

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

April 20, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

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

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Mr. Bobby Glasser

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: Mr. Joe Bower

STAFF: Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order by Mr. Wright at 4:30pm after confirming a quorum of 8 out of 10 current members. It was noted that Eric Brown has resigned.
- Recording/Streaming of the meeting was confirmed. (Note: Sound was unavailable for the youtube recording/Facebook livestream until the Sustainable Food Production presentation). Community members may join in person or call during the public comment period.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- The agenda was approved with the following changes: adding update on steps forward with community sustainability plan at beginning of subcommittee reports.

APPROVAL MINUTES (March 16, 2022):

- The draft March meeting minutes were approved with minor corrections from Mr. Wright as submitted to the recording secretary.
- The March 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:

- Introductions of current members in attendance.
- There are four Peregrin Falcon eggs which should start to hatch next week.
- Earth Day has many activities in the next few weeks:
 - Several cleanups, 3 this weekend, Kalamazooearthday.com
 - April 30th Styrofoam AND electronic recycling event 10 am-1pm at Mayor's Riverfront Park
 - More info in View from the Curb and on City's Facebook page
- Draft Sustainability Plan is officially available to the public
 - ImagineKalamazoo.org
 - Public Comment through the end of the month

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:

- Public Comment: There are no public comments or callers currently. Public comments will be limited to 3 minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION:

- Kalamazoo River/Morrow Lake Dam Cleanup
 - no updates to Morrow Lake Dam Cleanup
 - One of the River cleanups has been cancelled due to safety concerns (particularly needles).
 - Public Services Department is doing a cleanup there this Saturday. 10 am-12pm. Posting on City's website and City's Facebook. Ampersee and Jack Holmes Parkway. Citizen Volunteers are welcome; there will be refreshments and protective equipment available.

NEW BUSINESS

- Sustainable Food Production, Ms. Nicole Olween
 - Discussion could be added as a standing item on the agenda, applicable to Environmental Concerns
 - Food systems have a substantial impact on climate change and vice versa; 25-30% of annual global emissions

- Impacts biodiversity loss; can reverse biodiversity loss if handled correctly
- At a city level, “the way cities access and consume food is a massive lever for global changes to food systems and their environmental impact.” (Boyer, qtd. in Swan, 2020)
- Urban agriculture and community gardens do have positive impact overall, despite not substantially reducing local emissions, by fostering food and food waste awareness, create urban green spaces, and reduce food waste.
- 2019 Draft of the City of Kalamazoo Climate Action Plan Framework (completed by MSU graduate students) included “local food” as one of the six major areas of concern and one of two focus areas (Cangelosi, et. Al., n.d.)
- Kalamazoo has many local food initiatives
- Proposed Action Steps: Advocate, Educate, Counsel
- Encourage more local food, local gardens, etc.
- New App, Farmish, helps anyone growing food with excess can offer to community
- Urban Bird Treaty, Dr. Gail Walter, Audubon Society of Kalamazoo
 - **#BRINGBIRDSBACK**
 - Eco Services, habitat regeneration, consuming insect pests
 - Research has shown that 2.9 billion species of birds (1 in 4 birds that previously existed) have been lost since 1970
 - Some groups affected harder than others
 - Boreal Forest Birds, lost approximately 1/3, 9 out of 10 Evening Grosbeaks
 - Eastern Forest Birds, Wood Thrushes, 6 in 10 lost
 - Grassland Birds, 3 in 4 Eastern Meadowlarks
 - Aerial Insectivores, 2 in 5 Barn Swallows
 - Shore Birds, 1 in 3 lost
 - 14% bird decline within the last 10 years noted on radar
 - Worldwide problem
 - Why Care About Birds?
 - Good bird habitat is good people habitat
 - Birds and their habitat support your physical and mental/emotional health
 - Increases IQ and test taking ability
 - Decrease hospitalizations
 - Birds are good for the economy
 - Birds benefit your beverages
 - Keep insects in check
 - Boost Property Values
 - What’s Causing the Losses?
 - Habitat Loss & Degradation
 - Climate Change
 - Free Roaming Cats
 - Collisions (i.e. windows)
 - Secondary Impacts:
 - Loss of Biodiversity
 - Loss of other species
 - Loss of Ecosystem services
 - Economic impact
 - Ecological imbalance
 - Increase climate change
 - Decrease Nature experience
 - Health consequences
 - Reasons for Hope!
 - Thanks to conservation efforts: Waterfowl, Raptors have had increases in population since 1970
 - 7 Simple Actions to Help Birds:
 1. Bird Friendly Coffee
 2. Community Science (eBird citizen science program)
 3. Reducing Collisions (ie Windows!)
 4. Cats Indoors
 5. Native Landscaping
 6. Bird-friendly Communities (where we come in!)
 7. Urban Bird Treaty Program

