



City of Farmers Branch

Minutes

Sustainability Committee

Fire Station #2
13333 Alpha Link
Farmers Branch, TX, 75244

Wednesday, September
11, 2024

6:30 PM

Fire Station #2

Meeting held at 6:30 PM

Presiding: Loren Rives, Chairperson

Present: Ted Spradley (Secretary)
Al Mahesh
Val Clark
Suzette Vaquera
Lisa Massey
Jasper Morse

Absent: Price Trosin (Vice-Chair)

Staff: Alex Pharmakis, Sustainability Manager

A. CALL TO ORDER

Loren Rives called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm on September 11, 2024

B. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Hillary Pohlen, spoke to the committee about work of Master Naturalists and how they may help educate residents on the importance of native plants and trees. She mentioned the possibility of providing residents with seed packets of native plants, potentially through the Library's seed bank. She also asked about conservation efforts for commercial businesses.

Kelly Phillips spoke about the "Water is Awesome" initiative and "Save Dallas Water" programs. The City may be able to utilize these existing resources including tools for sustainable landscapes for residential lawns.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

C.1 Consider approval of minutes for the August 14, 2024 meeting; and take appropriate action

Lisa Massey motioned to approve the minutes as presented The motion was seconded by Val Clark. Motion passed unanimously.

C.2 Receive a staff update on sustainability initiatives

Alex Pharmakis provided the following updates:

- Staff is working on the LEED for Cities designation and will also begin working on the 2023 greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. The GHG inventory will be the second one conducted by the City. Staff plan to do an inventory on a four-year reporting cycle.
- The City has completed the State of Texas Energy Conservation Office LED Retrofit Grant at the Recreation Center Parking Lot.
- The City Council approved the purchase of an EV truck using EECBG funds from the Department of Energy
- Alex Pharmakis will present to the Planning & Zoning Commission on the SolSmart program in October. Minor changes to the code of ordinance will be required for the City to receive the Gold level designation
- Water Rebates
 - 102 toilet replacements approved
 - 11 irrigation checkup applications approved
- The Power Switch program is accepting signups until October 22
 - The contract window for the program is from September 23, 2024 to January 28, 2025
- Compost 101 Workshop is Saturday, September 14, 9-11:30 am. Registration is full
- Household Hazardous Waste Event: Saturday, Sept. 28, 9 am – 3 pm (Senlac Service Center)
- Shredding Event: Saturday, October 12, 9-11 am (City Hall)
- Tree Giveaway Event:
 - Registration Begins: September 24, 2024 (12 noon)
 - Tree Pickup Date: October 12, 2024 (9 - 11 a.)
 - Event Location: Dallas College- Brookhaven: 3939 Valley View Lane
- Haunts & Houses Event: Thursday, October 24 at the Historical Park.
- A member of the Sierra Club in Arlington inquired about Farmers Branch programs to get information before speaking to City Management in Arlington with the hopes of providing similar sustainability programs there.
- Next Sustainability Committee meeting is October 9

C.3 Receive an update on potential additions to the water rebate program

Alex Pharmakis inquired with City staff on three potential water rebate programs that the Committee had suggested (hot water recirculating pumps, tankless hot water heaters, and xeriscaping). Alex mentioned some of the hurdles associated with these building upgrades including building infrastructure upgrades, cost of installation, and permit requirements.

The committee discussed the possibility of instead providing permit waivers or stormwater rebates as incentives for these projects instead of a traditional rebate.

The committee also discussed providing education and demonstration sites for xeriscaping and sustainable landscapes to promote water efficiency.

C.4 Discuss impervious surface and tree canopy data

Alex Pharmakis provided maps created through the City's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) office that showed 2023 data for impervious surfaces and tree canopy.

The data shows that 52% of the city is covered by impervious surfaces. Of this, 10% is roads/paved alleys, 15% is parking lots, and 18% is covered by buildings.

The tree canopy data showed 15% canopy coverage. Alex mentioned that an aspirational goal for cities is 30%.

Discussion from the committee showed the importance of updating the landscape ordinance amendments and adopting a tree preservation ordinance. The landscape ordinance was presented by the Planning department to City Council, but has been tabled since. Jasper Morse also brought up strategic planting of trees, such as by bus stops to provide shade for patrons.

C.5 Receive subcommittee updates

- Built and Natural Environment – Continued support on the Composting 101 Workshop and noted that they have one available spot remaining on the subcommittee.
- Communications – Inquired about providing additional giveaway during the tree giveaway
- Water Conservation – Celebrated that the water rebate program has helped to install over 100 new toilets

C.6 Receive an update from Committee members on activities attended:

- Suzette Vaquera attended a workshop at Manske Library taught by a Master Gardener.
- Val Clark attended a Texas Tough Plants seminar and encouraged members to check out the resources on the Save Dallas Water website, primarily regarding native plants.
- Lisa attended the budget town hall meeting and a show at the Firehouse theatre.

C.7 Discuss agenda items for future Sustainability Committee meetings

Loren Rives will present the Committee's annual update to the City Council at the November 12 meeting.

Jasper Morse suggested marketing America Recycles Day on November 15, 2024.

D. ADJOURNMENT

Al Mahesh made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Lisa Massey. Motion approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm

Chair

Secretary