

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

## June 16, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Aaron Wright, Chair, Ian Magnuson, Vice Chair, Dr. Gail Walter, Eric Brown, Joe Bower, Sharon Dever, Wayne L. Bond, Bobby Glasser, Rob Liekis, Dr. Melliush

**EXCUSED ABSENCES:** Bobby Glasser

**UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:** No unexcused absences.

**STAFF:** Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison; Raelee Olson, Recording Secretary Interim; Amanda Cockroft and Tawaun Chestnut, I.T.

**OTHERS:** Jeanne Hess, City Commission Liaison; Lauri Holmes, Associate Member

**CALL TO ORDER:**

- The meeting was called to order by Mr. Wright at 4:30, after confirming a quorum of 8 members.
- Recording/Streaming of the meeting was confirmed, with community members joining via a link posted on the City's Facebook page.
- Members to adjust name to include role for recording purposes.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

- There were no changes to the agenda.

**APPROVAL MINUTES (May 19, 2021):**

- The minutes will be further reviewed, and any additional corrections, additions or comments will be emailed to Mr. Wright and forwarded on to the recording secretary.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Dr. Walter provides an update that there are two falcons in rehab hopefully coming home soon. There is one male missing which may not be good news.

**NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:**

- Public Comment: Iris Potter wants to know the role of the ECC in the decisions regarding deer cull in Kalamazoo. She is in opposition of the deer cull and the private meetings about the cull.
  - Mr. Wright mentions it will be discussed in the Wildlife and Natural Resources subcommittee discussion. He also says the ECC's role is to provide recommendations to the city commission and staff about environmental issues.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- **ECC statement on Natural Features Protection Overlay, Phase 2-** Mr. Wright says this is in process currently. Members drafted a public statement of support to be sent to the city commission, planning commission, and city staff. This draft was read and revised by members during the meeting.
  - Ms. Holmes mentions that Asylum Lake Preservation association and the management council of asylum lake have both submitted communications in favor of the expansion. She also discusses that there is public support for this project and the public would like more channels to show this support. Ms. Holmes says she has experienced some negative feedback about the ordinance expansion but no specifics as to what they are in opposition to. She has also seen many developers be very receptive to the wishes of the community regarding preservation of green spaces.
  - Mr. Magnuson emphasizes the importance of smarter development rather than just focusing on maintaining green spaces.
  - Dr. Melliush shares that he has met some community members that have misconceptions about the ordinance because they view it more as a restriction on them and their property, so he feels it is important how the expansion is conveyed to the community.
  - Ms. Holmes urges people to testify in favor of the ordinance so that the city can see that this is what the community wants.

- There was a motion to approve the statement. This motion was carried through. The statement will be sent to Ms. Drzick as well as Jamie McCarthy and Pete Elderidge.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **New member interviews-** Ms. Nicole Olweean was interviewed. She is originally from Kalamazoo and is aiming to direct her career towards the intersection of social work and environmentally sustainability.
  - Ms. Dever asks what Ms. Olweean worked in specifically that got her into environmental topics while she was in California. Ms. Olweean answered that she volunteered on a Coastal Roots Farm that focuses on sustainable and regenerative agriculture that also worked a lot with the community. She also worked in Santa Ana with an organization that worked to make the city greener and attain more land for community gardens. She also volunteered with the Common Bond Institute working with Syrian refugees.
  - Mr. Wright asks if there is a certain subject that Ms. Olweean wants to be involved in within the city. She answers that she wants to focus on flood response and mitigation in Kalamazoo with the ECC in the face of climate change. Obtaining more green space and expanding community gardening are also some of her goals on the committee.
  - Dr. Walter said she was impressed by Ms. Olweean's answers to interview questions.
- **Vote on new member-** There was a motion to accept Ms. Olweean's application for membership that was carried through by the board. Paperwork for her membership will be sent to Ms. Drzick which will then be sent onto the city commission to be approved. Ms. Olweean's membership should be official by the next meeting.
- **Wildlife Killing Contests-** Mr. Magnuson proposes the issue of wildlife kill contests and invites other members to share their knowledge.
  - Ms. Hess shares that she believes there is one happening in Galesburg and that it is essentially a competition to kill animals for sport.
  - Mr. Bond questions whether it is simply hunting or just killing animals.
  - Dr. Walter explains that a killing contest is usually depicted as who can come back with the most animals of a specific species in a certain amount of time.
  - Mr. Magnuson recommends that the committee keep an eye on the subject.
  - Mr. Bond shares that coyotes are one animal that don't necessarily have a season for hunting so it could be a loophole for the killing contest.
  - Ms. Hess reads off information from News Channel 3 "Great Lakes region predator challenge is an annual contest where hunters from across Michigan compete to kill coyote for cash prizes, but some find the event cruel."

