

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

May 18, 2022, MEETING MINUTES

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

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Dr. Melliush; Mr. Rob Liekis

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: No unexcused absences.

STAFF: Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison; Amber Jane Schneider, Recording Secretary; Jamie McCarthy, Development Project Coordinator

OTHERS: Jeanne Hess, City Commission Liaison; Lauri Holmes, Associate Member; 2 non-member attendees (guests)

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Wright at 4:32 pm after confirming a quorum of 7 out of 10 current members. Ms. Olween joined later.
- 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 on Zoom to include role for recording purposes.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- The agenda was approved as written

APPROVAL MINUTES (April):

- The April minutes were approved with the following corrections noted:
 - Bee Joyful, not "Be" Joyful
 - Add "species" of birds, not just "birds" (two locations)
 - Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) not "JKNC"
- The April minutes will be further reviewed, and any additional corrections, additions or comments will be emailed to Chair Wright and forwarded on to the recording secretary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 3 Peregrine chicks, getting banded on Monday, will begin exploring outside the nest next week!

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:

- Public Comment: There are no public comments currently. Two public attendees.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION:

- Community Sustainability Plan, Path toward adoption of the CSP, Jamie McCarthy
 - www.ImagineKalamazoo.com
 - Leave comments online or drop box at City Hall, due Monday May 23, 2022
 - Kicked off in early April at City Hall, Virtual Townhall, Community Presentations, Board & Commissions, Online Feedback Form
 - Feedback
 - High Priority Wait List: overwhelmingly all 4 are important, flooding gets a lot of interest
 - What's next:
 - May 23, Public comments due
 - May 31, Finalize plan and staff report
 - Staff report to include hiring staff member, requesting midyear budget change
 - June 6, City Commission for adoption
 - Initial presentation at City of the Whole, condensed for business meeting to vote on it
 - July & beyond, implement top strategies
 - ECC Support:

- Letter of Support for June 6 Commission
 - Co-present to City Commission (City of the Whole meeting from 5-6:30)
 - Serve as Public Forum for Annual Progress & Priorities
- CSP Recommendation/Discussion/Vote
 - Unanimous declaration of Climate Emergency
 - Climate Action Plan, aggressive goals, and implementation
 - Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan
 - Recommendations to the City regarding the plan: 1) Staffing 2) Reporting 3) Data Collection 4) Regional Leadership & Coordination 5) Bold Leadership
 - Proposed changing “Director Level” to “Coordinator Level” to mimic Ms. McCarthy’s recommendation for coordinator level position, Ms. McCarthy’s budget proposal is currently “coordinator level” and the ECC is recommending “director level” instead; recommending director level to have more authority
 - Politically, what is the most likely thing to be favored? Ms. McCarthy agrees the directness of the proposal would be effective in getting a director level, beyond the coordinator level. This could change the direction of that.
 - Scientific clarity – specify units as “Celsius” degrees which is a bigger concern than Fahrenheit
 - Polishing/clarification of the background portion, edits, will email final version
 - Recommend explaining and expanding background of ICLEI data
 - Updated Rebekah Kik’s title – Director of Community Planning and Economic Development (she is director level) since 2016 but was then City Planner
 - Removed redundant sentences, modified/clarified some grammar & punctuation
 - Highlighting transparency, accountability, and follow-through
 - Unanimously approved of the recommendation
- Kalamazoo River/Morrow Lake Dam Clean-Up
 - Senator McCann’s office has not provided any updates regarding the potential legislation/voting. The proposed legislation would give EGLE the power to enforce cleanup/forcing private companies to pay for greater levels of cleanup of spills etc.

