

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

JANUARY 15, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

<u>MEMBERS PRESENT:</u>	Aaron Wright, Chair; Phil Dietrich, Vice Chair; Joe Bower; Eric Brown; Sharon Dever; Bobby Glasser; Mary Clare Griffith; Ian Magnuson; Scott Schmidt
<u>EXCUSED ABSENCES:</u>	Wayne Bond (ECC Associate Member); Kevin Weller; Gail Walter;
<u>STAFF:</u>	Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison; Amy Thomas, Recording Secretary
<u>OTHERS:</u>	Jeanne Hess, City Commission Liaison; David Anderson, Mayor; Paul Manstrom (ECC Associate Member); Lauri Holmes (ECC Associate Member)

1. ROLL CALL (Excused Absences)

- Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- There were no changes to the agenda.
- **Mr. Dietrich, supported by Mr. Wright, moved approval of the January 15, 2020 ECC agenda. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (December 18, 2019):

- There were no changes to the Minutes.
- **Mr. Magnuson, supported by Mr. Dietrich, moved approval of the May 15, 2019 ECC Minutes as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The following information was provided regarding the January 14th Planning Commission meeting, and the request from the developer to rezone the former Vermeulen property from its current residential zoning classification to the commercial community zoning classification:
- The Planning Commission inquired if there was documentation showing that the community wanted the former Vermeulen property zoned commercial. There was a discussion about the possibility of reviewing that property to determine if commercial zoning would be appropriate.
- The Planning Commission provides zoning recommendations to the City Commission. The City Commission will make the final decision regarding the zoning request. The developer could decide to not proceed to the City Commission. The developer mentioned that he had offers for the property.
- Duane Hampton from the Asylum Lake Policy and Management Council (APLMC) advised the Planning Commission that if the former Vermeulen property is rezoned with a commercial community zoning designation, anybody who buys the land can put practically anything on it, which might have figured into their decision.
- Mr. Wright acknowledged Lauri Holmes for her efforts to inform the community regarding environmental concerns related to the proposed development for the former Vermeulen property.
- Ms. Holmes stated that the developer reconfigured the three parcels on the property so that the southern-most parcel was much smaller. It was originally much bigger than the other two parcels combined. The southern parcel is adjacent to the Asylum Lake Preserve, which is one of the environmental concerns that was discussed.
- The City of Kalamazoo Master Plan designates all three parcels for commercial zoning on the Future Land Use Map.
- Ms. Dever referred to an environmental program at the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings at the end of February. The cost to attend is \$40 for non-members. She will provide more details to the ECC.
- Mr. Manstrom suggested reading a book called, "*We are the Weather*", which deals with climate change. The book makes a compelling argument that the most effective thing an individual can do to combat climate change is to switch to a plant-based diet.
- Ms. Griffith stated that the Office for Sustainability at Western Michigan University (WMU) will be having a sustainable wood working workshop in February. The workshop is free to students or \$10 for non-students.
- The Office for Sustainability Facebook page has information regarding Fridays for Future. There will be a meeting regarding FFF on January 17th at noon, at the Fetzer Center on the WMU campus.

5. COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Tina McClinton, a guest from the Southtown Neighborhood in the City of Kalamazoo, resides at 310 Lake Street. She presented information regarding her efforts to save the five-acre wooded area next to her property from a proposed development. The wooded area is 60 percent wetland and 40 percent flood plain.
- Ms. McClinton stated that she has lived in this neighborhood for approximately 30 years. She presented pictures showing how the flooding in this area has gotten worse every year as more and more green space is developed on adjacent land.
- Ms. McClinton has experienced issues with sewage backing up through her basement floor drain when the flooding occurs. She had four feet of water in her basement and had to put in a new furnace and water heater. An on-demand water heater has been installed on the chimney so it's above the water level.
- The nearby Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) development took away green space behind her property. The area where KVCC is located is dry.
- She is concerned that if the land adjacent to her house is developed, more flooding will occur. The area by her house currently floods three or four times per year.
- Ms. McClinton presented pictures of wildlife in the undeveloped area. It's the last green space left in the Southtown area and it has lots of old trees. When the ten acres was developed across the street, the wildlife from that area migrated to the five-acre wooded area by her property.
- Mr. Wright stated that James Baker, Director of Public Services, provided a presentation at one of the ECC meetings regarding the flooding issues in the City of Kalamazoo. Mr. Baker advised that the Army Corps of Engineers might do a study to see what can be done. He also discussed the cost to mitigate the flooding.
- We would expect to see more rain with the climate change, and it overwhelms the systems we have in place. There is more run off with more development. The water doesn't have a way out other than slow absorption into the ground.
- The role of the ECC is to make recommendations to the City Commission on specific environmental issues.
- Ms. McClinton has contacted the City of Kalamazoo a few times to request help with her basement. She has been fighting to save the woods for the past four years. There are plans to put a five-story apartment building on the land where the wooded area is located.
- The pink ribbons in the pictures indicate where the wetlands are located; the orange ribbons show where the flood plain is located. The flood plain is next to her house; the wetland is further back on the property.
- Mr. Magnuson suggested that Ms. McClinton talk to more interested groups regarding her concerns. The Natural Features Protection Overlay Committee and the engineering staff should be made aware of these issues.
- Mr. Wright mentioned that Richard Stewart did a Facebook post stating that green space is needed on that side of town. It was suggested that Rebekah Kik might have more information about the proposed development, which could be added to a future ECC agenda. February 19th is the next ECC meeting.
- Ms. McClinton stated that she works 60 hours per week but she is off work on Wednesdays and is available to attend ECC meetings.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION:

City of Kalamazoo Sustainability and Climate Action Plan.

- The next meeting regarding the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan is scheduled for Thursday, January 30th @ 3:30 to 5 p.m. Subcommittees will be formed to discuss the Plan.
- The results from the community survey will be revealed at the meeting on January 30th.
- Jamie McCarthy is scheduled to attend the February ECC meeting to provide an update on the Plan.
- Mr. Magnuson will forward a spreadsheet regarding the Plan to Mr. Wright.

Former Vermeulen Property Rezoning Request.

- The rezoning request was denied at the January 14th Planning Commission meeting. It is uncertain at this point as to what the next step will be for developer.
- **Mr. Glasser, supported by Ms. Dever, moved to have the ECC submit a statement to the City Commission requesting that they uphold the decision made by the Planning Commission to deny the rezoning request for the former Vermeulen property. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**
- The developer could proceed to the City Commission at this point or he could withdraw his rezoning request. Mr. Wright and Mr. Manstrom will draft a statement to the City Commission and forward it via e-mail for review/approval by the ECC.
- Discussion followed regarding possible long-term zoning options for the former Vermeulen property. Mr. Manstrom suggested reviewing the City of Kalamazoo Future Land Use Plan. Mr. Glasser suggested supporting the Planning Commission decision and looking at the long-term zoning for those parcels.

- Mr. Wright introduced Mayor David Anderson and filled him in on the discussion that had been taking place regarding flooding issues in the Southtown Neighborhood. Mayor Anderson advised that he has spoken to Tina McClinton about her concerns.
- Mayor Anderson stated that he is passing his ECC Liaison duties to City Commissioner Jeanne Hess.
- Mayor Anderson was the President of the LIFT Foundation, but he is now a volunteer on the LIFT board. It is the mission of the LIFT Foundation to create affordable housing, and that is what they are proposing for the property adjacent to Ms. McClinton's residence.
- Many things are taken into consideration when determining a location for a low-income housing project, including the price of the land, proximity to employers, sustainability, environment and density, etc. It is important to build where the population is and to not create sprawl. Walkability and nearby bus lines are some of the amenities that are also taken into consideration. Tax credits can sometimes be awarded if the project is near employers.
- The LIFT Foundation talked to representatives from Bronson Hospital as an employer. They have owned the property on Lake Street for about 20 years. The Lake Street property is in a 100-year floodplain. The Stockbridge side of the property is open; it is a former gravel lot and is not wooded.
- The Lift Foundation has a plan to develop the property, which extends from Lake Street to Stockbridge. The developed portion of the land would be on the Stockbridge side of the property, where buildings used to be. There are approximately five-acres in the non-floodplain area by Stockbridge.
- The preliminary site plan for 60 affordable housing units has been drawn up. There are no plans for buildings on the Lake Street side of the property but there might be a parking in that area; pervious paving is a possible option.
- The LIFT Foundation will have to work with the EGLE, which used to be the MDEQ (Michigan Department of Environmental Quality), and the WIP (Wetland Identification Program). The Foundation is aware of the boundary of the wetland to the north. Nothing will be done to that portion of the land, which is adjacent to where Ms. McClinton lives.
- The Nature Center already has an urban park in Kalamazoo. They are open to the idea of having something similar for this development, which is known as Hawthorne Park. The urban park would have paths that would also be open to the community; it would take up about one quarter of the land.
- The Developer will have to comply with site plan requirements; storm water can't drain onto adjacent property, etc. There has been higher than average precipitation recently. Much of what was developed in that corridor was developed during more of a drought period.
- The Hawthorne Park development plan is dependent on funding. The developer acquires affordable tax credits. The LIFT Foundation already has \$250 thousand dollars for the project. The Foundation optioned that property from Bronson Hospital and purchased the adjacent property.
- The LIFT Foundation will work with the City of Kalamazoo to develop the site plan. Once the site plan is approved it will be available for the public to view. The land is already zoned for this type of development. The current zoning would allow higher density than what is proposed.
- Mr. Wright inquired if the flooding would get worse if the property is developed. Ms. McClinton stated that the flooding will get worse; Stockbridge doesn't flood but sewage backs up in the basements. Mayor Anderson suggested getting a sewer backflow preventer to prevent sewage issues during flooding.
- The psychiatric facility at 615 E. Crosstown is an example where pervious paving was used. Some strips of classic paving were also used for that project. The KVCC facility has similar pervious paving.
- Mr. Manstrom inquired if the police station on Crosstown (north of the proposed Hawthorne Development) will be replaced. Mayor Anderson advised that the police station on Bryant Street is scheduled to be replaced.