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- **Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board-** Mr. Glasser
  - Mr. Glasser was not present to give an update.
  - Mr. Wright mentions the NFP sent their map of the recommended expansion for the Natural Features Protection Overlay to the planning commission. The planning commission sent it back looking for clarification and revisions which were met. The plans were then sent back to the planning commission before they will be sent to the city commission. There are opportunities for public input on the plans and whether to expand the map coming up.
  - Mr. Magnuson shares that the first information session was today, however for some reason it was not broadcasted to Facebook for some reason. He plans on following up to make sure that the next session set for June 23<sup>rd</sup> will be broadcasted. This session will be after the next NFP meeting but before the next Planning commission meeting.
  - Dr. Walter shares that she attended the first session, and it was recorded so there should be a copy somewhere to be obtained.
- **Air and Water Quality** – Mr. Glasser, Mr. Wright
  - Mr. Wright and Mr. Glasser discussed NFP updates and the Lake St./ Stockbridge property the previous week. Mr. Wright invited public services director Mr. Baker to speak with the ECC again to speak about the Stockbridge issue as well as updates about the large-scale flood mitigation plan and the impact of litter on the wastewater treatment facility.
  - Ms. Drzick suggests adding on how stormwater impacts stormwater
  - Mr. Wright has communications going with Mr. William Ferrel about the MDHSS Air Quality Data Review and learned that there is still no update; they will get data to Mr. Wright when it is complete. He also emailed with Ms. Monica Brothers from EGLE, and they have put up odor monitors around Graphics Packaging and the city. They have not detected any odor level that triggers the detectors to indicate that there is a health and/or air quality issue.
  - Allied Paper clean-up is under way. They are working to scrape off soil to remove contaminants and prevent them from entering the water system.

