

## Mayor's Environmental Task Force

### Meeting Summary/Action Items

November 5, 2015

- Attendee sign-in sheet attached (Attachment 1).
- After introductions and opening comments provided by Mayor Beutler, Frank Uhlarik shared an outline for discussion (Attachment 2) relative to a proposed updated Sustainability Plan for the City of Lincoln. Feedback and comments relative to the outline included:
  - Ensuring continuity of the METF to assist/guide in execution of the plan
  - The need to re-establish sub-committees to work on priority focus areas of the plan i.e. energy, waste, water resources, transit, etc.
  - The need to establish indicators/metrics prior to finalizing the plan
  - Clarification from Dan King that the proposed permanent household hazardous waste facility will also serve small businesses (conditionally exempt small quantity generators)
  - While not specifically addressed in the plan, questions/concerns raised relative to BNSF Railroad's preparedness and response capabilities in the event of a spill or other HAZMAT incident
- Bob Kuzelka with Pro-Rail Nebraska was unable to attend and present on the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) Annual Meeting but will instead provide the update at the December 3<sup>rd</sup> METF Meeting
- Ben McShane – Jewell with Community Crops provided a summary of challenges to urban gardening in Lincoln relative to zoning considerations (Attachment 3). Open discussion ensued relative to:
  - Prohibition on sale of produce from "urban" or "Community" gardens
  - Competition/conflict with City's desire to promote redevelopment in-fill
  - Concerns/restrictions on public lands if purchased with federal funds
  - Bidding likely required if public land made available for commercial gardening
  - Role of a "food hub" (i.e. Pershing concept)
  - Other available land (Airport Authority?)
- Other announcements

- Dave Gosselin with UNL announced the availability of Environmental Studies Students to support 6 to 10 projects this year
  - Gene Hanlon provided information relative to the City's activities supporting America Recycles day – November 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Dan King indicated Lincoln Green by Design is working with Parks and Recreation and UNL to help celebrate opening of the N St. Bike Lane for the Earth Day 2016 event in April
  - Frank Uhlarik announced that Lincoln will be hosting the annual meeting of the Heartland affiliate of the Urban Sustainability Director's Network on June 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> 2016 and is seeking suggestions for community tours to highlight projects and initiatives of significance
- Action Items and Responsibilities – the table on the following page displays the status of action items discussed both in the October 1 and November 5 METF Meetings.

## METF ACTION ITEMS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Assigned To</u>	<u>Status</u>
Communicate METF Activities	10/1/15	Frank U.	METF Website link established 10/29/15
Outline of Draft Sustainability Plan	10/1/15	Frank U.	Draft provided 11/5/15, continuing to receive feedback and further develop plan
Ensure Continuity of METF	11/5/15	Frank U.	General discussion agenda item for 12/3/15 METF Mtg., Proposal to be provided at 1/7/16 METF Mtg.
Re-establish Subcommittees	11/5/15	Frank U./METF Participants	Frank U. to propose list at 12/3/15 METF Mtg., seek volunteers and formalize assignments at 1/7/16 METF Mtg.
Establish Indicators/Metrics	11/5/15	Frank U./METF Participants	To be proposed by Subcommittees in consideration of previous Sustainable Lincoln Plan Goals, Taking Charge Indicators and other City Initiatives (Timing TBD)
Reach out to BNSF re: HAZMAT presentation	11/5/15	Frank U.	Initial contact made – looking at 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2016 for presentation
Evaluate ordinance changes to support Urban Gardens	11/5/15	Community Crops/Planning/Law	Community Crops to propose model ordinance language for consideration

# Atch. 1

Mayor Beutler's Environmental Task Force- November 5, 2015



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Mayor Beutler's Environmental Task Force - November 5, 2015



Name	Representing	E-mail	Phone
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Dan Siskitt	NEPR		
Dan King	Lincoln Green by Design		
KENDALL WYERS	BLUESTEM SIERRA		
Bob Ruskamp	LES		
Brandon Gosselt	Planning		
Dave Gosselin	Env. Studies UNL	dgosselin@unl.edu	402-310-4615
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Bud (?)			

## City of Lincoln, NE

### Sustainability Plan Outline

- Introduction
- History/Accomplishments
- Challenges
- Relationship to Comprehensive Plan and other Transportation, Utility Master Plans
- Focus Areas (progress and opportunities for improvement)
- Measurements/Indicators
- Goals, Objectives and Targets
- Oversight Structure

#### *Focus Areas (tentative – subject to revision)*

##### Energy

- Efficiency Improvements for City Buildings/Operations
- Street Lighting (LED Conversion)
- Wastewater Operations Energy Recovery
- Fleet Conversion (CNG, EV, idle reduction technologies)
- District Energy
- Code Revisions

##### Transit

- Bike Share
- “Complete Streets”
- StarTran Ridership
- Rail

##### Waste

- Diversion and Recycling
- Permanent Household Hazardous Waste Facility
- Waste to Energy (Long Term)

##### Water Resources

- Drought Policies
- Conservation Measures/Incentives
- Gray Water and Effluent Reuse
- MS4 Permit Support

##### Land Use

- Greenspace
- Infill
- Community Gardens/Urban Agriculture

##### Other

- Sustainable Procurement and TIF Policies
- Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency

## Zoning and Urban Agriculture in Lincoln

From Lincoln Municipal Codes:

### *Urban Garden.*

*Urban garden shall mean a plot of ground where plants are cultivated; including accessory items for cultivation, including but not limited to sheds, trellises, fences and utilities. (Ord. 19733 §1; June 25, 2012).*

*Urban Gardens are a conditional use in all zoning districts except the AG and AGR. The conditions include (1) There is no commodity sold upon the premises; (2) Approval has been granted by the Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department.*

- The challenge we currently face with these codes is that, there are no allowances for sale of produce from “urban gardens”, either on-site or off-site.
- Urban gardens, as interpreted by the planning department, are intended solely for personal consumption.
- In addition, currently, urban gardens are only conditionally allowed in most zoning areas, contingent upon approval from LLCHD.
- These updated codes from 2012 were a great step forward for permitting community gardens in all zoning codes in Lincoln, and made possible the addition of community gardens on public lands, such as city parks.
- However, the restrictions described above mean that those interested in starting a small local foods business will have a very difficult time accessing land for production. Entrepreneurs will face numerous barriers to successfully launching their businesses if they cannot find suitable spaces.
- Utilizing commercially zoned spaces, currently the only zoning category that permits sales of produce off-site, presents numerous challenges, from securing long-term leases with landowners, potential soil toxicity from past uses, and limited water access.
- Water accessibility, generally, remains a key constraint, as the costs to install a water stand are on average \$5,000-6,000 and ongoing maintenance and fees can be a barrier.
- Numerous cities across the country have adopted comprehensive zoning codes that ease restrictions on urban agriculture, paving the way for rapid growth of new farming operations.
  - These examples provide numerous options for wording of definitions, incentivizing landowners to make vacant land available to urban growers, and examples of different zoning codes.
- Research by local advocates has shown that we need 3,333 acres of growing space to supply all of Lincoln's residents with enough fresh produce for a single year.
  - The city of Lincoln holds at least 6,000 acres in parks and greenspace.
  - LPS is currently mowing more than 480 acres of lawn and playground spaces and has an additional 134 acres of rooftop space.