

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

June 21, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ian Magnuson, Co-Chair; Sharon Dever, Co-Chair; Dr. Gail Walter; Steve Romanelli; David Benac; Bobby Glasser; Dr. James Melliush; Rachel Jondle; Thomas Dewhirst

ABSENT: Joe Bower; Rob Liekis

STAFF: Karen Rutherford (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Justin Gish, COK, CP&D
Devon Kelly, WMU
Jean Talanda, COK

ROLL CALL:

- The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Magnuson at 4:30 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 (6/21/23)

Bobby Glasser motioned to approve the Agenda and was supported by Steve Romanelli. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for 4/19/2023

Dr. Walter stated on the Subcommittee Report under Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection it should be clarified as the Urban Bird Treaty application and under the Tree Committee her name is misspelled.

Co-Chair Dever motioned to approve the minutes from April 19, 2023 and was supported by Gail Walter, as amended. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for 5/17/2023

Dr. Walter stated under the Subcommittee Report under Natural Features Protection, the fourth sentence should read "Generally". Under the Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection the sentence starting with "The Fish and Wildlife Service" should be a separate paragraph, clarifications were in there

too many times, and it should refer to the Urban Bird Treaty. Under the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board the word band should be ban.

Dr. Walter motioned to approve the minutes from May 17, 2023 and was supported by Dr. Melliush, as amended. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Individual/Announcements
 - Mr. Benac stated Portage Public Schools summer program is looking for someone tomorrow to talk about water quality. This can be done virtually. This is at 10:45 – 11:15 and again at 1:00 – 1:30. If interested, email Dave Benac.
- News/Educational Items – None.

COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Haley Brienne thanked Co-Chair Magnuson for his hard work and congratulated Co-Chair Dever on her new appointment.
- Jared, a colleague of Justin Gish, stated he is looking at ways to improve energy efficiency for smaller businesses and ways to implement that.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS (AS NEEDD)

- Decide on New Positions
 - Co-Chair Magnuson stated due to the by-laws and ordinance he suggested the Committee stay with the positions of Chair and Vice Chair as is required. Doing a Co-Chair would require an ordinance change by the City Commission to make it officially viable.
 - Co-Chair Magnuson stated the Chair duties include managing the emails, putting together the meeting agendas with the vice chair, and follow up on minutes and requests. He noted it is a commitment of about a couple of hours each month outside the general meeting time. This position requires that you run the meeting and report on absences. He recommended the person who is the Chair not have a sub-committee unless they want one because it is a lot of work. He asked if anyone was interested in being Chair.

Sharon Dever stated she was interested in being Chair. She stated she doesn't mind staying on the Subcommittee of the Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council as Vice Chair. There is not a lot of work outside of attendance. She does volunteer with some of their other efforts.

Ian Magnuson motioned to approve Sharon Dever as Chair and was supported by Dr. Melliush. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

- Co- Chair Magnuson asked if anyone was interested in the office of Vice Chair. The main duty would be if the Chair cannot make the meeting, then the Vice Chair would run the meeting. It was noted the person who volunteers should not be someone who is in the 2nd half of their 2nd term. It gives that individual time in that position. It was decided to table this for a later discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

- Introduction of Justin Gish from the City of Kalamazoo, Sustainability Coordinator
 - Mr. Gish stated he has been the Sustainability Planner for the City of Kalamazoo as of May 1, 2023. He stated it is his job to make sure the CSP does not sit there and decompose and to make sure it gets enacted. He is working with the neighborhood groups, community gardens and more. Prior to working for the City, he worked at Western Michigan University for the Sustainability Office as the Project Manager and the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. He is currently working on a PhD in Science Education with a focus on Environmental World View. His big priority is to get people excited about municipal composting. He would like to get the City to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner. He would like to see more solar panels and improvement of public transportation. He stated he serves on a similar board in Portage.

Dr. Walter asked how his work is divided between him and Jamie McCarthy. Mr. Gish responded he does everything in the neighborhoods and community. Jamie is going to focus on Brownfields. Jamie is his supervisor.

