

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

## August 18, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Aaron Wright, Chair, Ian Magnuson, Vice Chair, Dr. Gail Walter, Sharon Dever, Rob Liekis, Dr. Melliush, Nicole Olweean

**EXCUSED ABSENCES:** Joe Bower, Eric Brown, Wayne Bond, Bobby Glasser, Jeanne Hess

**UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:** No unexcused absences.

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

**OTHERS:** Lauri Holmes, Associate Member

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

- The meeting was called to order by Mr. Wright at 4:30, after confirming a quorum of 6 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 (July 21, 2021):**

- The minutes were approved as written.
- One correction noted: Misspelling of Tom Sauber's last name, has been corrected.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Mr. Magnuson recommends reading the MLive article about the air quality issue regarding Graphics Packaging

### **NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:**

- Public Comment: Iris Potter shares her opposition to the deer cull as well as baiting and shooting within the city. She plans to send information as to why the cull will not work and ways that we can live with nature to the committee.
- Patricia Hollis also is protesting the deer cull and believe the method is unnecessary and unsafe and urges the city to use a more humane method of population control.
- Eponine Garrett also opposes the deer cull and shares that there is no scientific study in which the cull is effective.
- Andrew also opposes the deer cull
- Hillary Reddig also strongly opposes the deer cull and thinks it is inhuman and believes there has been a lack of transparency in the process.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- ***Sustainability and Climate Action Plan Update***- Mr. Wright met with Jamie McCarthy Monday and it sounds like there should be a draft available soon. The group is putting together a prioritization list. Mr. Magnuson asks who the draft goes to first to start the implementation process as a topic for the next small group meeting. Ms. Holmes also asks where the funding will come from for implementation. Mr. Wright answers they are working on creating a full-time position for a manager of the project.
- ***Natural Features Protection Overlay Phase 2 Update***- Ms. Holmes shares that there were many that called into the meeting as well as many who wrote in and all were in favor of the expansion of the project. There was no opposition to the ordinance, and it passed unanimously.
- Deer Survey- Dr. Melliush talked to Pete Kushner who is heading up the deer committee and he had not yet heard about the results of the survey yet and plans on trying to find out more this week. Dr. Walter states that there is no proposal to cull deer currently, there is only the survey to determine if there is a problem.
  - Dr. Walter has been able to read a draft of the results and the next step is to send the draft to the AD HOC committee and she says that it is very thorough and well written. It makes recommendations for the city based on different phases and programs that can be used to manage the deer.

- Mr. Magnuson asks if Pete Kushner is the person that has the data, is concerned about the publicity with the deer population management in the city and would like to know who is involved with putting together the management plan as well as their stance on the issue. Dr. Walter answers that there is no management plan yet. She believes that the perspective of sharpshooters and culling is skewed since that isn't the focus and the report is being written by Mr. Kushner and he is putting the numbers into context. Mr. Magnuson proposes that the ECC should have access to the raw data as there is concern that Mr. Kushner could have potential biases. Mr. Wright says that he doesn't see that there should be a problem in getting the raw data attached to the report. He also mentions that even though the ECC hears from many that are opposed to the deer cull there are many people that call the city that want something done about the deer population, so they urged Mr. Kushner to start the AD HOC committee to create a representative group to respond to a reoccurring concern in the city. He doesn't think there is much we can do currently until we receive the results of the survey and then if it feels like there is an issue with the report the ECC can request the raw data.
- Ms. Holmes wants to know who was surveyed, what they were asked, and if the results determine the City's action. Mr. Wright says it was put on different platforms like any other survey and appeared like a normal survey of around 40 questions. Dr. Walter also mentions that the results of this survey do not determine actions taken.
- Mr. Magnuson voices his concern over how representative the AD HOC committee is as to his knowledge everyone on the committee is already in favor of the deer culling plan. He also understands that this is a reoccurring concern the survey is to determine the legitimacy of the problem.
- Mr. Wright says that the representatives of the neighborhoods of the AD HOC committee were asked to participate and that he doesn't believe that there is a reason to think that all the representatives are for the deer culling.
- Ms. Dever also shares her concern that everyone on the AD HOC committee may be for the deer management.
- Dr. Walter clarifies that every neighborhood was invited to be a representative on the committee whether they responded so it is unfair to assume that everyone on the committee has a problem with deer. She also states that deer management is not the same as a deer cull. Management is how we can live with the deer in the city. Ms. Dever counters that she didn't mean that the representatives were for the deer cull, but they had to have some sort of interest in management to join. She also believes that the way the group was formed had some bias.
- Ms. Holmes asks what the survey was trying to find out and why the survey was so long. Mr. Wright answered that the city has gotten complaints about deer over the years and that the survey was to determine if the concern was more widespread or only within a few communities. Dr. Melliush adds that many have been coming to meetings saying the deer problem keeps getting worse. He suggests that the city could give the members of the ECC a copy of the survey so that members can review it and understand how in depth it is.
- Mr. Wright goes on to say that he doesn't believe that there is much that the committee can do currently but reassures the community members that the ECC is taking the issue into consideration and will surely have an opinion to provide to the City.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Copy from agenda.

