

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 15, 2017 DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Manstrom, Chair; Matt Fletcher; Vice Chair; Alex Maldonado; George Russo; Nora Gimpel; Phil Dietrich; Lauri Holmes; Olga Button

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Margie Belchak, Chris Wahmhoff

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:

STAFF: John Paquin, Staff Liaison; Amy Thomas, Recording Secretary

OTHERS: Ethan Dombrowski, Lydia Garner (students working on class assignment); Aaron Wright, ECC applicant.

APPROVAL MINUTES (November 16, 2016): Note that there was not a meeting in December, 2016 and there was not a quorum in January, 2017.

Mr. Manstrom requested the following change: Page 2, bullet point, should be “nothing affects anything adversely downstream.”

Mr. Dietrich, supported by Ms. Holmes, moved approval of the November 16, 2016 ECC minutes as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

There were no changes to the agenda.

Mr. Dietrich, supported by Mr. Russo, moved approval of the February 15, 2017 ECC agenda as submitted. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. James Timmons, Chair of the ECC, resigned due to relocation.

NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:

- Mr. Dietrich mentioned that Arbor Day is coming up and the Tree Committee is looking for suggestions for a location to plant a new tree and hold the annual Arbor Day celebration. MLK Park was one of the suggestions but trees have been vandalized in that park.
- Mr. Russo mentioned that trees were recently cut down in Spring Valley Park; maybe that would be a good location to hold this event?

NEW BUSINESS

Election of one new ECC member: Applications: Mr. Toby Ward, Mr. Matthew McClelland, and Mr. Aaron Wright.

- Ms. Gimpel advised that three new applications were submitted on February 15th. A brief discussion followed regarding the three current applications that were previously submitted, and considering the three new applications for future vacancies. It was suggested that the ECC proceed with interviewing Mr. Wright since he was present and has been in attendance at the last two meetings.
- Mr. Wright stated that he has lived in Kalamazoo his entire life. He is employed by Galesburg – August schools as a Special Education Supervisor. His Interest in the environment stems from living here. He is proud of our community and wants to play a role in the decision-making process with regard to things that impact our community. He also stated that he would like to know how environmental concerns impact economically disadvantaged people. He is concerned that the federal government is pulling back regarding environmental regulations.
- The Board members requested that Mr. Wright step out of the room while they discussed his application.
- Mr. Fletcher stated that he knows Mr. Wright through his wife and through the school his son attends.

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- Mr. Manstrom commented that Ms. Gimpel sent an e-mail regarding three new applications. The new applications were not received in time for this agenda. Mr. Fletcher commented that his term will be over in 23 months. Mr. Russo stated that his wife accepted a job in Pueblo, Colorado but he will be in Michigan until June.
- Ms. Holmes commented that Mr. Wright sat through two meetings and now has some idea as to what the ECC is all about. The ECC has no grounds for rejecting him as an applicant.
- Ms. Gimpel stated that she is a women's rights activist and she emphasized the importance of getting women involved. She knows five people who are interested in being on the ECC, three of them submitted applications today. All of them are involved with the environment, two of them work at the Nature Center.
- Mr. Paquin stated that all three candidates submitted prior to the Agenda submission would be considered for the current vacancy, and any application submitted after that would be considered for future vacancies. When the February agenda went out, the ECC had received three applications to consider. Ms. Holmes commented on the importance of not holding up the process; it is important to follow protocol and procedure. It won't be that long before another seat opens up. If the three new candidates are interested, hopefully, they can wait for another opening.
- Mr. Paquin stated that he would update the status of each board member with the Clerk's office, which will help the board plan for new members. He hopes to make that information available at the next meeting. If existing members who are eligible to reapply would like to do so, they will have to express that intention.
- Mr. Manstrom stated that he sympathized with Ms. Gimpel's position. The City of Kalamazoo's website shows immediate openings on other boards. Ms. Gimpel advised that the focus is environmental but she will let the new candidates know there is potential to get involved in the future.
- **Mr. Dietrich, supported by Ms. Button, moved to recommend to the City Commission, the appointment of Aaron Wright to the Environmental Concerns Committee. With a voice vote, the motion carried by a majority vote. Ms. Gimpel was the only dissenting vote.**
- Mr. Paquin will send the nomination form to the Clerk's office for review/approval by the City Commission.

Election of new ECC Chair

Mr. Fletcher, supported by Ms. Holmes, moved to elect Mr. Manstrom as Chair of the Environmental Concerns Committee. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Manstrom, supported by Mr. Dietrich, moved to nominate Matt Fletcher as Vice Chair of the Environmental Concerns Committee. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2016 Environmental Concerns Committee Summary Report (James Timmons)

- Mr. Russo stated that his name was incorrectly stated twice as "John" rather than "George." Mr. Maldonado requested a correction to the spelling of his name: "Maldonado" not "Maldonato." Mr. Dietrich's name is spelled "Philip" not "Phillip." Ms. Gimpel and Ms. Button stated that their names were not in the report.
- Ms. Holmes referred to the second page of the report and advised that the Planning Commission is not a sub-committee of the ECC. The ECC liaison to the Planning Commission reports back to the ECC with Planning Commission updates. Mr. Dietrich mentioned that he is the ECC liaison to the Tree Committee but he is also a voting member of the Tree Committee.
- Mr. Paquin requested that the ECC report to him with any other issues with the yearly report.

