

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

MARCH 16, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Aaron Wright, Chair, Ian Magnuson, Vice Chair, Mr. Wayne L. Bond, Ms. Sharon Dever, Ms. Nicole Olween, Dr. Gail Walter

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Mr. Eric Brown, Mr. Bobby Glasser

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: Dr. Melliush

STAFF: Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison; Jamie McCarthy, Development Project Coordinator; Nolan Bergstrom, City Planning Department

OTHERS: Jeanne Hess, City Commission Liaison; Benjamin Stanley

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order by Mr. Wright at 4:30 pm, after confirming a quorum of 6 out of 9 current members.
- Recording of the meeting was confirmed; live streaming was not an option today due to technical difficulties. Will attempt to be able to live stream in the future.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- The agenda was approved with the following changes:
 - Adding a vote of the 2022 Annual Meeting Schedule/Location

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- There was no meeting in January and February's meeting did not reach quorum.
- The December 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:

- Kalamazoo Earth Day is doing things again this year, it is action oriented, the website is continually updated kalamazooearthday.com preliminary events throughout April, famous "Spring into Action" with actionable ideas
- Peregrine falcon eggs should appear any day. They have a video camera recorder and microphone. This has drained the existing "piggy bank" and donations are always welcome.
- Public Services is partnering with Kalamazoo River Watershed Council for a large river cleanup along the Ampersee shoreline, tentative April 23rd.

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:

- Public Comment: Benjamin Stanley: Thinks the peregrine falcon is very cool and interested in an apprenticeship. Appreciates the ECC. Has encouraged friends to save Styrofoam – unsure where to direct them at this time. Has talked to the county and suggests encouraging the City to increase recycling. Possibly make recycling weekly instead of biweekly, and to be free. Would like garbage to be free, so people stop throwing in the woods. Would like to find a way to encourage people to reduce, reuse, recycle, specifically old glass bottles. Interested in encouraging the community to compost and would like to have more information, education, or resourced if known.
 - Ms. Hess update: Dr. Jessica at Be Joyful shop, will begin accepting kitchen compost April 1st; sell composting buckets for the counter as well.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION:

- Sustainability Climate Action Plan Update – Jamie McCarthy & Nolan Bergstrom
 - ECC first board to preview the final plan – calling it the Community Sustainability Plan. The plan is now in its final stages, ECC can expect a copy of the plan any day
 - Mr. Bergstrom was first an intern for the City, then worked with the City through AmeriCorps for 1 year, and currently works with the City full time. Half of his time is specifically on sustainability projects.
 - The four core themes/sustainability visions previously identified. The plan discusses priorities within these core visions.

- For example, Energy efficiency is top of the priority list because of instant emission savings/cost savings, and it is something we can do now. Whereas electrifying buildings is secondary, because emissions may increase temporarily, but with solar energy that brings it down. The plan discusses how to take it from pilot to a more permanent program.
 - How to see and read this plan, because of previous meetings: which items/actions are actionable v. aspirational. Came up with a numeric 0-14 scale: actions fall on actionable end or aspirational end. This considers if there is staffing/partners in place, funding or low cost, timeline, and factors in the city's role.
 - For example, tree canopy is more aspirational (less actionable): the city has a role, but it will take a lot of time and working with multiple property owners.
 - 10 Goals, 29 Strategies, 80+ actions. Numbering does not indicate an order/step. These strategies will shift, flexible and adaptable based on changes in factors. Actions are a work plan for City Plan and the Community but will be fluid over time, so to help focus on most important in the short term conducted prioritizing, resulting in 6 Strategies.
 - Tested at Friendship Village. Next few months will engage in community engagement. Want to be sure these 6 are the most important.
 - Community Engagement Schedule: in person Open House April 11; virtual Town Hall-like meeting around mid-April/Earth Day; online comment box (virtual) and City Hall drop box (in person) for public comment.
 - ECC Support requests: any volunteers for Open House, share materials with other groups/interested parties, sharing a media package (will send to Aaron to share with ECC members), and drafting a resolution of support to be on April Agenda
 - Question 1: Concerned with how long it has taken to get this plan (2 ½ years). Are any departments waiting on this plan to begin actions? No, a lot of groups are already implementing things, i.e. Public Services with their bio-diesel pilot study. The benefit is more this plan keeps things on department's radar, annual workplans and in their budgeting. Some are already funded, in progress, and mentioned in the plan.
 - Question 2: In community engagement, are sources of feedback taken into consideration? (For example, interest groups, business interests are different than community interest.) Ms. Hess doesn't see this as a problem since the plan builds in flexibility based on changes, more just seeing if the 6 strategies are the "right" focus. It was noted that this is very accessible to citizens and the community.
 - Question 3: The ECC had specifically requested three items to be considered with the sustainability and climate action plan, including a dedicated staff person to run the plan and count the numbers. What is the status of this? This budget item did not get adopted into the 2022 budget. Still direction in the plan that it will eventually need this kind of coordination and oversight. There is an implementation chapter (shorter) that is how we make this happen.
 - Question 4: Greenhouse emission reduction goal is another specifically requested item by the ECC. Is this included in the plan? Ms. Hess noted there are not any science-based targets in this plan. There's an action that says we need to get there: a Virginia Tech student was helping with the inventory – his thesis found there is not enough data collected at a local/city level. There are too many gaps. The action listed first proposes filling in these gaps. This can be added later once the gaps are filled. (The plan is designed to be fluid/constantly updated and re-prioritized as things change.)
 - Chair Wright requests that a resolution of support must include the two not yet accomplished items (of the three items specifically requested by the ECC previously): a dedicated staff person, and Greenhouse emission reduction goal, in addition to supporting the plan. Ms. McCarthy noted that the community input did not include greenhouse gas emissions; however, it is important for the ECC to mention/bring up the concern regarding that large group of people concerned with greenhouse gas emissions.
- Wellhead Protection Program Committee Update - Jean Talanda, Water Resources Division
 - 100% Action Driven, involved in stormwater utilities and drinking water utilities, take care of the wellfields, looking at contaminants within Kalamazoo anything that could affect the water from a broader view.
 - Whenever a developer comes in, looks at all the factors: what exists, what chemicals they use, what they transport, any and all possible sources of contamination.
 - Work on liability sites KL Landfill, dioxin plume, works with consultants on getting sites cleaned up and moved along.
 - NPDS application update and 2-year Progress Report
 - Kalamazoo Storm Water Group (KSWG) – Grant, created a webpage, protectyourwater.net, just got funded for another year
 - Asset inventory - allows for stormwater work orders, State is working on a mechanism for adding stormwater to a public utility – this work will allow for a smooth, quick transition.
 - Couple studies of surcharge (not flooding, because it's not in a flood zone) – study on what would need to be done to fix it, and if funding would allow could fix in the future. Another study at woods lake due to complaints. Would love to redesign and come up with better infrastructure – very costly, would not be possible until it becomes a public utility.