Kleinstuck Preserve Update.

- The Stewards of Kleinstuck have raised \$300,000 so far. They are still working on acquiring the adjacent property to add to the Preserve.

EEE Spraying.

- Gail Walter provided a draft summary of a presentation she attended at the Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Advisory Council on EEE. The information can be posted on the ECC shared drive. The presentation did not mention spraying or effectiveness. It only addresses the nature of vector borne diseases.
- Mr. Wright suggested gathering more information regarding the spraying and then making a recommendation in case there are future issues with EEE. The State of Michigan does the spraying.
- Mr. Schmidt suggested asking the supplier of the spray for details about the chemicals that were used. Commissioner Anderson advised that there was an option to use a more natural spray versus the one that was used containing

Pyrethrin. There was a death or two locally from EEE, and there are strong feelings on each side regarding the pros and cons of spraying for EEE.

- The ECC members were in favor of having Ms. Walter continue researching the spray that was used for EEE.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Woods Lake Salination Issues.

- Mr. Wright, Mr. Glasser and Mr. Manstrom met with Chris Bovid, President of the Woods Lake Neighborhood Association. Mr. Bovid wants the City of Kalamazoo to do more frequent leaf pick-ups in the Woods Lake area. The fallen leaves absorb road salt and that washes into Woods Lake.
- John Paquin arranged for more frequent leaf pick-ups in the past, but he has retired from the City of Kalamazoo. Ms. Drzick will contact Joe Bonhomme, Water Superintendent for the City of Kalamazoo, to find out who might be able to provide assistance. The next leaf pick-up is scheduled for spring 2020.
- Mr. Wright stated that Mr. Bovid wants to have the “best practices” for leaf pick-up in writing so that it can be a permanent procedure. In the past, the leaf pick-up included street sweeping. The sweeper usually comes within 24 hours after the leaf pick-up.

Graphic Packaging Expansion.

- Mr. Wright plans to attend the public meeting on January 30th. He will discuss the possibility of Graphic Packaging using the City of Kalamazoo’s odor monitoring system. There is a place for public comment on the EGLE (Environment Great Lakes and Energy) website; Mr. Wright will share that information on Facebook.

Bottle Deposit

- Mr. Bower (Director of Development, Michigan Environmental Council) advised of a referendum to expand the bottle deposit law to include all liquid containers other than milk cartons. The changes are not scheduled to happen this year; it is being set up for a campaign initiative in 2022.
- The policy team met with some of the stakeholders to discuss ways to not make this change a big impediment on local stores who have nowhere to store the bottles.
- The expanded program would be based on how much the stakeholders sell. They want to minimize their carbon footprint. If there is a certain amount of money left over, that would be disbursed to the bottlers.

Review ECC in Code of Ordinances.