Mr. Fletcher, supported by Mr. Russo, moved to postpone the vote on the Yearly Report until the next ECC meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Deer Population Management – Recap of January presentations, and other discussion.

- At the January non-quorum meeting, Ryan Koziatek from the Nature Center provided information about their deer management program. Dr. Les Tung, Chair of a Neighborhood Association also provided information about deer management. He advised that a Kalamazoo Christian class is providing deer data from the Asylum Lake area. Dr. Tung is waiting for the data to see if it would make sense to invite a DNR wildlife biologist to provide advice. There was a discussion about possibly enacting an ordinance to outlaw the feeding of deer in the City of Kalamazoo.
- Mr. Dietrich inquired as to what the issue is with the deer. Ms. Holmes stated that there was more of a problem than just deer eating petunias; it was more of a quality of life issue. Deer poop was also a problem and the deer

carry diseases such as lime disease. Mr. Fletcher stated that the deer are almost domesticated in Kleinstuck Preserve. They stand in the road, which presents safety issues in terms of collisions.

- Mr. Dietrich inquired if the next step for the ECC is to await the results of the study. Mr. Maldonado mentioned that recurring data would be needed to determine what could be done.
- Mr. Dietrich inquired if the ECC should ask the City Commission to commission a study. Mr. Manstrom stated that it would be helpful to have extended snow cover, which we have not had this year, to have a good study.
- Mr. Paquin advised that another option would be to have someone from the Portage Board talk to the ECC about their findings. Jamie McCarthy, a former Portage Environmental Board member or a current board member might be able to provide information.
- Mr. Manstrom advised that there was an over population of deer in Portage but they decided not to do anything about it.
- Mr. Dietrich commented that it seemed to be frustrating that more data is needed but nobody seems to be doing anything to get the data, they are just relying on a class project. The ECC doesn't have budgetary authority.
- Ms. Button commented that she is still grappling with what the problem is: Lyme disease, cars hitting deer, deer eating Petunias? It would be helpful to determine what the problem is before deciding what to do about it.
- Mr. Wright referred to the term "maximum carrying capacity." The Department of Natural Resources had a number of deer (ratio per square mile) they thought was best for the deer and the land but they don't use those numbers anymore.
- Mr. Paquin inquired if there is currently an ordinance against feeding deer in the City of Kalamazoo. Mr. Fletcher commented that, if there is such an ordinance, the ECC could recommend enforcement of the existing ordinance. Mr. Manstrom recalled that Mr. Tung indicated there is no ordinance against feeding deer in the City of Kalamazoo. Ms. Holmes indicated that feeding the deer is not the problem; feeding the birds is the problem. The deer visit bird feeders and eat the food that people put out for the birds.
- Mr. Fletcher suggested that the ECC continue to learn and listen regarding this problem. Mr. Manstrom stated that Mark Mills from DNR is willing to speak with the ECC about this issue. He inquired if plans to manage the deer population would be reviewed through the DNR. He suggested leaving the topic of deer population on the agenda under old business for now and possibly inviting someone to speak on that topic again at a future ECC meeting.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Kalamazoo River Issues (KRCC, KRWC, Allied, Etc.)

- Ms. Belchak was not present to provide an update.

Kalamazoo Environmental Council

- Mr. Nesius stated that the Kalamazoo Environmental Council met a couple of months ago. Ms. Gimpel mentioned that the KEC is working w the Climate Change Coalition and Connie Ferguson to organize the March 20th legislative breakfast at the Nature Center. Someone who works at the nature center is involved with KEC. The Climate Change Coalition is organized through the Nature Center. The Citizens Climate Lobby is another working group.
- Ms. Holmes inquired if the KEC has representatives for different environmental groups. Mr. Manstrom advised that was the original intent. The KEC is the organization that should have developed the Climate Change Coalition but they were inactive so it was developed through the Nature Center.

City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission

- Mr. Manstrom advised that at the October Planning Commission meeting there was a discussion about rezoning 45 parcels east of downtown. That item was back on the December Agenda. Arvco was excluded from the rezoning and it didn't pass. The rezoning would change these parcels from industrial to mixed use. Arvco does not have to comply with the mixed use requirements. The intention is to open up to more residential development without losing the manufacturing base. Mr. Fletcher commented that the community has a need for lower-income housing.
- Mr. Wright inquired if the ECC has an interest in the new development from an environmental standpoint. Mr. Fletcher explained that many of the 45 parcels were designated as brownfield properties and they can't be developed for residential use unless all the soil is removed. The rules are very specific and we would have to know more.
- Mr. Manstrom stated that the riverfront zoning overlay now applies to these 45 parcels. Concern was expressed at the Planning Commission meeting about having parking lots next to the river. Mr. Paquin advised that area falls under phase II storm water rules and the overlay affects how they manage storm water run-off. Wellhead protection protects drinking water.