- Spring Valley Lake – 2 year study, damned lake, if need to flush lake; tie between Wellfield #5 is on the edge of the Lake. 33% of the surface water infiltrates into the wellfield and becomes part of the drinking water. The Salt content (though diluted) could influence the corrosivity of the piping. Could influence corrosion control.
- Now have capability to upgrade maps using GPS and GIS, GIS specialist could provide link to specific information.
- Last year 940 lead service replacements, close to double the previous year. Very proactive in lead replacement.
- Farming a 22-acre parcel in Oshtemo as potential future wellfield. Due to restricting chemical uses, it is as close to organic as possible.
- First forest management plan/deer management plan on the 381 acres of land in Comstock, on the City's existing wellfield. Possibly to implement to keep track of the entire wellfield, wildlife, walking trails, birds, invasive species, erosion. The plan was contracted out and should arrive sometime in April. The contractor's stated than any forest management plan MUST include a deer management plan.
- Have GPS updated most of the trails at El Sabo 740 acres of preserve, which is a lot to manage as a wellfield. Lots of misuse (esp. during COVID due to increased foot traffic.) Should be able to pop a location on your phone and be able to not get lost using your phone.
- Tremendous amount of public education. Public Education for Wellhead Protection as well. 10 brand-new adds last September. Adds back now in theaters and continued streaming. Also testing Spotify adds!
 - Attended Farmer's Market for public education as well
- Question: Director Baker mentioned a plan to reroute water away from City of Kalamazoo to prevent flooding downtown: is this within Ms. Talanda's purview? No, decisions and financing are all on Director Baker, but Ms. Talanda works with D. Baker on environmental issues more as an administrative portion/working with contractors.
- Question – can't swim in Spring Valley, does she know why? Not within Ms. Talanda's purview (unaware of recreational uses of the lake.)
- Question: are there alternatives to road salting? Ms. Talanda is not involved in salting/roads, but she participated in sampling and was able to trace back where some salts come from and reducing salt is something she cares about. D. Baker has implemented improvements to salting and planning – investing and working on this problem because it is important.
- Protectyourwater.net: Well over 100,000 – 200,000 /month. Get metrics on traffic to the website and engagement – how long they watch a video. Have significantly increased their outreach. Specific spot on there for educators as well.
- Kalamazoo River/Morrow Lake Dam Clean-Up – Chair Wright
 - Currently the company is not cleaning up past a few feet.
 - A new rule is currently in state legislature for vote which would allow further enforcement
 - Nothing else is being done currently

NEW BUSINESS

- Sustainable Food Production – Ms. Olween
 - Postponed to next meeting
- Urban Bird Treaty – Dr. Walter
 - Ms. McCarthy is talking to the city, does not want a recommendation at this point, so can read memo from Dr. Walter and next time will discuss.
- Renewing Member Terms
 - Eric Brown, declining to renew his term. No vote needed? Will be sent to Ms. Drzick in email.
 - Mr. Bond will need to step down in July due to schedule conflicts. It was suggested that ECC members can vote to change the date/times of the meetings to better meet schedules, will be discussed in the future.
 - Mr. Magnuson, Ms. Dever, and Mr. Liekis: terms were up Jan 1st of this year and all three would like to renew their membership. Voted to confirm their renewals.
 - Will review new member applications next meeting for the one (or two?) resignations.
- 2022 Annual Meeting Schedule – vote to move physical location from chambers to the Community Room. Waiting to hear from IT regarding live streaming.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- ***Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board***– Mr. Glasser
- ***Air and Water Quality*** – Mr. Glasser, Mr. Wright
- ***Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection*** – Dr. Walter
- ***Waste Management/Litter*** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Hess, Mr. Liekis, Mr. Bond

- April 30th Sat 10am – 1pm, recycling event (includes electronics recycling!), will be in view from the curb, Mayor's Riverfront Park
- Ms. Hess attended SW Michigan 1st and was part of a styrofoam conversation. Purchasing a densifier was mentioned; the benefit of a densifier would be to increase the amount of styrofoam that could be stored. A densifier was significantly out of budget for the styrofoam program, it was heavily considered prior to the beginning of the program. Bronson has a densifier that the program can use. Ms. Dever is waiting on hearing from the City regarding taking over/continuing the styrofoam program and location.
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Mr. Magnuson
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Holmes
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee** – quarterly with Jean Talanda, City of Kalamazoo
 - See above (Old Business)
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Ms. Olwee
- **Odor Task Force** – Mr. Wright
 - Still no response from EGLE regarding Graphic Packaging report

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 6:40? p.m.