynette praised the work of the City to fit as many plots in. Dan asked whether a garden would be planned for a new community center. Chad spoke of the intent to maintain current community garden resource to some capacity at the current location and through additional locations.

Julie brought up the potential use of Sobieski and West Lake Park as community garden sites. Chad said staff are considering expansion and alternatives if the ERC site were to be reduced. Chad and staff is interested in understanding the user desires and goals to figure out the best options. Julie asked if there was a waiting list, and Chad replied that there were waiting lists in the first years, but not in 2020. Specifically plots were available at the end of the year, but claimed at the beginning.

Julie asked if the Prairie Island plots were spoken for. Chad said he believed there were, but they are managed by the campground operator. Chad suggested Prairie Island expansion is another option.

Julie provided some background that 15-20 potential sites were evaluated for a future community garden, with West Lake and Sobieski getting the most support from the CEQC as future sites.

Julie asked if the meeting attendees could weigh in with comments. Dan said this would be an appropriate time for attendees to hop in, but asked to keep comments brief.

Liz McHeel is involved with the sustainable food and farming program at MSCS. She noted MSCS is looking to establish a community garden and could receive help from the construction program.

Chris Meyer introduced herself as a former Master Gardener and shared that she invited Jim Worthley and Tom Kujawa to speak. Lynette asked about the Stone Point Park gardens and if they are still in operation – yes they are.

Jim Worthley asked if the community garden would need to be on City land. Jim has talked with the community garden organizer at St. Mary's (Kyle Black). St. Mary's has a large area with a fence across Hwy. 14 from main campus area. Dan and Patrick Menton said that non-city land is being considered.

Tom Kujawa mentioned that Redeemer Lutheran hosted in the past and may be available in the future.

Bonnie stated that it is important that the City do outreach so people who need space or have constraints (food insecure, transportation limited) are able to use garden.

Bruno Borsari provided his thoughts. Bruno described how Wapasha Gardens and J.R. Watkins were successes, but discontinued. Bruno said the location is vital – he noted Stone Point Park is disadvantaged by being 6 miles out of town. The East Rec garden has been great way to bring community together, and he has been active in bee keeping there. He thoroughly supports community gardens and shared a link about a book chapter on sustainability and another about the WSU arboretum. It is a must to convert lawn into productive landscapes. Bruno stated MSCS would be a good partner.

Winona sustainability:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321343637_Achieving_Sustainability_in_the_City_of_Winona_Minnesota_USA_A_Case_Study

WSU:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323483545_An_economic_value_assessment_of_ecological_services_in_the_tree_community_at_Winona_State_University_Arboretum

Deb noted that the SHIP program funds quite a bit for community gardens, including Maplewood, Prairie Island and St. Anne's. Kelsey Ocello is new SHIP coordinator: info@winonacountypartnership.com.

Patrick Menton asked about the total plots in town, and availability. Bruno said they don't have numbers at this moment, but all spaces are getting used. Patrick asked about who administered the Maplewood Garden? Deb said a sociology class helps with the management [Jay Palmer at WSU is the professor who organized the HRA garden]. Patrick also asked about getting food to those who need it. Chris Meyer described her experience sharing food from community gardens. Jeanne Franz said the WSU garden produce is taken to Winona Volunteer Services over the summer, and given to Warrior cupboard when school is in session.

David asked if there is a coordinator or ability to coordinate community gardens? Seems there would be potential to share best practices. Deb indicated that SHIP could help develop organization and bring resources, such as funding a stipend and materials. It might be helpful to think of it like a farmers market where a coordinator helps with individual vendors. Patrick stated the sustainability of the project will be important. Bruno said the ERC site and Wapasha did a good job by providing needed amenities, and achieved this with coordination. Patrick noted that having staff time is a challenge, and raises cost.

Dan stated that there was a lot of good input, and the CEQC is probably not in a position to make a decision today. Requested that John share information in the minutes and write up action items.

David brought up Chris Meyer's comment in the chat of mapping the community garden resources, and asked that it be included in the minutes.

Bruno asked if it is possible to build a garden yet in 2021. Julie said that ideally the CEQC was looking for starting a new garden in 2021. Lynette said fencing at Lake Park would be needed to secure the site. Lynette sees it is very important to have local accessibility.

