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Subject: Elgin Climate Emergency Update after October 13, 2020 Elgin Sustainability Commission Meeting

In 2018, the UN issued a warning to the world that we likely had less than 11 years left to cut Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 50% worldwide or suffer “disastrous consequences”. Such disastrous consequences are widely interpreted to include such possible phenomena as passing a “tipping point” beyond which life on the Earth could become no longer possible. It is also well known that our food systems are in jeopardy because many crops, animals, and plants rely on ecosystems of certain temperatures and climates that will be destroyed at higher temperatures. It is also known that it could cause the collapse of civilization due to civil unrest due to displacement and starvation of huge numbers of people and lack of clean water.

This means countries like the United States realistically need to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by around 2025 in order to meet worldwide emissions cuts of 50% by 2029, which is around the end date that the UN warned of.

In 2018, Extinction Rebellion was formed in the UK to sound the warning of a Climate Emergency. Their goals were (1) to declare a climate emergency and for the media and leaders to tell the truth about it, (2) to reach net zero Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2025, and (3) to form a people’s assembly from common people to oversee the changes needed to implement this. That last one is because the governments and politicians themselves have known about this problem for at least 50 years (such as warnings from government scientist James Hansen in the 1970’s) and have so far been unable to make any real change in 50 years (much talk, little action). Extinction Rebellion is a strictly non-violent organization.

In 2019, Extinction Rebellion Chicago performed many Non-Violent Direct Actions in and around Chicago with the goal of getting municipalities to Declare a Climate Emergency, from February 2019 through November 2019.

In February 2020, Chicago declared a Climate Emergency resolution, written by a former member of the Chicago Ministry of the Environment who is also a member of Extinction

Rebellion Chicago. Lori Lightfoot, the mayor of Chicago, claimed that the Climate Emergency resolution was passed in light of the increasing water level of Lake Michigan, and the Chicago City Council and Mayor largely took credit for the resolution.

Also, in February 2020, the Elgin Citizen's Initiative formed. This formed mainly as a result of Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford's own desire to unite environmental initiatives in the area and work on environmental goals, as well as other members in the Elgin community who might now want to remain nameless but also include Angela Talbert (also known as Sunflower Seed), who were interested in becoming activists to help the world, and Paul Berland's desire to continue the work of Extinction Rebellion also to help the world.

On March 10, 2020, the Elgin Sustainability Commission received a request from a Citizen Initiative for Elgin to declare a Climate Emergency resolution. This included a draft of the resolution, which later passed very little unchanged. This request was inspired by the success in Chicago that had just happened. There were many citizens in the area present at this meeting to witness this. The Elgin Sustainability Commission approved this unanimously, to recommend this to Elgin City Council. As part of approving this, they decided to add a provision that a Climate Emergency Workgroup would be setup to manage the business of following this resolution, whereas the rest of the Elgin Sustainability Commission would continue with the rest of the work it was doing in parallel.

On May 27, 2020, Elgin declared a Climate Emergency resolution with a vote of 6-3 in Elgin City Council, at the next available meeting. In the debate during that meeting however, and the fact of the 3 dissenting votes, it is clear that many people in the Elgin City Council are not fully up-to-speed on the science of the climate emergency as warned by the UN in 2018, or are opposed to this effort.

On June 1th, 2020, a publicly editable Google Doc was circulated among citizens and activists and known contacts within the Elgin Sustainability Commission containing the possible ordinances and changes we were envisioning, inviting them to collaborate. It was also sent to the only contact E-mail addresses I had inside the Elgin Sustainability Commission, namely the outgoing Tia Aagesen and Erik Anderson, who were the ones who mainly ran the Elgin Sustainability Commission for the past 3 years. Erik Anderson then copied Jan Monell, the official liaison between the City of Elgin and the Elgin Sustainability Commission on this. It had been re-ordered and edited from the list of March 18th, 2020 and now the #1 item on this list was the water bill / direct mailer / education item that had lumped many of those original proposals into one item. This item reads:

1--aggressive, continuing efforts to educate both the city staff and the public at large on the latest climate science; mailers in the water bills to all Elginites, sign posts and billboards throughout the city explaining the seriousness of the climate crisis and the need for concrete action by each and every person and details about what each person needs to start to do such as using less meat, plastics, and gasoline, getting on clean energy electricity plans, and so forth; local schools and colleges, city hall, and the libraries should have dedicated bulletin boards with information about the climate crisis;

On June 25th, 2020, the publicly editable Google Doc mentioned above was also sent to Tom Armstrong, the new chairman of the Elgin Sustainability Commission.