- Morrow Damn clean-up is still in progress but is still a mess. A small part has been cleaned up with more plans to dredge further. There are still talks of further clean-up efforts.
- Woods Lake- Have not heard back from Mr. Chris Bovid of the Woods Lake association. He met with Director Backer to talk about street sweeping and repairing the filtration system on the end of Woods Lake. Mr. Wright plans to follow up.
- **Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection** – Dr. Walter, Mr. Bond
  - Dr. Walter shares an update on data from survey for deer cull. There were over 2,000 responses and the survey is now closed. Waiting on processing of these surveys for updates. Dr. Walter believes that the ECC needs to support the community in their efforts to gather data and not come to any conclusions until after the data is processed.
  - Dr. Melliush agrees that the committee should wait to see the results and work from there.
  - Mr. Magnuson wants to know who shares the processed information with the committee. Mr. Wright responds that the city tabulates and shares the results.
  - Ms. Dever shares a statement explaining the need for transparency in this process since this problem was proposed by a grassroots organization and the community.
  - Dr. Walter asks what Ms. Dever means by “professional assessment”. Ms. Dever responds that she was trying to convey that there was no official study conducted for things like actual deer density. She believes that there shouldn’t be any action taken just based off the survey. If the survey comes back saying the community wants something done about the deer population, then there should be an official study done to determine if there is an actual ecological issue with the deer population.
  - Ms. Dever’s statement was shared with the group. Edits and revisions are made. Mr. Bond mentions that when the deer cull was performed in Ann Arbor there was a study done on deer which made it easier for people to advocate for the deer cull.
  - Dr. Walter suggests that the ECC waits until the data on the survey is released to release a statement.
  - Ms. Dever suggests that there are many other steps that could be taken to control the deer before a cull is performed.
  - Mr. Wright also believes that the survey results should not be the only thing that determines action on the deer cull and hopes to hear of more data on deer culls since there is a lot of controversy in the areas that they were performed.
  - Dr. Melliush believes that most of the concern will be focused on how deer affect the landscaping in the city, not necessarily ticks and car accidents.
- **Waste Management/Litter** – Ms. Dever, Mr. Bond, Mr. Liekis, Ms. Talanda
  - Group has not met since last ECC meeting, trying to determine the direction they want to go with the group and what they hope to accomplish.
  - Mr. Bond reviewed the republic contract and determined that the goal is to ensure that republic is maintaining their previous compliance efforts.
  - Ms. Dever suggests that there are more ways that we can increase litter pick up and litter prevention.
  - Dr. Walter mentions the ambassador group downtown that have done work downtown to reduce litter.
  - Mr. Magnuson mentions that he recently experienced multiple people simply throwing trash out their window and suggests a solution like drive up trash cans. Mr. Bond brings up the fact that he sees trash right next to the trash can so even if there are more trash cans it’s up to the people to put in the effort of throwing their trash away. He suggests instead launching more education campaigns about litter.
  - Ms. Hess mentions that Mr. Andrew Hahn and the Downtown Kalamazoo Partnership are installing recycle bins throughout the downtown area. Mr. Hahn also mentioned to Ms. Hess that there is more Styrofoam due to covid and plans to work with Mr. Hahn to try to combat this increase.
  - Ms. Olweean suggests the implementing an incentivized composting and recycling program within the city. Ms. Dever agrees with the idea and says that to start a program like that the city would first need to be audited to find out what exactly is going into waste bins.
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Mr. Magnuson
  - Mr. Magnuson was unable to attend the latest Planning Commission meeting
  - There was a commercial property zoning change on Wall Street
  - Mr. Wright mentions the city’s sustainability climate action plan and there is a meeting scheduled by Ms. Jamie McCarthy for the following Thursday to review the draft of the action plan
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter
  - Plan to work on updating the ordinance within the next couple of weeks
  - Dr. Walter wants to know if there is an update on mosquito surveys. Mr. Wright follows up saying that Dr. Walker has the same pilot program going this year with locations in Vicksburg and Portage.
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Holmes
  - The council spoke about the parcels on the northwest corner and potential solutions to save the area during their meeting

- The community does not want to see the area turned into a car wash. The mayor has gotten involved but still no progress.
- Ms. Holmes mentions the water remediation program that will remediate water coming in off Drake Road and Stadium Drive. This program has not started yet but may be working by fall.
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis
  - There have been 11 ambassadors named to 20+ parks. The ambassadors are responsible for litter pick-up, weed removal, beautifying the parks, and monthly events. Ambassadors have some freedom to design their own plans for the park.
  - There is a planting event in the parks coming up this fall.
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Mr. Magnuson
  - Kalamazoo River alliance had a river clean-up two Saturdays ago
  - Ms. Dever shares stats of the river clean-up including that there were over 3000 pounds of trash picked up by 70-90 volunteers and about 580 pounds of that trash picked up was metal.
- **Odor Task Force** – Mr. Wright
  - Biggest part of construction the city is working on is rerouting junction chamber at Graphics Packaging. This project will not be able to start until spring of 2022. Graphics now has 16 odor monitors. There is no baseline data yet from the monitors to show how much hydrogen sulfide is being detected on the property.
  - A webpage will be up for odor control in the city so that citizens don't have to contact EGLE, they can go directly to the city. This will hopefully cut down response times.
  - Mr. Brown mentions he has been smelling a sweeter scent around the Graphics Packaging area

**NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:**

Public Comment: Tina McClinton could not access the Natural Features Protection meeting and was wondering if there are any efforts in motion to save the green space by her. Mr. Magnuson answers that citizens need to go to the Imagine Kalamazoo website to find the link to attend the Natural Features Website. Mr. Wright also believes that the development project of the green space in concern will not happen anytime this year.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- The meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.