

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

September 20, 2023, MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sharon Dever, Rob Liekis; Dr. James Melliush; Rachel Jondle; Thomas Dewhirst; Dr. Gail Walter

ABSENT: David Benac, Co-Chair
Bobby Glasser
Stephen Romanelli

STAFF: Karen Rutherford (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Chris Broadbent, City of Kalamazoo
Jeanne Hess, City Commissioner
Jean Talanda, COK
Laura Holmes

ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm.

ASSURANCE OF LIVE STREAMING (Facebook/You Tube)

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA (09/20/2023)

Chair Sharon Dever asked if anyone had any changes to the agenda for the September 20, 2023, meeting. There were no changes to the agenda.

Thomas Dewhirst made a motion to approve the Agenda and was supported by Rachel Jondle. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for 8/16/2023

Chair Sharon Dever asked the Committee Members if there were any changes to the August 16, 2023, minutes before a motion to approve. There were no changes to the minutes.

Committee Member motioned to approve the meeting minutes and was supported. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Individual/Announcements:

Gail Walter stated she is giving a presentation on Friday, September 22nd, 2023, at noon for KCCC. This will be a zoom meeting and the topic will be on climate change, birds, and bird friendly communities.

Gail Walter announced there is a free webinar in October on night sky initiatives and biophilic cities. She shared a document on this topic to the ECC mailbox.

Chair Dever stated there is a Peoples Plant-based Party at the Farmers Market on Sunday, October 8th, 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

News/Educational Items:

Committee Member stated Steve Romanelli forwarded an email to her from a person from the MSU extension who has recently moved to Kalamazoo. A link was sent to her to apply for the open position on the ECC board.

COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Dever had the phone lines checked for any comments. There were no phone line comments.

Chair Dever opened discussion for comments by others.

Laura Holmes stated on October 21, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Winchell Avenue Disciples of Christ Church Fellowship Room, the Asylum Lake Preservation Association will have an information meeting announcing when they will be having various speakers from the community and elsewhere. They will be discussing various aspects of the preserve. She noted they have a network and they send out mailings. If you want to receive the mailings, give her your contact information.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS (AS NEEDED)

New Applicants:

Chair Dever stated they have on the back of the quarterly of the View from the Curb, a notice of one vacancy for the ECC Committee. No applicants have applied recently.

Note the updated email address for the public:

Chair Dever stated the new email address allows all Committee Members to receive the emails that are sent to it. Discussion ensued on who received the agenda and other emails.

ONGOING BUSINESS

Yard Management Techniques:

A Committee Member stated there is one commercial all-electric lawn service in Kalamazoo County. He met with Bobby Boyd who is with the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. This is a side business he and his brother started. He is the Equity Program Manager for a sustainable business. His goal is to have an impact on the County with having an all-electric lawn service. Mr. Boyd has agreed to come to next month's meeting. This business currently has several commercial accounts with MDOT.

The Electric Vehicle Association is hosting a Drive Electric Week. It is Saturday, September 23rd from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and begins at Mid-Town Fresh.

Chair Dever stated David Benac contacted Consumers Energy about an incentive program for electric leaf blowers. He has not heard back from them.

Chair Dever stated she will wait until after next month to see how they can promote different kinds of education to the benefits of using yard management techniques as well as other issues related to this.

Zoning Code Update, Greenspace Zoning:

Chair Dever stated the zone codes passed through the Planning Commission. The next step is the City Commission. Jean Hess stated this will need to go through two readings. It has to be voted on by December 1st.

Committee Member stated he emailed Christine Anderson. It looks like the next large text and map update will start this winter, with engagement through this winter and next spring. The final approval of the changes will be next fall. One other issue still pending changes is for lighting, specifically on Stadium. It was suggested to add this to New Business for future meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Dever asked if anyone had anything they want to bring forward to discuss.

A Committee Member stated in regard to the yard management techniques, he interviewed five neighbors who have sprinkler systems. They all have them on automatic pattern schedules. He felt this was a waste of water. He suggested they turn it off during rainy days. Their response was it was easier to keep it on. He recommends this to be added to the education for yard management techniques. Discussion ensued.

Chair Dever stated in regard to GPI, there will be public hearing to discuss the issues. It will take place on-line October 5th at 6:00 p.m. You need to register ahead of time to make a comment. EGLE is hosting this event.

There is a group called Kalamazoo Parents for Clean Air that you can follow on Facebook. They make updates regularly.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

- **Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board**– Mr. Glasser – not present.
- **Air and Water Quality** – Mr. Glasser – not present.
- **Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection** – Dr. Walter – there was a community engagement yesterday. The planners were looking for input from different groups in the community on areas downtown. Some of the areas they are looking at is Farmers Alley and Exchange Alley. The group was happy to learn about the Peregrin Falcons. She made a request of a clear fly zone in those areas for the birds protection.
- **City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission** – Ms. Jondle – Christina presented an overview in August and September of what is happening.
- **Tree Committee** – Dr. Walter – She was out of town and was not able to attend the meeting. Discussion ensued regarding tree inventory and plantings. Jean Talanda stated Anthony Ladd asked her to tell ECC that they received 12% of their grant application which is a million dollars. He wanted to convey how much he appreciated the ECC’s letter of support.
- **Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council** – Ms. Dever – They are starting the installation of the stormwater treatment system at Asylum Lake. There is an article at wnich.edu titled, “Installation of Innovative Stormwater Treatment System Underway at Asylum Lake.” Discussion ensued.
- **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board** – Mr. Liekis – He stated he will follow up with them.
- **Kalamazoo River Watershed Council** – Mr. Benac – Stated there were about 10 people who attended the event. He reports they are still dredging from Morrow Dam.
- **Wellhead Protection Program Committee – Quarterly** - Jean Talanda - quarterly
- **Odor Task Force – Quarterly** – Mr. Benac – quarterly
- **Community Sustainability Plan** (roughly quarterly) The next update will be in November.
- **Solid Waste Update** – Chris Broadbent – Chair Dever reviewed an updated Mr. Broadbent sent to her. She stated the Recycle Coach App is extremely helpful. Committee Member stated the State put together a movie with the Battle Creek recycling group. It is entertaining and educational. He will send a link to Chair Dever.

CHECK PHONE LINES AND STREAMING FOR COMMENTS:

No comments.

ADJOURNMENT

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