- Mr. Wright suggested reviewing the charge of the ECC as stated in the code of ordinances. He wants to make sure the Committee keeps its focus. There will be further discussion about this at the next meeting.

Discussion on ECC Structure.

- This agenda item was tabled until the next meeting. The discussion will include details about ECC Associate Memberships.

Discussion on Paperless Meetings.

- It was suggested that the ECC Agenda and Minutes could be viewed on the projector screen in the meeting room in an effort to have fewer paper copies.

Subcommittee Assignments.

- Mr. Magnuson suggested that the sustainability meetings should be his focus rather than the Planning Commission meetings. He will continue attending Planning Commission meetings until a replacement can be found.
- Ms. Griffith stated that her new schedule and internship will interfere with her attendance at ECC meetings. She offered to become an associate member, which would allow Wayne Bond to become a voting member on the ECC. The ECC will follow up with Mr. Bond at the next ECC meeting he attends.
- **Mr. Magnuson, supported Mr. Schmidt, moved to accept Ms. Griffith’s proposal to transfer to an associate member position, which will allow someone else to become a voting member on the ECC. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

ECC Field Trip?

- Mr. Wright mentioned that the ECC took a tour of the City of Kalamazoo water reclamation facility in the past. He was hoping the Committee could tour a solid waste facility (dump) but the City takes those items elsewhere.
- Mayor Anderson confirmed there are no local garbage dumps. Trash from Kalamazoo County is hauled to St. Joseph County. Recycling from Kalamazoo goes to a facility in Indiana.
- Ms. Drzick oversees the composting site; there is free mulch available at that facility by Schippers Lane
- Mr. Schmidt mentioned the hazardous waste facility on Lake Street in Kalamazoo as a possible place to take a tour.

- Mayor Anderson mentioned the recycling crisis that occurred in the United States when China stopped taking recycling produced by the United States. The Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) has a program with six animated raccoons (the raccoon squad) which takes a humorous approach to educating the public about recycling. Recycling will go to the landfill if it is not cleaned properly.
- The Waste Management/Litter Subcommittee has discussed where the recycling goes and if it winds up being reused. The subcommittee had information stating that Kalamazoo has a 6.9 percent contamination rate, but it is uncertain if that number is accurate. According to available information, approximately 11,000 of 16,000 households in the City of Kalamazoo participate in the recycling program
- Mr. Wright suggested the possibility of taking the ECC meetings offsite to look at issues of concern. Ms. Drzick offered to set up a tour at the Water Reclamation Plant, preferably in cooler weather. She also suggested the possibility of touring the central pumping station to look at the water process. Mayor Anderson suggested approaching the Best Way Company on Miller Road for a tour of their waste management/recycling facility.
- Mr. Schmidt mentioned the possibility of enforcing recycling city wide. Mayor Anderson advised that more recycling has been collected since the City switched to single-stream recycling but there have been more issues with contamination. Mr. Wright suggested revisiting this topic at the next ECC meeting.

8. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

NFP Review Board.

- Mr. Glasser reported that the NFP Review Board didn't have any new cases, but they might discuss zoning issues regarding the former Vermeulen property. The Board is also looking at what part 2 of the overlay should look like and possibly incorporating guidelines regarding air and noise issues.

Air and Water Quality.

- The Air and Water Quality Subcommittee did not meet last month.

Wildlife and Natural Resources Protection.

- Mr. Walter and Mr. Bond were not present to provide a report.

Waste Management/Litter.

- The Waste Management/Litter subcommittee did not meet. Ms. Dever will be talking with someone to get more information about composting.

Planning Commission

- Report previously provided.

Tree Committee

- Mr. Dietrich was not available to attend the last Tree Committee meeting. One of the agenda items pertained to a Consumers Energy grant check to replace trees.

Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council –

- Ms. Dever reported that the ALPMC submitted a letter to the Planning Commission regarding the former Vermeulen property. There was a discussion regarding BTR2 and a presentation with details about storm water run-off, how changes by MDOT affect the run-off, and what percentage of storm water is going into Asylum Lake. There would be a substantial cost to remediate the run-off into Asylum Lake.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

- Mr. Wright was not available to attend the last meeting and there was not much to report from the minutes.

Wellhead Protection Program Committee

- Ms. Drzick will ask Jean Talanda to provide a report in March.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Recording Secretary