Because of the provision setup by the Elgin Sustainability Commission that a Climate Emergency Work Group would handle this resolution, work could not begin on this legally until this Work Group was setup (this later became re-titled as the “Climate Action Work Group”, removing the word “Emergency”).

On July 4th, 2020, Paul Berland sent an E-mail addressed to all Elgin City Council Members asking 2 questions that nobody in Elgin City Council answered.

Based on the fact that nobody answered question #1, it appears that nobody in the Elgin City staff really has an idea or hope about preserving the future for the children.

Based on the fact that nobody answered question #1, it also seems that nobody in the Elgin City staff is taking the responsibility seriously of the power that they wield.

The 2 questions were:

1. Do you care about the future of humanity and our children in the face of the climate emergency and also agree that we will be able to solve this?
2. Can we please add a mailer in all of the city water bills and correspondence to each resident of the city explaining that the city has recognized the Climate Emergency and that this is a real problem, with similar citations as the ones above, and also that this problem can be solved but it will require coordinated effort from all members of the city including reducing use of gasoline, plastics, and meat, and everyone coming to an understanding of this issue and stop pretending this is a controversy?

Please recognize that the cost of an extra piece of paper in the mail, or an E-mail, will probably be pennies or less, and so the total cost of this effort will not be that great compared to other efforts that could be employed for much greater amounts of money with much less impact.

Please also recognize that in addition to the mailers, additional efforts for very little money should be made to update the city web-site and newsletters with this pertinent information as well as billboards and informational signs throughout governmental buildings, libraries, and schools.

On July 8th, 2020, the City of Elgin staff requested a first draft of the “water bill message” via E-mail, and the same day, I gave a first draft of the message that I hastily put together via E-mail to Jan Monell, copying Tom Armstrong, Aaron Cosentino, and F John Steffen, among others. The length of this message was quite long.

There was no response from the City of Elgin staff or any member of Elgin City Council or the Elgin Sustainability Commission to me after I sent this quite long first draft on July 8th, 2020.

On August 18, 2020, an Elgin Climate Action (not Emergency) Workgroup started official business and met for the first time. All participants agreed that we were all on the same page with the 28-30 proposals from the Google Doc, and we all picked ones to focus on. These proposals were in a handout at that first meeting. We agreed to meet again soon to discuss the first 19 or so items that don't require much money to spend as it was agreed that budget was tight, and we did hold that smaller meeting, but none of the action items assigned to Tom Armstrong were ever carried out (to this day, October 14, 2020, almost 2 months later).

On Elgin Climate Emergency Base Camp on August 25, 2020, Paul Berland posted "Draft #4" of the Mailer message on Base Camp, which was a culmination of 4 of the 5 participants of the Elgin Climate Action Work Group. All 5 of the participants in the Elgin Climate Action Work Group except Cheryl had given their go ahead, since Cheryl was unavailable. After Cheryl gave her input, a "Draft #7" was released on September 9th, 2020. This is the latest-and-greatest draft from the point of view of the Elgin Climate Action Work Group, and is the latest document on Base Camp of the content of the first message to send to all the residents in Elgin in line with the #1 effort on our list.

On Elgin Climate Emergency Base Camp on August 27, 2020, Jan Monell told us that for the message to fit inside the water bill, it would have to be 150 words or less.

On Elgin Climate Emergency Base Camp on August 27, 2020, and on September 1, 2020, and on September 7, 2020, 3 members of the Elgin Climate Action Work Group (a majority of the 5 non-ESC members of this work group) tried to explain that we cannot shorten this message and that this message has been very carefully constructed to fulfill 3 criteria that are absolutely vital to the success of this effort (see "Background Information" below; this had been communicated numerous times by myself within the Elgin Climate Action Work Group). The responses from staff indicated that they seemed not to understand or to deliberately ignore this.

