

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

## January 18, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ian Magnuson, Co-Chair; Sharon Dever, Co-Chair; Dr. Gail Walter; Steve Romanelli; Bobby Glasser; Rob Liekis; Emily Demorest

**ABSENT:** David Benac; Joe Bower; Dr. James Melliush

**STAFF:** Karen Rutherford (recording secretary)

**OTHERS:** Jean Hess  
Lauri Holmes  
Steve Bertman

**CALL TO ORDER:**

- The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Magnuson at 4:33 pm, after confirming a quorum was met.

**ASSURANCE OF LIVE STREAMING**

- Recording/Streaming of the meeting was confirmed, with community members joining via a link posted on the City's Facebook page.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

- The agenda was approved.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES (12-21-2022):**

- The draft December 21, 2022 minutes were approved as written.
- The December 21, 2022 minutes will be further reviewed, and any additional corrections, additions or comments will be emailed to Co-Chair Magnuson and forwarded on to the recording secretary.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Individual
  - The City Commission passed the budget which included sustainability coordinator. This position will be posted.
  - Jamie McCarthy and Nolan Bergstrom from Planning and Development will be presenting next month on updates.
- News/Educational Items
  - This is a new section that has been added. We want to use this platform to offer up information on news articles related to climate or environmental justice, etc. This does not have to pertain to the City of Kalamazoo.

- If Western University recorded and streamed the teaching, Cybelle Shattuck did an amazing job on environmental racism. Mr. Romanelli to look it up and share it with the Committee.

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

- Public Comment:
  - The Committee welcomed Steve Bertman, Professor in the Institute of Environment Sustainability at Western University. He is currently the chair of their Climate Working Group. This group consists of faculty, volunteers, alumni, and community members. They are trying to educate people and interact with the community about the climate crisis. They have declared March 2023 to be Climate Emergency Month. They are planning to promote and advertise events that will be occurring in March. They are currently looking for key-note speakers. They have invited the Governor to speak but have not heard back from her. Mary Robinson, is going to be the former President of Ireland, who wrote the book on climate justice, is going to be in Ann Arbor in mid-March. They are trying to see if she will speak. They have a website called [climateemergencymonth.org](http://climateemergencymonth.org). He asked if the Committee is interested in signing on as an endorser to be listed on their website. With the list of endorsers, they are trying to show how broad the support is for urgent action on climate change. He asked the Committee if they could organize an event in March announcing the position of the Sustainability Coordinator, including the goals for the position. He noted the County will be hiring someone soon. There is opportunity for collaboration to connect with the City and the County and the University. Mr. Bertman shared information about the sustainability coordinator position for the County.

One of the events that is about 95% sure will happen is a visit by Missy Stoltz from Ann Arbor who is the head of their office. This is tentatively set for March 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 P.M. at the Van Deusen Room in the Central Library.

Co-Chair Magnuson asked if they did anything with Kalamazoo Earth Day in April. They do a lot of events as well. Mr. Bertman stated they wanted to do this in April but did not want to interfere with Kalamazoo Earth Day. One of the other things they were trying to do is they are trying to come up with a series of opportunities for students to do an alternative spring break by volunteering in the City or at the Nature Center or other ideas like that. He asked if anyone would want to be involved in their planning efforts.

Co-Chair Magnuson stated once the plans have been finalized, he should give the updates to them by the February 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. Those updates can go in the record and be provided publicly. Mr. Glasser suggested he have one of the ECC Committee members attend their meeting and report back to the ECC Committee. Mr. Bertman stated they want to send out press releases in February. He noted he would be happy to have someone from the ECC Committee zoom in on the meeting. He will send a link to the ECC Committee for the zoom meeting.

Ms. Hess suggested the Committee endorse the climate work group and recommended asking the City if they would also partner.

Co-Chair Magnuson stated they will put together a recommendation to vote on at the next meeting.

### **PROCEDURE ITEM (AS NEEDED)**

- Bylaws – discuss updates from Clerk and City Attorney
  - Co-Chair Magnuson distributed the current bylaws along with a document he received from the Clerks office with Committee appointments.
    - Co-Chair Magnuson stated the City attorney has reviewed the bylaws and there are some changes that need to be made. He made a draft of the changes and displayed them on screen for discussion. He read through the notes made by the attorney. Discussion ensued.
    - Co-Chair Magnuson will get clarification from the attorney on these issues and report back to the Committee.
- Terms – make corrections, update information, etc.
  - Terms – Co-Chair Magnuson stated the Clerks email noted that Dave Benac’s position was filling a vacancy and his term ended. He was confused about whether Dave was on his second term. He will ask for clarification.
    - Co-Chair Magnuson stated terms end three years after the 12/31 but he will find official dates. Discussion ensued.
    - We have one vacancy. Members have to be a resident of the City of Kalamazoo.