Lynette asked about Hamilton St. location and other CEQC recommend sites? Patrick described that Tillman Park has future work with flood control that may be problematic. In his view, Sobieski is a front-runner followed by the West Lake site as future locations. Bruno said his favorite memories are tending bees at the East Rec. garden. He sees the gardens as a magnet for community engagement. Chad said Sobieski might not solve locational limitations. He is concerned infrastructure costs would be high for West Lake, and there is no budget for work this year. Water to west Lake site will be expensive.

Dan wondered if COVID restrictions would be an issue to building new garden. Lynette stated that where there is a will, there is a way. Covid does not need to be a barrier. Bruno stated that even infrastructure does not need to be a barrier.

Lea added her thoughts to the conversation and introduced herself as being involved in Wapasha Garden. She wonders about the West Lake site being too wet. Chad said this site is wet during the spring, summer and fall.

Chad reiterated that each site has pros and cons, and that he is trying to get to yes.

Lynette wonders about surrendering baseball field. It would not be popular with sports folks.

Julie suggests picking a spot and working from there. This would help in determining the budget needs. Dan agrees. Dan wonders if Laura could mentor new coordinators who are community members. Chad says the City can seek estimates of cost by working with community members, and the more details about sizing and material needs, the better. Staffing is a concern, so public involvement is needed.

Niki introduced herself as a St. Mary professor and CEQC member. She has St. Mary's students who are excited about community gardens and could do a lot of planning legwork. Will have a new cohort available every year to supplement and help with ongoing sustainability of the garden.

Lynette shared that her daughter was a coordinator for two gardens in Maplewood, and therefore knows that funding is available.

Dan suggested that the action items are selecting a spot, the needs for the spot, etc. Lynette said a timeline is also needed especially since the tight timeline before planting.

CEQC likes the idea of creating a task force to consider garden options and further the conversation. Julie will discuss with the Mayor as part of the check in process.

4. **Sustainability Planning Update:**

John provided a brief update on the sustainability plan, and that CEE was selected as the consultant by the City Council. Lynette asked if there are meetings to discuss which issues will be part of the plan. John described that the steering committee selected six topics: energy, water, food production, material & waste, land management [and transportation]. John said a community survey is forthcoming to get input on what to focus on, should be online by mid-March. John expects to come back to the CEQC at that time for collective and individual CEQC member input.

5. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 6:16 pm. Motion by Julie, second by Dan. Approval unanimous.

Notes prepared by John Howard.

Zoom Chat Log:

Patrick Byron: ARE community gardens located near those who have the greatest need?

GREAT comments, Bonnie!!

RIGHT ON, BRUNO!!

HOW can we tie any location with school kids?

Could we find out who might be interested in various aspects of these potential projects?

Bruno Borsari: Dear all, greening the urban space with edible landscapes, gardens, restoration is (and will continue to be) an imperative to educate, engage society in learning and actions aimed at achieving food security and a sustainable development. Here in attachment is a document that tells the achievements towards sustainability in 2018. As you will see, gardening and composting were keystone activities in Winona. I hope that we will be able to create opportunities to engage more Winonans in growing food in town and I remain fully committed to get involved with this and similar projects. Thanks.! Bruno

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321343637_Achieving_Sustainability_in_the_City_of_Winona_Minnesota_USA_A_Case_Study

Here attached is a paper describing what we did at Winona State.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323483545_An_economic_value_assessment_of_ecological_services_in_the_tree_community_at_Winona_State_University_Arboretum

Kelsey: Patrick, one of the projects SHIP recommends is a community garden to school lunch room program, so that would be something we could look into as well.

Chris: Maybe we could put together a map and information about all the gardens and for those that can be rented maybe we can get that information

Emilie: An intern could be paid to get gardens on a map

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&ll=44.73711586246581%2C-93.42208&spn=1.096471%2C1.118395&source=embed&mid=15sjWGPwTvcrRfm1odWkkGKZi1EY&z=9>

Or all you have to do is send an email to info@northerngardener.org to get on their community garden project map for the MN state Horticultural Society

Jeanne Franz: If you need soil analysis done on potential new locations for gardens, Winona State students would love to do that as a research project.

Malia Fox: I am very happy to have met all of you. I hope you saw the value of our community garden presentation. I sure hope we can work together! Thank you!