

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

July 21, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Aaron Wright, Chair, Dr. Gail Walter, Eric Brown, Sharon Dever, Wayne L. Bond, Joe Bower, Bobby Glasser, Rob Liekis, Dr. Melluish, Nicole Olweean

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Ian Magnuson

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, Mike Dazy, Pilot Lead for Consumers; Brittany Cullimore,

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order by Mr. Wright at 4:35 pm, after confirming a quorum of 10 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 were approved as written.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Mr. Wright, Ms. Dever, and Mr. Magnuson got to visit the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition and got to see a few speakers led by Dr. Denise Keel. Mr. Wright gave an update on the Sustainability and Climate Action program development.
- Ms. Dever shared that July 31st is the next styrofoam drop-off date

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:

- Public Comment: Christine Prowdy expressed that she does not believe that a deer kill is not the solution to deer problems in the community. She would like to know if there is even actually a problem and what the census is on the deer population in Kalamazoo. She expresses that she is not in favor of deer kill. Mr. Wright acknowledges that this issue will be discussed later in the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Presentation on Consumers Energy Benchmarking Pilot Program- Brittany Cullimore**
 - Ms. Cullimore shared that this energy initiative will be launched in the City of Kalamazoo later this year.
 - Mike Dazy explains the Kalamazoo Energy Collaborative is working with Consumers Energy who is working to eliminate coal by 2025 and 63% renewable energy and 90 % clean energy resources by 2040. One way of doing this is the energy waste reduction program which is an incentive program that offers a rebate to consumers with a goal of becoming more energy efficient and clean. Kalamazoo is the first city in the campaign for Consumers Benchmarking Program thus launching the Kalamazoo Energy Collaborative.
 - Ms. Cullimore explains that this program is meant to connect utility, city, and local buildings to support goals around energy efficiency. This program is the first of its kind in the nation where the utility is partnering with the city by providing funding and resources to do local outreach.
 - Ms. Cullimore explains that by being aware of energy consumption though benchmarking we can better understand energy performance within a building. Benchmarking brings together building characteristics and meter consumption which can in turn provide energy performance over time and its relation to similar buildings.

- Buildings that continuously participated in a benchmarking program reduced energy use by an average of 2.4% per year resulting in a 7% savings over a three-year period
- 77% of operators reported making operational changes and 75% of operators said they invested in new equipment because of benchmarking requirements. This shows that valuable information from benchmarking leads to action.
- Benefits of benchmarking include:
 - Helps building owners/managers understand the performance of a building in reference to other similar buildings and helps prioritize improvements in the building
 - Provides context on whether to purchase or lease buildings or to invest in upgrades
 - Help sustainability efforts to reduce GHG emissions and data generated can be used to guide future sustainability goals
- This benchmarking program is voluntary and is for commercial and multifamily buildings already existing in Kalamazoo. It also provides support to local businesses and owners in energy savings. They provide resources and technical assistance to owners/managers to support benchmarking efforts and help them act on energy savings. This program also helps the city's energy goals for a healthier community and a transition to a low carbon future by focusing on efficiency.
- The program includes:
 - Benchmarking assistance where the collaborative will hold events called data jams to walk owners/managers through the process and make sure they have the information need to get benchmarked.
 - The program will also have an energy Portal which allows participants to engage with energy data and see trends over time.
 - After successfully benchmarking each participant will see an analysis of their data and an assessment of their building as well as be provided with a list of recommendations to make the building more energy efficient.
 - A challenge that will be faced is getting owners and managers to take those actions, so they plan to provide reminders and support owners after benchmarking to get through those challenges.
 - The Collaborative wants participants to be recognized and celebrated through things like award ceremonies and provide opportunities to host building tours to highlight energy efficiency efforts.
- They are targeting commercial and multifamily building that are 20,000 square feet or larger in the city of Kalamazoo, however if smaller buildings would like to participate, they can. Industrial and manufacturing buildings are excluded from the program.
- Ms. Cullimore explains that they have already started outreach and are looking for 5-6 buildings who want to participate in a focus group mid-August to get some feedback on what the program offers and how it supports owners in their energy efficiency efforts as well as any barriers they have come across.
- Ms. Dever asks if the monitoring only focuses on amount of energy used. Is there a specific list that the program is looking for/ Ms. Cullimore shares that they are putting together an extensive list of things they will look for, but it will also vary based on the building type? The program team will work with facility managers to get a full picture of the building to understand how their energy consumption relates to the efficiency of their performance. Ms. Dever asks if they are focused on how much heat energy is retained within the building or strictly on meter consumption. Mr. Dazy explains that gas and electric are included, and water has been considered. They have also considered including AMI (15-minute interval data) data analysis that looks at electric consumption over 15-minute increments of time. They have the option of doing virtual audits to learn how the building uses energy but not necessarily heat calculations. Ms. Cullimore adds that the building's energy use will be compared to the median energy use of the same type of building to see if the consumption is above or below that value. This tells the group how you're performing against others and whether there are actions that can be taken to reduce energy consumption. The team will then walk through the building with the owner/manager to point out areas where energy may be wasted.
- Dr. Walter asks what Consumers (an energy company) gets out of making buildings more efficient. Mr. Dazy answers that Consumers has obligations to the energy waste reductions programs they started in 2009 and the Michigan Public Service Commission to meet requirements for reducing energy consumption through customers. They also have programs in place to reduce energy consumption and increase efficiency within the company. Overall, it's best for the customer and environment and what regulatory bodies are moving toward.
- Mr. Bower adds they are a public utility, so they are supposed to serve on behalf of the public. He says it also seems that Michigan is stepping up its efforts to use more renewable energy and there are energy efficient mandates in place so the more the company can do to stay up with trends the better for the company.