Co-Chair Magnuson asked if he saw collaboration with Western Michigan University. Mr. Gish stated yes. Western uses student dollars to do student projects. He believes there is movement there. Pressure comes from the top at Western and if the facility does not want it to happen then it does not happen. He has relationships there and there is room to collaborate.

Co-Chair Dever asked what the current plan is in updating the public and the ECC. Mr. Gish stated they will revamp the City's sustainability website. He will be putting together a monthly newsletter. They will announce when key performance indicators are met. Co-Chair Dever stated ECC would like to have in-person updates on a quarterly basis if that is feasible. Mr. Gish stated he is happy to do it but would need to know what they are wanting updates on. They can figure something out going forward. Co-Chair Magnuson stated he could speak on the projects that Jamie was working on and/or projects and targets as Mr. Gish sees them. He suggested Mr. Gish return in August or September. Discussion ensued.

It was suggested that Mr. Gish work closely with ECC. ECC represents a wide range of neighborhoods along with different social networks. ECC board is committed to the same things he is trying to accomplish. They can be instrumental in getting community support and funneling information back to Mr. Gish. Mr. Gish stated he has met with several neighborhoods, and it is a big part of his role. He stated he appreciates the support from ECC.

Co-Chair Magnuson stated back in January or February, he and Jamie McCarty were talking about the public comment feedback mechanism that was used for the community sustainability plan

before it was adopted. He felt it was very confusing. He recommended when Mr. Gish is looking for public feedback, he would appreciate if ECC could see them beforehand to provide feedback on the mechanism and process before deploying it at the City level. Discussion ensued.

Co-Chair Dever asked if they could tentatively plan for Mr. Gish to return in September. Mr. Gish responded yes, and he will provide some numbers at that time.

The newsletter will be done via email similar to what Parks puts out. Co-Chair Magnuson suggested getting a dedicated page in the View from the Curb.

- Devon Kelly, “A GIS and Economic Analysis in Solar Electricity Generation Siting within the Greater Kalamazoo Area (GKA)”
 - Co-Chair Magnuson introduced Devon Kelly. Mr. Kelly stated he is a recent graduate from Western Michigan University. He studied economics and leadership business strategy and graduated with a business degree. His honors thesis was a climate and renewable energy-focused one because he is passionate about this. He was very geography and business sustainability focused. He has been in contact with Co-Chairs Magnuson and Dever as well as Jamie McCarty and is hoping to be an impactful student and researcher for future energy development in the City.

Mr. Kelly presented his honors thesis on screen titled, “A GIS and Economic Analysis in Solar Electricity Generation Siting within the Greater Kalamazoo Area (GKA)”. He stated the motivation for this thesis was three things.

1. Evident Need – Consumers Energy (GE) is looking for the public’s help in assessing locations for utility-scale solar power plants. They are looking to add 8,000 megawatts of utility-scale energy by 2040. This would require a flat, open, treeless land with direct access to the sun and proximity to existing transmission infrastructure.
2. Kalamazoo CSP – the goal is to accelerate local renewable energy investments. They would need to remove barriers and develop tools that lead to more solar deployment.
3. Career Path – He is very passionate about this topic. He is working for one of the largest manufacturers of winter vines out of Portland, Oregon.

He continued his visual presentation.

Co-Chair Magnuson thanked Mr. Kelly for his informative presentation. He asked him what some of the questions was he received. Mr. Kelly stated it was about the cost benefits of transitioning agricultural land to floor projects. He also received questions about impacts on the land and the habitats surrounding that land from the implementation of the solar projects and transporting electricity from other sources. Discussion ensued.

ON-GOING BUSINESS

- Asylum Lake/Zoning Update

- Co-Chair Dever stated the updated draft was released less than a week ago. She is hoping there will be time to go through it at the next meeting.

Co-Chair Magnuson stated on Thursday, June 29th at 6:30 the City will be doing a Commercial Zoning Update meeting at City Hall. There is more information on Facebook.