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- Mr. Fletcher mentioned that it would be educational to have people from Planning attend an ECC meeting once a year and summarize what's going on in the City from a planning perspective. He inquired if the ECC would like him to ask Laura Lam to speak with the ECC.
- Mr. Paquin commented that it might be a good time to ask for an update regarding the design it phase of the Master Plan.
- Ms. Holmes inquired as to who could advise the ECC about current environmental issues.

Tree Committee

- Mr. Dietrich advised that the Tree Committee received a request to remove trees from the Al Sabo wellfield for a City project to improve communication with the wells. Mr. Paquin added that the improvements were related to the water SCADA system.
- Mr. Dietrich commented that whoever planned that project didn't understand that the Tree Committee has jurisdiction over all City trees. They wanted to remove trees to make room for the new equipment. The Tree Committee took an e-mail poll to speed up the process so deadlines could be met. Mr. Dietrich was concerned about possible issues with transparency when a decision is made via e-mail rather than a public meeting. Mr. Dietrich voted no regarding the proposed tree removal in the Al Sabo Preserve.
- Mr. Pryor put on the next agenda a discussion regarding the process for Tree Committee approvals that need to be done prior to the next regularly-scheduled public meeting. The current proposal is to have a 10- day notice for the meeting and taking a vote. This provides time to provide information to the ECC and PRAB.
- Mr. Wright inquired as to the structure of the Tree Committee. Mr. Dietrich advised that the members are as follows: Forestry Supervisor, Consumers Energy Forester, City Engineer (Water Division), ECC representative and PRAB representative. The Tree Committee deals with ROW trees. They have to plant two trees for every one they cut.
- Mr. Paquin explained that the SCADA system is a communication system utilities use. The AT&T land lines are skyrocketing in cost. The new SCADA system is a computerized communication, which needs to communicate 24/7. A new monopole for communication equipment had to be added in the Al Sabo Preserve. The alternate sites proposed for the equipment would have required numerous more trees be taken down. They put the equipment next to the pumping station and took down fewer trees. They had to look at existing utilities and elevations to locate the pole. The site they wound up with was not originally considered but best for several reasons, including the need to remove fewer trees.
- Al Sabo is a 720 acre land preserve with a water pumping station and 16 production wells. It is not a park but rather a land preserve with more restrictions for land use. There is more environmental pressure because an increased number of area residents want to use it, partially due to the new regional trailway on the southern portion of the property along Texas Drive.
- Mr. Dietrich advised that the Tree Committee also discussed a request to add a bike lane along Portage Road. They had to approve the removal of an 18" Oak Tree in front of the Heritage Retirement Community by Miller Rd. in order for the trail project to proceed. Heritage declined to provide an easement to keep the tree.

Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council

- Ms. Holmes advised that property at the southwest corner of Drake and Stadium has been in the Vermeulen family for over 100 years. The property is in being sold but she did not have the name of the purchaser.
- Tyler Bassett will speak at the April 4th annual meeting to be held at the Parkview Hills Clubhouse.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

- Mr. Timmons is no longer with the ECC; he used to provide updates regarding the PRAB. Mr. Wright stated that he was willing to take over that responsibility. The PRAB discusses concerns regarding parks, usage of parks, applications to use parks, parking lots not plowed, etc.

Climate Change Coalition

- Ms. Gimpel announced that there will be a movie regarding food forest perma-culture techniques on February 26th at 2 p.m. at the Disciples of Christ Church.
- On Monday, March 20th there will be a legislative breakfast from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Jon Hoadley will be in attendance. From 6:00 to 7:30, the Steering committee working groups will be there and they will have a speaker from Notre Dame.

Wellhead Protection Program Committee

- Mr. Paquin worked with KRESA cinema classes. The six winning videos will be rotated with the existing videos and shown before the movies at Celebration Cinema and Kalamazoo 10. Twenty-five videos were submitted in response to the recent contest, which has a first prize of \$100.
- The City recently applied for the Groundwater Guardian Program. Metro bus placards have information about that program. This provides structure to do more education.
- A grant was signed for another \$70,000 for the wellhead program. These funds help pay for the ads and ground water modeling.

Ms. Button mentioned that she will be having rotator cuff surgery on March 2nd so she might not be at the March meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Fletcher, supported by Ms. Button, moved to adjourn the February 15, 2017 meeting of the Environmental Concerns Committee. There were no objections and the meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Recording Secretary

Date: _____