- Mr. Glasser asks who else has this been presented to and proceeds to make suggestions of different buildings that could be included. Ms. Cullimore explains that they have been working closely with the City and Jamie McCarthy and Dr. Denise Keel, but the Environment Concerns Committee is the first group that they have presented to as they are in the early stages of recruitment but are looking to make more connections.
- Mr. Wright wants to know what Consumers means by clean energy. Mr. Dazy directs to the plan that's online to see more of how the plan is broken down, but it includes a 10% use of natural gas. Mr. Wright then asks who is the team that would be supporting building owners. Ms. Cullimore says they have a group of three or four engineers that will assist participants and they want to establish a helpline including an email and phone number to provide assistance. If the owners decide to take action to be more efficient the engineers will be there to help guide them. Mr. Wright then asks how the team plans to communicate how much money will be saved by owners by being more efficient and how do they plan to communicate emissions to the public. Ms. Cullimore answers that they would like to have transparency of information and once owners start taking action, they can show that data to the public. As for the participants, after the building is assessed, there will be a list of actions with expected energy savings that can then be calculated into cost savings. Mr. Dazy adds that there will be a program website that has a dashboard that shows all the participants and energy performance of buildings that are participating and that's where they could get data for cost savings and energy emissions reductions. They have not had conversations about tracking carbon reductions of each project yet, but it is something they would like to incorporate into the metrics they track.
- The team will send an email containing the contacts and more information.
- **Sustainability and Climate Action Plan Update**
 - Mr. Wright did not attend the last meeting but there is an early draft and Jamie McCarthy has put in for a budget for staffing. They are in the prioritization phase to sort through the action plan. Hopefully there should be a completed draft in the next few months.
- **Natural Feature Protection Overlay Phase 2 Update**
 - Ms. Dever shares that there are two meetings planned for the draft to go in front of the planning commission. The reading of the plan is the first meeting on August 2nd and the second meeting on August 16th is when they will vote on it.
 - Ms. Hess shares that even though there is a letter from the ECC in the packet it is always helpful for the public to call in with their support.
 - Ms. Drzick shares that there are still decisions being made on whether meeting will be held virtually, in person, or hybrid.
- **Deer Survey**
 - Dr. Melluish says they have not met about this subject much recently but has heard there is not a conclusion on the data as it hasn't finished being processed.
 - Ms. Hess says they have been receiving a lot of feedback on the deer cull from both sides of the issue.
 - Dr. Melluish wants to know if Ms. Hess has heard of anything regarding a deer problem from Western as they have a lot of property. Ms. Hess answers that she has not heard anything but can reach out to get some information and feedback.
 - Dr. Walter shares those areas that belong to Western are heavily impacted by deer.
 - Ms. Holmes shares that the city and ECC have been through this before and part of figuring out if there is something that could be done was determining if there are practical solutions. They were trying to figure out if there was something that could be done to mitigate deer problems, and no one found an effective answer. Ms. Holmes wants to know if there are any studies that have had success in mitigating deer effects. Mr. Wright responds that he believes that is the role the ECC plays because there is concern in the community. So, when the results of the survey come back the ECC can provide the input as to whether it would be effective.
- **Recycling Litter Discussion**
 - Mr. Wright says there have been group meetings and he had a discussion with some city staff to try to put together a map and list to help keep track of litter pick-ups throughout the city. Dan (the neighborhood activator) agreed to fill in neighborhood association and Nolan agreed to help map out the areas of when and where pick-ups have been done. They mentioned that the city is working on a website to put out for monitoring pick-ups.
 - Ms. Dever mentions the group is looking into different compost options, education programs, and cost programs.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Public Access to Monthly Agenda**

