



Green Practices Commission

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Meeting Minutes – University City Green Practices Commission

June 11, 2020

Location: Meeting conducted via videoconference

Attendees Present: John Solodar (Chairperson), Adam Staudt, Barbara Brain, Jenny Wendt (Staff Liaison), Jonathan Stitleman; Timothy Dugan; Tim Cusick (Council Liaison); Mary Gorman; Liz Essman.

1. Meeting called to order 5:35pm
2. Opening Round - None
3. Approval of Minutes: 03/12/2020 with minor revisions
4. Special Presentations - None
5. New Business
 - a. Jenny reported on recent changes in her position. Formerly in the Public Works Dept., Jenny is now based in University City's Planning Dept. and her role has expanded to include assistance with economic development, business outreach and retainage as well as sustainability.

b. Commercial Solar Program

Jenny requested input from commissioners on a proposal to promote solar power to commercial property owners. Advantages of the program include no money down and low interest loans with interest only payments for the first year. This is similar to the solar program for homeowners that University City helped promote in 2019. All commissioners expressed their support for promoting the program.

c. Energy Management System

Commissioners discussed the advantages and disadvantages of implementing Dude Solutions software, a smart energy management system to track energy usage. Currently, energy usage and cost information is manually entered for University City facilities. Purchasing software to manage this process would reduce errors, save considerable staff time and allow a better overview of energy consumption. Dude Solutions offers three different options:

Monitor the 20 highest usage meters

Monitor all gas and electric meters

Monitor gas, electric and water meters

Commissioners were in agreement that the third option was likely too expensive for the city to pursue in the current economic climate but that either of the other options were worth pursuing and making a final decision on since a system such as this has the potential to have an excellent return on investment.

6. Old Business

a. Energy Efficiency Master Plan

Jenny reported that University City's capital improvement project was put on hold in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn. Prior to that, money to hire a consultant to develop an energy efficiency master plan had been budgeted and Jenny stated that she would like to see this project move forward. Electric bills cost the city a lot of money each year and a master plan has the potential to result in meaningful savings. Commissioners agreed that this project should be re-proposed to the council.

b. Anti-Litter Campaign

Commissioners discussed the anti-litter campaign that had been planned for this fall. The campaign was to consist of a poster contest, anti-litter promotional literature and organized group litter pick-up events. With the ongoing social distancing measures in place because of the COVID-19 crisis, it was decided to delay the campaign with the exception of moving forward on opening a dialog with businesses about the property upkeep code. The rest of the campaign components will be discussed again in autumn.

c. Oops: Feet on the Street Recycling Audit

Although recycling contamination is still a serious problem, there was general consensus that this is another project that should be postponed until spring 2021 because of the pandemic. The campaign would require volunteers to be out in neighborhoods inspecting recycling bins and talking one on one with residents.

d. Biodiversity projects

Barbara was asked for an update on projects she mentioned in a pre-COVID-19 meeting. Barbara responded that most projects were on hold except for a small group of people working individually to water newly planted trees on city property. Barbara is also continuing to work on her own picking up trash and removing invasive vines as part of the Midland Median Project.

e. Upcoming Comprehensive Plan

Tim Cusick was under the impression that the council had selected a consultant for this project but Jenny had heard that the project would be re-bid in two separate Requests for Proposal. Tim will investigate and report back to the commission. There was agreement that the Green Practices Commission would want to have input into this plan in order to ensure that there is a strong thread of sustainability throughout.

f. Sustainability Strategic Plan Update

Jenny updated the commission on the status of intern applications to assist with the Sustainability Strategic Plan. A Washington University class will be helping with this project and would like to focus on energy and water.

7. Council Liaison Update

Tim Cusick reported that restaurants in the Loop had re-opened on a limited basis and would appreciate people ordering food. He gave a thank you to the artists who had decorated the boarded up windows and also expressed thanks to the people who demonstrated peacefully during the recent unrest.

The I-70 development is proceeding and a public update was expected within a few weeks.

A newly formed commission on stormwater issues is now in place.

Aleta Klein is the newly elected council member for the second ward.

There has been a 10%-40% loss of revenue because of the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic, mainly from lost sales tax. Tim also mentioned that University City did not receive any stimulus money directly. St. Louis County received funds that will be apportioned to municipalities.

8. Closing Round

Jenny reported that there are plans for a UCity Together poster contest. There would be a \$100 gift card for the winning entry and the poster would be displayed in local businesses. A decision on approval of the funds is expected later this evening.

9. Adjournment at 6:45pm