- Air Quality Update

- Mr. Benac stated in one of the emails that Co-Chair Dever sent out there was something about monitors. There is a group of people in the community that are trying to get monitors installed at some of the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS). There are seven schools of high concern. There are two that are of special concern where the kids have been held in for recess and sent home because it was so bad. They are trying to get monitors placed outside the schools. To get the best possible monitor that exist in front of every KPS building (25 or 26 schools) would cost less than the surveillance the City approved last night.
- Mr. Benac stated the City and EGLE are currently focusing on hydrogen sulfide. This is a big problem. Today one of the monitors registered 50 with 1.4 being the high level. Another one registered 10. Several of the monitors registered at 4. Hydrogen sulfide is the gas that has the highest odor, so it is probably the one that causes the most public concern. There are 50 gases that Graphic Packaging Inc. (GPI) releases according to the EPA that are listed as pollutants. Many of these are substantially more toxic than hydrogen sulfide. Right now, we are only measuring hydrogen sulfide. This is the reason for getting the other monitors. We would be able to get a better range of measurement. Getting them in front of the schools will give us data points across the City, we could make better comparisons.
- Mr. Benac noted there is a new Smithsonian Institution Project called Tempo that could possibly come on-line next year. It uses satellite technology in cooperation with NASA. We will be able to give nationwide, near real-time, data that can measure many of the pollutants of concern. He sent in a form to be an early adopter to their user group. He is not sure if there will be a cost, but most Smithsonian things are free.
- Mr. Benac stated the group that is behind collecting signatures to get ranked choice voting on the ballot in Kalamazoo, that group is trying to create civic engagement and civic community. They plan to have a series of public meetings. The first meeting is scheduled for June 24th at 11:00 A.M. at the First Congregational Church. He will be doing a presentation about citizen involvement in air quality activism.
- Question was asked where the funding would come from for the KPS monitors and what would it be per school. Mr. Benac responded they are getting quotes. The sensors they are looking at are high end scientific instruments. You have to call to get a price. They have a couple of requests in for quotes. \$7,500 is the bottom end price. He states it is about \$10,000 per unit. The group trying to organize and get the monitors for the schools is The Kalamazoo Parents for Clean Air. The group is on Facebook and Twitter.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

- **Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board**– Mr. Glasser – No new cases to report. Still looking at the zoning update. They are struggling with where the NFP Board fits in with zoning overlay. Additionally, they are struggling with the mission statement that was put out. The function of the Board is to support development. The Board sees the intent of the statement “support development” as they play a part in development. It does not mean they are in favor or against development. The Board is to essentially view the properties that fall in the overlay. As plans for development come in, they look at the NFP rules. They had a vacancy on the board but now they are at full capacity.
- **Air and Water Quality** – Mr. Glasser stated other than the GPI air quality issues he is not aware of any new incidents or reports.
- **Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection** – Dr. Walter reports they have four Peregrine Falcons chicks. Someone was attacked on the roof of the Radisson by one of the falcons. They are now grounded.
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Mr. Magnuson stated they approved GPI’s expansion of their parking for a couple hundred spaces to be used for heavy trucks. There were a couple of business concerns and concerns with moving from commercial zones to residential. They need a liaison for the Planning Commission. This person would update ECC. They meet monthly and broadcast from City Commission chambers. They meet the first Thursday of each month, however the next meeting will be July 20th from 7:00 P.M to 9:00 P.M.
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter stated the Tree Committee did not meet in June.
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever stated the water quality issues due to road salt and more that have been in the process to improve are being worked on and seem promising. Discussions on how the Land Management Plan will be implemented have been started.
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis – Co-chair Dever stated they have a new person on their board who is running their meetings.
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Mr. Benac stated one of their biggest events, Canoe the Kazoo, will be Saturday. More information is on their social media page.
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee – Quarterly** - Jean Talanda – quarterly – tentative July
- **Odor Task Force – Quarterly** – Mr. Benac - quarterly

CHECK PHONE LINES AND STREAMING FOR COMMENTS:

No phone calls.

Co-Chair Magnuson stated since he is finishing up his time on the Committee there will be a vacancy for Vice Chair. It requires a 90-minute commitment along with research and/or a sub-committee if you choose to do it. He will have this vacancy placed on the City website.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.