

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

February 15, 2023 MEETING REPORT

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ian Magnuson, Co-Chair; Sharon Dever, Co-Chair; Dr. Gail Walter; Steve Romanelli; Joe Bower

ABSENCET: David Benac; Dr. James Melliush; Bobby Glasser; Rob Liekis; Emily Demorest

STAFF: Karen Rutherford (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Jean Hess; Jerry Wilinski; Jamie McCarthy; Nolan Bergstrom; Allen Webb

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Sharon Dever at 4:30 pm. Quorum was not met for this meeting. This document will serve as a report of the meeting's discussions.

ASSURANCE OF LIVE STREAMING

- Recording/Streaming of the meeting was not confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Jerry Wilinski stated he lives in the Millwood Neighborhood. Contractors have been trimming the trees around the utilities. They have not been following the basic pruning practices. He stated they are killing the trees. These were not City employees but contractors who are doing this work.
 - Co-Chair Dever asked if he could email more information including pictures. Co-Chair Magnuson will provide to him the emails.
 - A question was asked by an unidentified person if the air quality was being tested semi-regularly in the City. He stated he looked up the rail pass for Norfolk Southern, the rail company that caused the toxic derailment in Ohio. They have a rail pass that runs through Kalamazoo. With the weather patterns he wonders if the City is testing air quality. Do we have any emergency plans if something like this were to happen here?
 - Co-Chair Devers responded we do have emergency phone numbers that people can call and report issues. EGLE will investigate the complaint and make an assessment.
 - Co-Chair Magnuson stated air testing has been a big part of the Graphic Packaging and Wastewater Reclamation plant. He recommended he google Graphic Packaging EGLE and he will get a lot of MLive coverage for this. You will learn how to report smells if you need to.
 - Allen Webb, who is an English Professor at Western University, stated he has been involved in environmental issues for a long time. He also teaches Environmental Studies. He and Co-Chair Devers has worked together. For the last ten years he has been a part of the Climate

Change Working Group at the University. He stated they are eager to work with the City and support what this committee is doing in any way that they can. They have a reading group that anyone here can join. They are currently reading *Faulters* by Bill McKibben who will be meeting virtually with them on campus on March 1st. He will be their kick-off event for their Climate Emergency Month. The University is declaring March to be Climate Emergency Month. There will be many activities including educational events. You can find out more at the website - climateemergencymonth.org.

- Jean Hess announced the Commission would be doing a Proclamation on March 6th.
- Dr. Walters stated Green Drinks is Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at a location to be determined. She will be giving an update on the Urban Bird Treaty. They can be found on Facebook.
- Co-chair Devers announced Kalamazoo Earth Day is coming up. We have a few months yet. It will be actual Earth Day, which is Saturday, April 22nd. It will be in three different neighborhood locations. A podcast has recently been released from Public Media Network. Volunteers are always welcome.
- Co-Chair Magnuson stated Graphic Packaging was cited for another violation for \$100,000 in December. He plans to discuss this in further detail at next month's meeting.

COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- No Comments

PROCEDURAL ITEMS (as needed)

- By-laws – Not discussed due to quorum not being met.
- Terms - Not discussed due to quorum not being met.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION

- Community Sustainability Plan presented by Jamie McCarthy
 - Ms. McCarthy stated she works in Community Planning and Economic Development for the City of Kalamazoo. Part of her job has been working on the Sustainability Plan. This was adopted last June. She introduced her co-worker Mr. Nolan Bergstrom who works in the same department.
 - Ms. McCarthy reviewed the six-month-old plan. The new position of the Sustainability Planner the City was supported in the recent budget approval. This person will be coordinating, doing tracking, and reporting. This position will also include public communication and engagement on things like neighborhood plans and streets projects. We are hoping to have the person hired and on-board in the middle of March.
 - They were part of the Michigan's Green Community Challenge in 2022 through the Municipal Leagues and Partners. They have held the Bronze status for the past few years. With the most recent challenge they have moved up to Silver level. Their goal is to reach Gold level.
 - Green House Gas Inventory – they met with the individual who was working on this for his masters degree a few months ago and had a breakthrough in some of the data that Consumers Energy has been able to share with them. They hope to have this completed in the next couple of months and can share more about it at a later date.
 - Ms. McCarthy shared slides of projects that have happened across the City in 2022 as well as programs that will continue into 2023.
 - Green Circular Economy.

