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Kelly Ohlson, District 5, Mayor Pro Tem
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Wanda Krajicek, City Clerk

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WORK SESSION

November 8, 2011

6 p.m.

1. Call Meeting to Order.
2. Council Work Plan Update and Policy and Plan Review Schedule Update. (staff: Diane Jones, Kelly DiMartino; 1 hour discussion)

In July this year, City Council developed its Work Plan for the 2011 – 2013 term. Council action items - topics and actions that are to be addressed over the two-year term and beyond - are captured and tracked in four documents:

1. Council Work Plan (2011 – 2013)
2. Work Plan Items to be Done Administratively
3. Agenda Planning Calendar
4. Policy and Plan Review Schedule

Since July, several new items have been added and the original schedule has been revised. The work session is an opportunity for City Council to review the information and suggest additional revisions if necessary.

November 8, 2011

3. Sustainability Update. (staff: Bruce Hendee; 45 minute discussion)

This sustainability update addresses a specific request from Council Leadership made in July of this year. It provides a definition of sustainability, City background on sustainability, a brief discussion on the importance of sustainability as a topic, background on key initiatives within the City organization and a brief look ahead. This update is directed primarily to environmental issues. Future sustainability updates will include social and economic as well.

4. City Fleet Use of Corn Ethanol. (staff: Bruce Hendee, Ken Mannon, Tracy Ochsner, Lucinda Smith; 1 hour discussion)

The use of corn ethanol is a controversial topic. Ethanol is used in varying blends to reduce carbon emissions and thereby reduce the impacts of global warming. The use of corn ethanol has demonstrated benefits for the improvement of air quality and carbon emissions reductions, but comes with negative environmental and social factors. It has to be viewed as a short-term fix to a long-term problem. The benefits allow for a reduction in foreign oil dependence while improving air quality emissions from vehicles relative to the traditional use of gasoline. The negative social implications are that it takes away from an available food source and makes corn expensive. Corn for ethanol production is subsidized and tends to encourage this crop over others which might be used as a food source. A resulting trend from this over production is that food prices go up both for edible corn and other crops which are in less abundant supply. There is a subsequent impact on families in need of affordable and nutritious food.

From an environmental perspective, the production of ethanol also has a negative impact. Because the crop is subsidized, it tends to encourage unsustainable farming practices. Farmers tend to add fertilizer and herbicides to encourage greater yields. Additionally, there is a tendency not to rotate crops. The resulting impacts are more fertilizer and herbicides in runoff from farm fields, and decreasing soil health. In fact, over-fertilization has created significant dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico.

Currently City Operation Services has a policy of using alternative fuels, including E85 Blend (85% ethanol), when hybrid applications are not available and if the infrastructure is in place. There is currently substantial research on alternatives to corn based ethanol but, as of today, none of the alternatives have been successful at a commercial based production level. Complete elimination of use ethanol will increase carbon emissions from the municipal organizations operations by 525 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year without offsetting strategies. The challenge is in deciding the appropriate balance of strategies to reduce carbon emissions while still recognizing and protecting human and environmental considerations.

5. Other Business.

6. Adjournment.