NEW BUSINESS

- Resignations
 - Nicole Olwee: final meeting today
 - Wayne Bond: final meeting in June
- New Membership/Recruitment
 - No applications currently, 3 open positions come July
 - Discussed ideas for outreach/encouraging applications, such as advertising on the back of the View from the Curb, reaching out to Western’s Sustainability groups, and word of mouth. Two possible suggestions including Rob Townsend (assisted with recycling program) and Chris from the Bike Farm.
 - Application form on the City’s website: Note there has been some difficulty in filing/technical glitch?
 - One in-person guest has attempted to apply more than once; application was not received.
 - Contact Clerk’s office, paper forms are available
- Chair Wright term will be up in December (according to bylaws, unable to be a member for 1 year before re-applying)
- Suggested future agenda item: technical issues with City’s website/applications/updated information

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board**– Mr. Glasser
 - Plan for redevelopment (expansion) of the Kalamazoo Country Club, consensus was for the application withdrawal for revision less tree impact engineers are willing to redraw those plans, next month’s agenda
 - NFP looks at the whole process of the overlay and how best to fast-track the review process. Looking at cases where able to allow city staff to make simple decisions in some cases where allow things to move efficiently through rather than going through city planner/permitting, NFP review board very long process/deliberation.
 - Members expressed concern with potential for city staff to abuse the decision making.
 - NFP is deciding and defining which situations/considerations they would allow city staff to make those decisions on their behalf.
 - NFP does not consider it “giving up” power but expediting the process in cases where its “so simple its obvious.” NFP likely retains the ability to overrule if something is abused?
- **Air and Water Quality** – Mr. Glasser, Chair Wright

- Have not met, waiting on air quality report from MDHS/EPA. (Originally supposed to be in the fall, then winter, then spring... last heard it was expected in June?) Chair Wright is hopeful this means they is prioritizing “getting it right” instead of getting it out quickly.
- In April, Mr. Glasser attended the Michigan Environmental Compliance Conference hosted by EGLE each year. Monica Brothers presented the GPI/KWRP site as a success story in the way the state, local government, regulators, businesses etc. implemented the array of the odor monitors and the resulting data that was and continues to be used to track sources of emissions and to allow for engineering controls to prevent/mitigate air pollution and odors.
 - Presented to people from across the state the positive aspects resulting from the odor problem
- **Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection** – Dr. Walter
 - Urban Bird Treaty still in limbo, waiting on movement with both the City of Kalamazoo and the City of Portage
 - US Fish & Wildlife Service have changed the application process: Dr. Walter needs to read through this more, seems the process is more onerous with additional hoops to jump through.
 - Original goal was end of March, but it didn’t happen. Ms. McCarthy will have more time for this once the CSP is adopted (hopefully in June). Hearing June from Portage as well.
 - Outdoor Cats significant problem in some neighborhoods
 - Ms. Dever working on plan: “trap, neuter and rehome/rescue” rather than release (bad for birds!)
- **Waste Management/Litter** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Hess, Mr. Liekis, Mr. Bond
 - City is officially taking over the styrofoam recycling. Ms. Dever has provided the city with a document of volunteers and City staff will be emailing potential volunteers soon. The next event is July 23rd. There will be dedicated City Staff running the event.
 - The city plans to keep it quarterly for the next few dates listed in the View from the Curb
 - Electronic waste: accept “all sorts” of electronic waste, most are free with a fee for specific items (as listed in the View from the Curb).
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Mr. Magnuson
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever, Ms. Holmes
 - Garlic mustard pull recently, ended up cancelling fourth session because the first three sessions were so successful that it wasn’t necessary
 - Wrapping oak trees (with chicken wire) to protect from beavers
 - The beavers have been very active and have taken down several trees.
 - Discussions about parking – will be discussed at a future item.
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee** – quarterly with Jean Talanda, City of Kalamazoo
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Ms. Olween
- **Odor Task Force** – Chair Wright
 - Attended in-person May 4th with Kalamazoo Water Reclamation Plant (KWRP) staff; Monica Brothers from EGLE and representatives from both Jones & Henry and Graphic Packaging (GPI) attended via zoom.
 - GPI Expansion continues; the big project/new machines have been in use since February; final construction (including parking lots) is happening now. GPI brought in around 1000 contractors to put the expansion in, and most of those contracts are now done and not working in the area anymore. For the most part, GPI is close to running all their new machines like regular.
 - There are battery issues for the odor monitors, including defective solar chargers. Supply chain issues have prevented getting replacement parts for these battery issues.
 - New detector units and batteries are being deployed. There are 16 monitors on GPI’s property and they are looking at an updated and increased service plan from Envirosuite (at a higher cost). Chair Wright is uncertain if this would mean more monitors or more robust software?
 - Envirosuite software, show where odor has been and predict where it is going, incorporating weather data
 - GPI continues to use hydrogen peroxide and oxygen to mitigate odor. The open-air clarifier has been working better for approximately 9 months because water is turning over quicker giving sludge less chance to build up (and cause odor problems). Prior to the expansion, the open-air clarifier was not being used at the capacity for which it was rated. Less water flowed through it, allowed more sludge to collect and creates the problematic chemicals (such as hydrogen sulfide) that was released to the atmosphere. With the increased production (because of the expansion), there is more water flowing through the clarifier. The clarifier is now working more efficiently and at capacity. GPI is currently renting a machine that injects oxygen into the water to further reduce the opportunity for hydrogen sulfide to be created (hydrogen peroxide is a more expensive alternative). GPI is working on purchasing going forward.
 - GPI predicts the expansion has doubled the water discharge to the KWRP than prior to the expansion.