Many conversations ensued back and forth within the legal parameters and framework of the Elgin Climate Action Work Group and Elgin Sustainability Commission, but much of this seemed to be deliberately brushed aside without any attempt to take the arguments or statements seriously (much of the conversation, issues raised, and points was basically ignored and not responded to at all, and the character of Angela Talbert and myself (Paul Berland) seemed consistently disrespected and disregarded).

The impression that we got was that the people felt that we weren't doing enough for our community, for the environment, and for educating others, whereas the members of the Elgin Sustainability Commission and Elgin Green Groups 350 were beyond any type or form of criticism. This attitude seems to stem from ignorance due to the fact that these people never took

the time to fully ask us or know what we actually do each day in the community, for the environment, and educational efforts. It also stems from arrogance that the measures they are taking (such as Deb's Zoom calls) are way better than the measures that we are taking (such as daily face-to-face education within the community of Elgin and much more), without asking what measures we are actually taking, and seeming to assume without asking what measures we are taking, and then coming to the conclusion that we have nothing further to add to the efforts.

On September 8, 2020 and on October 13, 2020, in the next 2 Elgin Sustainability Commission meetings, scant attention was given to the issues raised by the Elgin Climate Action Work Group on Base Camp and in their own meetings and members of the Elgin Sustainability Commission and Elgin Green Groups 350 consistently dominated all the conversations, which were typically 15 minutes or less during these public meetings, and moved on quickly leaving numerous questions and issues unresolved and not assigning any action items or making any decisions on any of the items being raised by the Elgin Climate Action Work Group, and not allowing Paul Berland or Angela Talbert ample time to rebut the numerous counter-arguments that were presented.

Nobody ever asked Angela Talbert herself directly for any type of feedback although she was present at the September 8th, 2020 meeting, and did not allow ample opportunity for her to break into the conversation, or to allow me to make any rebuttals.

Angela was not present at the October 13, 2020 meeting because she was working 2nd shift at a fulltime job for a factory in Elgin. Her E-mails and messages are consistently and constantly ignored by the Elgin Sustainability Commission and the Elgin activist community alike.

I would also point out that most of these people are retired and much older and do not have to work a fulltime job, nor overcome the many obstacles, financial and otherwise, that many people like Angela Talbert face. I would also like to point out that these people seem to assume a lot about us without asking us and don't seem to regard that we have any type of relevant value or knowledge, even though I've been an extremely active environmental activist for at least 7 years, been knowledgeable about environmental issues for at least 44 years, and also [have my own website with massive amounts of scientific and activist information.](#)

The number of words that myself or Angela Talbert were permitted to speak were very few indeed, with many other people dominating the conversation, and Tom Armstrong consistently steering the conversation onward without adequately addressing all the points raised.

It also seems that Tom Armstrong has failed to properly prepare the Elgin Sustainability Commission with the material that had been presented on Base Camp in the Elgin Climate Action Work Group, on phone calls, and in in-person meetings, and did not present the arguments, discussions, and documents that were presented to him.

At the October 13, 2020 meeting, the content of the message in "draft #7", that had been posted to Base Camp more than a month ago, was not even discussed at all, even though I had filled out every requirement for having it added to the agenda, including E-mails to Jan Monell, Barb Keselica, and Tom Armstrong to have this added to the agenda, messages on Base Camp to add this to the agenda, and filling out the online form to have it added to the Elgin Sustainability

Commission meeting agenda. Even though I went through all the proper procedures, this matter did not appear on the written agenda, and I don't believe the Elgin Sustainability Commission was properly prepared to discuss it.

The content of this message (draft #7) was not discussed at the October 13, 2020 meeting, except to say that the Elgin Sustainability Commission needs "more time" to review this message, and to question the professionalism of the authors of this message and to insinuate that a more professional author should craft this message. Tom Armstrong said that before they can discuss the content of the message, they need to create a platform for the message, even though Jan Monell had said on Base Camp on September 14, 2020 that the first thing that needed to be done was to agree upon the content of the message.

Regarding the platform for the message, which I think means mainly web site changes, I had been asked to be included in the loop on this at previous Elgin Climate Action Work Group meetings. I thought this was agreed on, but I have not been in the loop on this effort. The only thing I know about this effort is that Cheryl and Mollie are working on this and it is "in process", with no indication of when they expect to complete it or whether they will ask me for any advice on it or use any input from me at all.