- Non-regulatory partnership between a community and the US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Goal 1: Conserve urban habitats for birds
- Goal 2: Reduce urban hazards to birds
- Goal 3: Educate and engage urban community in caring about and conserving birds and their habitats
- Potential Actions suggested for each of the above goals
- Birds in Kalamazoo
 - 331 bird species documented in Kalamazoo County, 319 considered likely
 - 15 species are endangered, threatened or of special concern in the state of MI
 - Kleinstuck preserve has the highest population of bird species, >200
 - 5 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA's) in Kalamazoo County: The Kalamazoo River corridor, Fort Custer Recreational Area, Fort Custer Training Area, Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) Grassland, Austin Lake and Upjohn Pond (IBA's are identified using an internationally agreed set of criteria as being critically important for bird conservation)
 - Motus Wildlife Tracking System, three receiving towers in Kalamazoo County
 - eBird – collaborative with Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 97 “hot spots” in the county and 17 in the City.
- Bird-friendly Lifestyle Pledge: “The fact that you can only do a little is no excuse for doing nothing”, John Le Carré
- To apply to be a part of the Urban Bird Treaty Program, requires a population of 100,000 people. The City of Kalamazoo alone is not enough. We can define the geographic area for the treaty. Possibly a partnership with the City of Portage, other townships, the entire county...
- Jamie McCarthy will be presenting this to the City of Kalamazoo to gain support.
- Municipal Partners currently include the City of Parchment; Oshtemo Township and Kalamazoo County are on board but not yet signed. Non municipal partners include the Kalamazoo Nature Center, Audubon Society, DNR, Fort Custer Training Center, Stewards of Kleinstuck. One commercial partner.
- Draft Recommendation not needed at this time. Jamie McCarthy will notify us once city departments have been notified/approved and eventually, when it goes to City Commission, ECC will draft a recommendation.
- 2022 Annual Meeting Schedule
 - Will continue to live stream and take calls during public comment period
 - Can request to hold known large-group meetings in additional rooms as needed
 - Voted to hold meetings in community room for the rest of the year (instead of Chambers)
- New membership
 - One open seat; two open seats in August for sure
 - No active applications
 - Encourage people to apply for membership!

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- ***Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board***– Mr. Glasser
- ***Air and Water Quality*** – Mr. Glasser, Chair Wright
 - Chair Wright will attend in person at next meeting; hopeful City will get started this summer with the project to re-route the outflow at the junction
 - Lawsuit moving forward against Graphic Packaging (and the City)
 - The City rejected Graphic Packaging’s proposed Community Benefits Agreement with Graphic Packaging
 - DRAFT Environmental Justice map available on State’s website www.michigan.gov/environmentaljustice
- ***Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection*** – Dr. Walter
- ***Waste Management/Litter*** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Hess, Mr. Liekis, Mr. Bond
 - Officially continuing styrofoam recycling and a dedicated staff member in charge of the project
- ***City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission*** – Mr. Magnuson
- ***Tree Committee*** – Dr. Walter
 - Results from tree inventory (June-Sept 2021), trees within curb lawn within City’s right of way
 - Compared to 20 years ago, there are far fewer trees (especially younger trees), more vacant sites for trees, and more stumps

- A high portion of the trees that exist are older, and high risk for 'failure' due to mature age; several recommended for removal due to age or condition
 - Need to plant 2500 trees per year over the next 7 years to 'restock'; also need to maintain (water) the trees, need tree diversity increase
 - Only 200 were planted last year; only 500 recommended in plan
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever
 - May 7 & May 14 Garlic Mustard Pull from 10am-12pm or 1pm-3pm sign up on asylumlakepreservation.org
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis
 - Looking for a new Director, taking applicants currently
 - Adding more benches and planting
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee** – quarterly with Jean Talanda, City of Kalamazoo
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Ms. Olween
- **Odor Task Force** – Mr. Wright

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS, reprised:

- Public Comment: There are no live public comments or callers.
- Vice Chair Magnuson read some of the Facebook comments: someone commented on microplastics affecting bird populations, Bee Joyful (storefront downtown) is interested in hosting a bird presentation and interested in applying to become an ECC member. Someone else is interested in learning to become a falconer. ECC members will reach out to these individuals/businesses to discuss.

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.