**Co-Chair Magnuson made a motion, supported by Rob Liekis, to re-up David Benac’s term to begin the second year of his first term. Motion passed unanimously.**

Co-chair Magnuson asked the Committee Members if they had changes to their address and phone number to get the changes to him by Sunday.

Co-Chair Magnuson to confirm whose terms are up at the end of this year.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION**

- Community Sustainability Plan
  - Co-chair Magnuson stated he and Co-Chair Dever were planning on meeting with Jamie McCarthy. That did not happen. He noted he did not like the format of the Public Comment period with the Sustainability Plan that was happening. He asked when the next public engagement is being developed by the planning department that they ask us to participate, and we can help make it understandable and be a part of the process. Jamie McCarthy and Nolan Bergstrom will be her next month to discuss what is happening.
- Kalamazoo River/Morrow Lake Dame Clean-Up – Ian Magnuson
  - Co-Chair Magnuson noted on Monday he emailed Representative Rogers and State Senator McCann asking what their prognosis is for bills related to river clean-up might be. He has not heard back from them.
- MDHHS visit follow up discussion

- Co-Chair Magnuson stated everyone is getting frustrated. They said it would be the first quarter. There is another two months. They are waiting for air quality information.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Ann Arbor Leaf Policy Update – Emily Demorest
  - Ms. Demorest noted Dr. Walter was able to join them in the meeting, which was helpful. She stated she brought this issue up in the fall with the possibility of looking at policy changes with the City’s leaf management, looking at it as a resource. Someone sent her information from Ann Arbor and their approach to this issue. She met with Jennifer Petoskey who is their solid waste outreach and compliance specialist. Ann Arbor has a composting program that they run with a private contractor, WeCare. The leaf management is part of this program. They have a weekly composting pickup for their residential customers as their service with the City. This includes leaves, yard waste and anything they label as table scraping, they will accept. They plan to do this for the commercial customers on a subscription basis. They have individual leaf pickup, but you have to request it. When googling leaf pickup in Ann Arbor, it brings you to their website that directs you to home composting, green gardens, mulching and other different options. They enforce ticketing to residents who blow their leaves into the street.

Their Parks Department has a Natural Preservation Department which sets their policy for park management. As a regular practice they do not do any leaf blowing in their parks. They mulch and have these natural areas where they leave things.

Ms. Demorest asked how this large-scale composting program affects the City’s finances. Ms. Petoskey did not feel comfortable answering that question.

Discussion ensued.

Co-Chair Magnuson asked Ms. Demorest to put together a summary of what was discussed and then we could invite Public Services to start having conversations. He will reach out to Wendy Burlingham to see if she can come speak with the Committee in February or March.

- New Topics
  - PFAS Update – Mr. Glasser stated West Michigan recently identified PFAS area in South Haven.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

- **Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board**– Mr. Glasser – They did not meet last month due to lack of cases.
- **Air and Water Quality** – Mr. Glasser, Ms. Dever – plan to meet soon.
- **Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection** – Dr. Walter – the application for Urban Bird Treaty is up for review to all 24 partners.
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Mr. Magnuson – nothing to report.
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter – nothing to report.
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever – She will have more next month. They meet March 16<sup>th</sup> and they are going to have a management plan review for the public.
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Ms. Demorest – They approved a couple of board members. They had a couple of winter events that will not be happening. She asked them about doing a planting for Earth Day at

Woods Lake. They are losing their landscape coordinator. They will need to replace this position before making any future plans for plantings.

- ***Kalamazoo River Watershed Council*** – Mr. Benac
- ***Wellhead Protection Program Committee – Quarterly*** - Jean Talanda – this was reported on last month.
- ***Odor Task Force – Quarterly*** – Mr. Benac

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Tina McClinton made a comment on Facebook. She noted she did not want to lose greenspace and remarked on flooding issues in the City. Co-Chair Magnuson thanked her for her comment and stated the City is looking into flooding. He said James Baker had talked about an opportunity and that we may want to investigate some alternatives. The best tool for your green space protection is the natural features protection overlay in the Board. He noted that she was concerned about the water dissipation from a big parking lot. This is something he is just learning about. He noted we are not a planning related committee but removing parking minimums would go a long way to addressing that. This is something for the planning commission.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- The meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.