Below I will give my counter-arguments to the arguments that were presented by the Elgin Sustainability Commission to not move forward with "draft #7" message in a direct mailer (since it will not fit in the space of the water bill). I have never been afforded an opportunity to discuss this with the Elgin Sustainability Commission, and I do not have their E-mail addresses, and they will not provide them even though I asked for them to be provided on October 1, 2020 on Base Camp but it was flatly refused to be provided to me by Steven Kroiss, so I am sending this information to Elgin City Council instead, and I am copying the activist community on this to let them know about this crisis of trust that is going on here in Elgin.

Please see "Background Information" at the end of this E-mail for why this is important.

More important details are given below in response to many of the arguments being given by the Elgin Sustainability Commission to disregard my efforts (most of my responses have been given before in in-person meetings, E-mails, and Base Camp messages, but the only one who sees these are Tom Armstrong and Steven Kroiss and to some extent Deb McMullen and Carolyn Rauschenberger, according to the protocol established and described to me by the Mayor David Kaptain and the former members of the Elgin Sustainability Commission and Elgin Green Groups 350, but I am not sure this is trickling all the way up to the decision makers in the Elgin City Council).

Mailers in the water bill or other mail that go to all residents of a city that also come from the city have an authoritative quality that show this is coming directly from the city and that we are serious with this and this is no longer something that doesn't concern everybody.

I don't believe that every single person throws out every single additional piece of paper in the water bill. It is true that often we get the same piece of paper over and over in the water bill and we recognize it instantly and throw it out, but if there is a new piece of paper in the water bill, or in the mail from the city, I bet it will attract the attention of many people. Also, for those people who pay their water bill on-line, the mailer would go out in the form of an E-mail.

Also, mailers in the water bill are not the only medium I was suggesting. I was also suggesting **bulletin boards** throughout the city, in libraries, schools, and government buildings. This has never been discussed, **not once by the Elgin Sustainability Commission,** even though I've been saying this since at least June 1st.

One of the first changes demanded by the Indigenous people is an immediate ban on Fracking. I don't see this change in any other plan from any other source from current leadership except for groups that are just focused on banning Fracking as their sole issue such as Food and Water Watch. This indicates how many leaders and people changing policy are underestimating the problem or unable to tackle the problem as a whole and need the help from those who are truly knowledgeable and informed, and not just college educated.

[The new Biden-Sanders plan is also woefully inadequate and also more of a ruse to further the ends of the oil and gas industry unchecked](#) and get people to vote for Biden, who is more environmentally friendly than Trump, but does not appear to be smart enough to bring the world out of the climate emergency.

The continued underestimation of this problem will likely result in the collapse of human civilization.

Under our current course, we are projected to reach over 7 degrees C global warming, [which would make much of life on Earth completely impossible](#) according to [an overwhelming majority of climate scientists world-wide.](#)

However, it has been shown that we can turn our course from this with swift action to end fossil fuels, transform agriculture, end dependence on meat, pesticides, plastics, etc. within the next few years, but it must be done swiftly, so we must act now. This is also not just about the warming but also

the devastation and damage to our eco-systems that support life. It is possible, for example, that if all life in the oceans die off, that all life on the planet will die off, because of relationships between these things in the eco-systems that support life that we don't fully understand. 350.org has been warning about these tipping points for years and we are dreading that we may reach a tipping point from which we will never return. Therefore, we must act swiftly and decisively and we must act now. The Union of Concerned Scientists [notes that we have consistently under-estimated the magnitude and speed of ecological impacts](#).

I think this is a very complex problem, entangled within our economy, our churches, our culture, our mass-media-inforced implicit “way of life” and corresponding implicit understanding that we have certain rights to act in ways that are, to outsiders as well as more enlightened folks, clearly unsustainable and unjust, and our relationship with the higher powers that look over this world. It has also now been extra complicated by the sudden rise to prominence of the new “Black Lives Matter” movement. This is an extremely complex issue. That is why I believe we will need people from all walks of life and all areas of society to truly solve this problem.