- Through FFE the City has been able to host a Tire Recycling Event for the past three years.
- Foam Recycling continues to be offered quarterly.
- We did a Recycling Audit to see what people were throwing into the bins and then giving them some feedback as to whether the items were recyclable.
- Kalamazoo Roots is an on-going class done through KVCC. They have plans to expand this in 2023. It is about learning how to garden at home in containers.
- With support from FFE we have been able to put in our sidewalk network. Through Imagine Kalamazoo, citizens stated it was important to them.
- Bike lanes were added in 2022 and will continue in 2023.
- Traffic Calming activities have been added.
- Housing – Building new units with a unique partnership that is bringing funding to build homes on single family lots. They are on track to build 10 to 15 new homes each year scattered throughout many neighborhoods. They have been getting pre-permitted plans that have 1 – 4 units. You should see more of these in 2023.
- The City have been supporting multi-family rental units. County wide we need about 8,000 housing units. We are short today. You should see this increasing in 2023.
 - Unidentified person asked what the City was doing for the un-housed and what are they doing with the pods. Ms. McCarthy stated she was not prepared to answer those questions but can get them in touch with someone. She believes it is the private housing organizations and non-profit organizations who are trying to help with that.
 - Co-Chair Magnuson asked if Ms. McCarthy was aware of any plans to work with the historic commission in preservation of the historical homes. Ms. McCarthy stated they had monies from FFE to pilot some energy audits and home weatherization type activities. They have funded five homes who will receive those improvements. The way it is set up it will not launch itself into volume. They are concerned with what that volume is. In 2023 they want to focus on bringing all the partners together who have those types of programs which would include the county, local city level, community home works and possibly other groups to come up with a better way to navigate through the system.
- Through our collaboration with our Public Services Department and Consumers Energy we offered many water audits along with energy audits. We have been offering this for the past couple of years.
 - For Commercial buildings, the City has been in partnership with Consumers Energy and others, in launching what is called Energy Collaborative. This gives them easy tools on-line to benchmark their building. This will help them to know exactly what their energy use is, what it is at on a per square foot basis, they can compare it to other buildings similar to that building, they are committed to continuing to monitor and track their energy use, and they get access to Consumers Energy programs that will help them reduce their overall energy use.
 - In 2022 we set a goal to work with 35 buildings. We were able to get all 35 buildings signed up. The City benchmarked four of our main buildings. This Energy Collaborative will be extended to all the commercial buildings in the county.
- Ms. McCarty noted that they have been doing EV work. Many manufacturers are going to electric vehicles. They participated in an event called EV Smart Communities. This was about how municipalities can start implementing best practices in supporting the infrastructure for charging throughout our communities. The City also participated in Power My Fleet, which is a Consumers Energy supported program. We were paired up with a technical consultant and

took a look at the City's fleet and they helped us come up with a plan on what vehicles we would convert over first. There is more to come on this.

- This past year the City was able to take what was a small bio-diesel pilot and now it has been scaled up to where all Public Services road driven vehicles have a modern diesel engine that can use bio-diesel. They have all been converted over to bio-diesel. In a busy weekend when they get a heavy snow fall they have calculated that they have saved 8 – 10% over burning regular diesel fuel.
- Four of the homes that were built last year were installed with solar panels. They would like to extend this technology to all the homes that get built. You will be hearing more about this in 2023.
- The City continues to replace lead service lines to homes. There were over 800 that were done in 2022.
- The City continues to distribute water filters.
- 29 homes received full lead paint remediation in 2022. They prioritized homes with children.
- The City has been focused on planting street trees. In the past five years we have planted over 1,000 street trees.
- There has been a lot of storm drains work this past year.
- Through part of the Michigan Green Community Challenge, they will be doing a green infrastructure cohort this year.
- Ms. McCarthy stated over the next few months there will be some great outreach opportunities for the City. The Climate Month Proclamation and Energy Collaborative is coming to City Commission on March 6th. She encouraged the ECC to attend the Commission meeting to hear more information.
 - Earth Day is coming in April, and they are looking to see how they can get involved in those events.
 - Mr. Bergstrom has been involved with bike month that is coming in May.
- Mid-term there are plans to focus on communication. She would like to see an e-newsletter that can be sent out to the community. We want to offer opportunities for people to get involved with some of the things that will be happening.
- Tracking and monitoring. Thinking about our key performance indicators and how we are communicating that.
- Later this year and especially next year, our department will be diving into Imagine Kalamazoo 2035.
- Mr. Bergstrom stated May is National Bike Month and they are planning large event at Bronson Park on May 13th. This year, 2023, street project will include street calming, non-motorized implementation as well as other projects.

NEW BUSINESS

- Climate Emergency Month Events
- Climate Emergency Month Recommendations,
<https://www.kalamazooecrisis.org/climateemergencymonth>

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 16th, 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:

No Public Comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.