- Mr. Wright says he heard from a member of the community asking how they could access the monthly agenda. Most committees appear to not share coming up agendas however Mr. Wright expresses that he is not opposed to sharing the agenda ahead of time and asks the group their thoughts.
- Ms. Dever believes that it could be a lot for such a small volunteer group to handle especially since there is already a lot of transparency within the group and there are always opportunities for members of the public to join meetings and talk on different subject matters.
- Ms. Hess adds that the addition of a monthly agenda would likely be handled by the City Clerk's Office. She suggests that the group could post a "draft" and say that the public can tune in to see the final agenda.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board**– Mr. Glasser
 - Mr. Glasser says that they are happy with the number of responses in support of the NFP Overlay Phase 2 project. He mentions that they did not meet this month.
- **Air and Water Quality** – Mr. Glasser, Mr. Wright
 - The group did not meet this month. Mr. Wright says that he has not heard about the air quality data review yet. He plans to send a follow up email.
- **Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection** – Dr. Walter, Mr. Bond
 - Dr. Walter says the peregrine falcons are on their way to being on their own soon. She also shows a pamphlet provided by the State of Michigan called *Ticks and Your Health* that can help community members identify ticks and access information about them. Now is when we will see an increase in arthropod related diseases.
- **Waste Management/Litter** – Ms. Dever, Mr. Schmidt
 - No further updates
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Mr. Magnuson
 - Not present
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter
 - Dr. Walter mentions that the meeting for reviewing the tree ordinance was cancelled and will hopefully be rescheduled for August.
 - The invasive tree species downtown are being replaced by a better species
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Holmes
 - Ms. Dever says there were some beetles released to deal with purple loosestrife.
 - Ms. Holmes says that Tom Sauber was going to check to see if the beetles have made any progress on eating the invasive species.
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis
 - Parks and Rec has decided to start meeting in person in parks, but Mr. Liekis was not able to attend this meeting due to the change from virtual meetings.
 - Mr. Wright mentions that Mr. Liekis could mention in the next meeting that the ambassadors for the parks could share their litter pick-ups with the litter removal project and Mr. Wright to help keep track of litter pick-ups through the city.
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee** – quarterly
 - Mr. Wright will email Ms. Drzick and Ms. Talanda about the next quarterly meeting
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Ms. Olweean
 - Ms. Olweean says that she has not been able to connect with anyone with the group, but Mr. Magnuson just sent her contacts for the Watershed Council, so she plans to reach out to them and have them let her know when their next meeting is
- **Odor Task Force** – Mr. Wright
 - Mr. Wright says that there is now a website where community members can log odor complaints. The link for this site seemed to not work but hopefully got this fixed so the new, fixed link will be sent out. He asks the group to try it out to make sure that it is working before it is put out to the public.
 - There has not been an odor task force meeting but are scheduling one for August. They hope to have more data from Graphics Packaging by then.

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.