One thing that I believe that the leadership is ignoring is the power of the people. If we can better inform the people about the real issues surrounding the climate crisis, then they will be better able to help us. Once the people are properly informed, they can begin to take real, coordinated mitigation efforts on a personal level as well as through advocacy politically, culturally, and spiritually. This could go a long way towards global mitigation. But this education must be done in a sincere and persistent manner, similar to the way the education is occurring surrounding the pandemic, which is a lesser crisis affecting fewer people, animals, and plants worldwide.

Part of the problem with informing the people are the [immense amount of money spent by private interests connected with the oil and gas companies on misinformation campaigns](#). Apparently there is also evidence being presented that even [the US Chamber of Commerce itself](#) may be one of the biggest groups involved in these misinformation campaigns that greatly confuses the public at large and goads them into ignoring this cataclysmic emergency that is looming in our near future.

Flawed Marketing Perspectives

There is a flawed analysis that tries to analyze this effort of a Direct Mailer in terms of Traditional Advertising and deduce that this effort is not effective.

This has been presented multiple times by one Elgin City Council member as if it is the authoritative word on this subject. However, I have not been allowed an opportunity yet for rebuttal.

However, that analysis is flawed because this **is not selling anything at all and is not the same thing as trying to sell yet another product that people don't need and can't afford.**

It is anticipated that this effort will garner much more interest because it is truly not selling anything **and it is coming directly from the city and not just another merchant.**

You cannot gauge this effort on the basis of "average advertisement" – it is much different than a request for money for something people probably don't need.

At the end of the day, I don't see how a municipality can say at the outset that this effort would never work or be counter-productive **if they never even try it.** This type of effort has **never before been tried** to my knowledge in any municipality.

If the argument is that this creating too much paper trash, **then we really need to stop sending out library newsletters as well** and place strict ordinances on what money-driven merchants are sending in the mail.

The October 13, 2020 Elgin Sustainability Commission meeting was basically a repeat of the September 8, 2020 Elgin Sustainability Commission meeting from my perspective. The arguments and discussion were essentially a repeat of what has been said for many months, with little or no change in attitude or perspective, or even acknowledgement of the many things I have been saying. This indicates that we are not really having any type of exchange of ideas yet on the issues that concern the Elgin Climate Action Work Group.

Therefore, I come to the conclusion that Base Camp and **the Elgin Sustainability Commission are simply obstructions to the efforts of progress to save the people of the world and will not participate in those any further unless members of the Elgin Sustainability Commission believe that I have any further value to add.**

Because they do not give me ample opportunity to speak or make my voice heard, I do not feel that they truly consider my input worthwhile.

Background Information

The key is that this information **would be coming from an authoritative source, meaning the City**, and not just some “fringe environmental group” like Sierra Club or Greenpeace which is respected by some people but not by a much larger number of people who consider themselves more practical-minded. Also, it seems that even people that are aware of the Climate Emergency **are still not aware of the urgency** of what needs to be done to actually address it or the small amount of time we have to address it (see Why Climate Emergency below).

When it comes to more serious measures such as gasoline taxes, banning of fracking, and banning of natural gas connections on new housing, **we will hit a brick wall if we don't first get the public more on board** with our program, such as what happened in Seattle with the banning of natural gas connections, which got seriously blocked.

For that to work, I think you will need to be sending out careful letters and E-mails to all the people in the city [such as this one that has not been sent yet](#) (also known as “draft #7”) explaining the urgency of this effort and the necessity for certain sacrifices to be made of the public and expenditures to be made to avert the crisis. If these letters and E-mails are not sent out to the entire public, I think we will hit a brick wall when we arrive at more aggressive and ambitious measures.

In support of my argument that we need to do much more work on education of the entire city, [please see the following article](#). In this article, you can read the story about how Seattle 350 was making great strides making Seattle more sustainable, but when they came to a measure to stop natural gas in all new housing developments (#6 on our list as well), they hit a brick wall. That is because corporations started fighting hard against them and defeated their ability to make progress, and there was not sufficient back-pressure from the public to fight against the corporate-led initiative to keep them from defeating this greenhouse gas preventing bill.

That is why I think we need to lay groundwork and education to the people in the city (the public, corporations, the churches, and the politicians) so

that when we start introducing more ambitious and aggressive measures such as no natural gas in new heating installations, no fracking, etc., then we will be able to overcome the opposition that is sure to crop up.