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- ***Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board***– Mr. Glasser
  - Not present
- ***Air and Water Quality*** – Mr. Glasser, Mr. Wright
  - Nothing to report
- ***Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection*** – Dr. Walter, Mr. Bond
  - Dr. Walter shares that there are cases of West Nile Virus seen, not yet in Kalamazoo County but in Michigan. It is expected to see more cases of West Nile Virus and Triple E mod-August into September. There is a short course on biophilic cities called "Seeding the Biophilic Cities" that she will share with Mr. Wright. The falcons are doing well, and it seems the juveniles have finally left.
- ***Waste Management/Litter*** – Ms. Dever, Mr. Schmidt
  - Nothing to report
  - Mr. Wright says he is still working on a list of litter pickups
- ***City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission*** – Mr. Magnuson

- The styrofoam pickup in July went well. Mr. Magnuson believes that we can do better about clarifying what kinds of styrofoam are accepted. The last pickup is the last Saturday in October. If more people could volunteer it would be great.
- The planning commission talked about a dog kennel approval, multifamily dwelling approval, and updated their schedule for the rest of the year.
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter
  - Held a meeting on the tree ordinance revision in which ideas and issues that want to be included in the next revision were shared. They will be meeting again soon.
  - The city has received a \$25,000 grant from the DNR to do a tree survey in the city. The survey will be occurring this fall. Mr. Wright asks how the tree survey will affect the urban tree canopy map. Dr. Walter answers that she does not know at this time, but she is guessing that it will update the map.
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Holmes
  - Nothing Significant to report
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis
  - They are planning winter activities for the parks including skiing and mountain biking. Governor Whitmer has also approved about \$150 million to go to parks and maintenance, the amount designated for Kalamazoo has not been decided yet.
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee** – quarterly
  - Mr. Wright will contact Ms. Talanda
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Ms. Olweean
  - No meetings yet but Ms. Olweean has reached out to introduce herself and show her interest in joining the group.
- **Odor Task Force** – Mr. Wright
  - The water reclamation plant has four new carbon scrubber units in addition to a sewer monitoring system that also monitors odors.
  - Graphics Packaging changed the chemicals they used to knock down odors on a regular basis. They also shared data from their Envirosuite system and the 16 monitors there. There were no measurements in the data that appeared to be very high. Mr. Wright asked Graphics to put the data in a graphic form to have a better visual. Monica Brothers has not gotten many complaints about the odor as opposed to the previous year. The city also put the odor monitoring website online so if there is a complaint about an odor a community member can log it. Once Graphics Packaging is done with their expansion the wastewater reclamation plant will be able to go in and dig out the junction chamber and reroute the effluent from Graphics and put a vacuum sealed pipe in place so that the odors don't escape. Mr. Magnuson asks for clarification as to who the projects are directed and funded by. Mr. Wright confirms that it is within the Public Works department. Mr. Magnuson then asks if there are any conditions to the \$20 million tax break that Graphics Packaging got from the City. Mr. Wright answers that the expectation was that Graphics would then report regularly and show progress and monitoring of the odor issue. Mr. Wright has not yet received the report on this data.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.