- KWRP has had the same issues with solar powered batteries. They're planning to swap out the sensors and add an additional five sensors. The community facing webpage that compiles all the data is still not up; waiting for more stability from the sensors. KWRP is working with Envirosuite to get new sensors and working on upgrades to the sensors.
- Bidding for bio-filter project began two weeks ago, all connecting pipes that come into KWRP will flow through the bio-filter: ideally filter out some of the odors coming in.
- Junction chamber where waste off the big GPI clarifier and goes directly to KWRP, Jones & Henry proposed re-routing the direction of flow from this junction chamber, start date for this project is still up in the air: could be this year, more likely next year. Waiting for GPI to finish the expansion (all contractors finished) because they have to completely dig out and re-route, and even if they could get to it this year, supplies would also be an issue.
- EGLE is conducting a drone study the week of May 23rd to monitor and uses grab-sample capabilities to create a 3D map of odors. EGLE (Monica Brothers) also has a few odor sensors and will also use Envirosuite data from KWRP. Should have more data soon.
- EGLE health study (as mentioned earlier), possibly late May or early June
- City receives 2-3 odor complaints per month. EGLE reports odor complaints have slowed in the last year compared to previous years.

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:

- Public Comment: Richard Stewart from the Southtown neighborhood: 1) Politics are still moving forward to destroy NFP Greenspace area in Stockbridge/Lake Street area. 2) Would like a discussion on traffic related air pollution. For example, since Portage Road reducing to one way in each direction, the increased starting/stopping of traffic has increased the odor. Would like the ECC to increase pressure on the city to consider start/stop traffic congestion and the impact on air pollution when designing/planning construction.
- Ms. Dever noted that City of Kalamazoo has previously identified as a more walkable city, perhaps this discussion should be with the planning department and providing more walking and biking options to reduce air pollution. Desire more bikeable and more walkable areas.
- Public Comment: In-person guest is concerned with trash/roadside litter migrating to the watershed/stormwater and to the Kalamazoo River. Example: Cork Street – trash, construction traffic. Lots of trash accumulating along the street.
 - A definite issue for the ECC to discuss
 - Also noted it is important to identify property owners as they are partially responsible to cleanup?
 - Possible awareness campaign?
 - So much rubbish, who and how to clean it up? Not enough staff, limited street sweepers available
 - "If it gets to the street, it gets to the creek"

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.