I believe the “Water Bill mailers” (in actuality any material sent out to all residents; not all residents pay water bills) must have 3 components:

1. That the problem is urgent and must be dealt with now. We cannot afford to focus on just 1 crisis (such as the pandemic or racism or economic inequality) but need to spend significant time on this crisis as well.

2. That we are serious and **we have a realistic plan to address this. (Please let us discuss this in person or via Zoom or virtually at length if this is not understood, believed, or recognized.)** Of course, if you flat out disbelieve this, you may feel this is not worth the effort and not respect me enough to consult with me and where I am coming from. And if you disbelieve there is a solution, then you do not really have hope for the future for our children. If you have this lack of hope, then I maintain that this is a serious problem that you should think about in your own internal reflections, especially since you are holding such a position of power and responsibility. If you are not willing to even give me a chance in dialog, then you may be abandoning a vital solution to the problems that face our people. You would then be responsible for abandoning the responsibility of leaving no stone unturned in trying to save our people. You could then therefore be responsible for the downfall of our people by continuing to ignore and disregard my efforts. There is my [Action Plan](#) which addresses many facets of the crisis including society, culture, and the economy, or [the Indigenous Environmental Network's Regenerative Economy plan](#), to name, in my opinion, two of the most realistic plans that are out there that take into consideration a wider variety of considerations than normal plans that I've seen in my opinion. Indigenous people have actual, real-world experience with sustainable living and have much wisdom that we would be foolish to disregard.

However, I believe the actual solution to this problem that we will actually adopt will be a synthesis of many ideas and solutions from many people from many walks of life and many different perspectives working together, which is why #3 below is also critical.

3. We must start to have weekly or even daily meetings in the public (these could also be online) to talk about the environmental crisis and what we must do to actually resolve it. These should be free and open and involve education, debate, and problem-solving.

Why Climate Emergency?

This Climate Emergency is [man-made](#) and can be reversed with [timely action](#).

This action must be done on a [local level](#) before we can make a global difference.

If this problem is ignored for [more than a year](#), there could be a non-existent future for our kids.

There has been gross [mis-information](#) and [mis-representation](#) in mass-media about this problem.

Every day, [an average of 200 more species become extinct](#).

The World Bank said "[there is also no certainty that adaptation to a 4°C world is possible](#)", and the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change AR4 synopsis](#) says "**unmitigated climate change would, in the long term, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt.**"

A couple of years ago, [the United Nations warned we only had 11 years left to seriously make changes and emit far less greenhouse gases globally](#) or the consequences will be catastrophic. That may even be optimistic considering tipping points may be [closer than we think](#).

[This article](#) says we have less than a year to act states exactly this: "The stimulus packages created this year will determine the shape of the global economy for the next three years, according to Birol, and **within that time emissions must start to fall sharply and permanently or climate targets will be out of reach.**"

If you re-read the **bold** portion above, you will see That it indicates that if within a year's time if we do not cause emissions to fall sharply and permanently, then the climate targets will be out of reach, meaning very

likely catastrophe and passed tipping points, which could make the surface of the planet inhospitable to life.

It is also instructive to note that the title of the article is “World has six months to avert climate crisis, says energy expert”.

If you have not read this already, you should also read [this article from the Union of Concerned Scientists](#): In this article, “it says the message of the science is that we have consistently underestimated the magnitude and speed of ecological impacts in the past, and that new and alarming feedbacks, tipping points and thresholds continue to be revealed as we learn more.”

In addition, we have heard of trillions of locusts in Africa which is another sign that our eco-systems are in danger and that we are running out of time.

Also, in 2020 we are also now seeing now 12 million people forced out of their homes in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh due to severe monsoons, floods, and landslides caused by global warming, the worst derecho in Iowa this year damaging 10 million acres of farmland, the hottest temperature on Earth recorded in Death Valley this year (130 deg F), the first ever fire tornados in California, year six of intense drought and crop failure in Central America, and 15 million people with food and water shortages in Africa.

I believe we are simply out of time and we must act now.

My principle idea is to get everybody synchronized and to tell the truth about the problem so that the people can get coordinated and working on a solution through Water Bills, mailers, bulletin boards in libraries, government buildings, schools, etc.

Sincerely,

Paul Berland