



City of Farmers Branch

Minutes

Sustainability Committee

Community Recreation Center
14050 Heartside Pl
Farmers Branch, TX, 75234
Pecan Room

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

6:30 PM

Pecan Room

Meeting held at 6:30 PM

Presiding: Soren Thomsen (Vice Chair)

Present: Loren Rives (Secretary)
Al Mahesh
Shelby Anders
Val Clark
Price Trosin
Lisa Massey

Absent: Joseph Riegel (Chairperson)
Alex Lyda

Staff: Alex Pharmakis, Sustainability Manager

A. CALL TO ORDER

Soren Thomsen called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 13, 2022.

B. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Omar Roman, newly elected City Councilmember, provided an introduction to the members of the committee.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

C.1 Consider approving minutes for the June 8, 2022 meeting; and take appropriate action

Al Mahesh made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Loren Rives. Motion carried.

C.2 Receive a staff update on sustainability initiatives

Staff provided an update on EV chargers. Additional units will go in at City Hall to replace defunct units and add additional ones.

Additional solar panels are being installed at the library and natatorium.

Staff also provided an update on EV-ready new constructions. Staff met with other surrounding cities looking into similar issues.

Staff spoke at an architectural association meeting about the City's sustainable efforts.

Solar Switch has had over 100 residents sign up and there is significant savings expected for homeowners. People can still sign up until early August. Neighboring communities are also welcome to sign up.

The Solar Farm was nominated for D Magazine's Non-profit and Corporate Awards. Developer is currently working with Oncor on getting agreements in place.

Staff will also present on sustainability efforts to the RISE Coalition which is comprised of other cities and governmental organizations.

C.3 Discuss mission and vision statement of the Sustainability Committee

The Communications Subcommittee developed a mission, vision and elevator pitch for the committee. Lisa Massey shared that the goal behind the work was to show collaboration, stewardship and ultimately sustainability. The intent is also to communicate that sustainability involves more than just recycling and planting trees. Group provided feedback. Group to provide feedback to Lisa Massey by July 27th.

C.4 Receive a presentation on a potential water rebate program

Alex Pharmakis shared that the City was considering a pilot Water Rebate Program. There is a budget request of \$10,000. The program would replace residential toilets in older homes (built prior to 1994) with WaterSense certified toilets. Toilet rebate options were provided to committee members. Water savings would likely range from 3,500 - 6,500 gallons per household per year. The recommendation aligns with the Sustainability Plan that the City approved. The rebate would come as a credit on the household water bill.

Members discussed the dollar amounts of individual rebates and future options to benefit low-income or fixed-income residents.

C.5 Consider recommending the City move forward with the establishment of a water rebate program; and take appropriate action

Al Mahesh made a motion to approve a recommendation that the City move forward with a water rebate program. Lisa Massey seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

C.6 Receive a presentation on a potential tree giveaway program

Staff provided a presentation on a tree giveaway program. There is currently a line item in the budget that would cover the cost of approximately 200 native varieties of trees to give away, a registration site and event support. Residents will pre-register for a tree, pick up at a designated event and receive education on the importance of tree cover both at the event and in follow up communications. There are similar programs in other communities such as Plano. There are good metrics that are associated with tree coverage. The program also fits within the Sustainability Plan. City estimates are that there is currently 20% tree coverage, but ideal would be to increase this to 30-40%. Tree coverage also reduces heat impact.

Committee members noted how many trees were lost in a recent storm. Group noted the importance of measuring community interest with this program. Group discussed similar programs in other communities and what additional assistance was offered.

C.7 Consider recommending the City move forward with the establishment of a tree giveaway program; and take appropriate action

Val Clark made a motion to move forward with a tree giveaway program. Lisa Massey seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

C.8 Receive subcommittee updates

- **Communications**
- **Water Conservation**
- **Built and Natural Environment**
- **Earth Day Runner's Race**

Lisa Massey provided an update from the subcommittee. The group has pivoted from a summer program opportunity with the Naturalist to a fall program that was on a smaller, more feasible, scale. She also provided an update on the sustainability plan that ties in with the communication plan. She requested that other committee members share images with her for content. Soren Thomsen shared that work is ongoing for a sustainability dashboard. The City's IT staff is working on seeing what resources could support this.

Loren Rives provided an update from the Built and Natural Environment. The committee is discussing a composting program that would provide education as well as potentially a raffle to win a compost bin. Some suggestions from the group would be to measure entries, visits to the community center or composting center. The subcommittee also requested adding more resources to the sustainability webpage for the City, asking for a proclamation to participate in Lights Out and also finding ways to highlight existing sustainable efforts that are already in the City code. Staff will follow up to see if the City has permitted any of this construction and if there are areas elsewhere in the code that the committee could support. The committee discussed composting options within other communities. The group discussed potential groups that could provide content and educational expertise. Soren Thomson suggested that the subcommittee look into ways that the City could use native and water smart plants in its landscaping. Group suggested also looking into ways to further support and complement water conservation. Another suggestion was to dedicate one of the City's existing parks for sustainability.

Shelby Anders provided an update on the Runners Race. There is an interested sponsor and also support from the Chamber. The group is now working on a budget, securing additional sponsors and an operational plan.

C.9 Receive an update from Committee members on activities attended

Lisa Massey attended a webinar put on by Brookhaven (SustainableU).

C.10 Discuss agenda items for future Sustainability Committee meetings

The committee discussed additional agenda items for upcoming meetings:

- Smart Lighting
- Approval of the Sustainability Committee's Mission, Vision and "Elevator Pitch"
- Presentation from the City on landscaping/grow zones

Committee will plan to meet at Fire Station #2 for the next meeting.

D. ADJOURNMENT

Shelby Anders made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Price Trosin. Motion approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Chair

Secretary