

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

JUNE 17, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Manstrom, Chair; Phil Dietrich, Vice Chair; Joe Bower; Eric Brown; Sharon Dever; Mary Clare Griffith; Scott Schmidt; Gail Walter; Aaron Wright

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Eric Brown, Scott Schmidt, Bobby Glasser, Kevin Weller

STAFF: Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison; Deborah Wright, Recording Secretary

OTHERS: Jean Hess, City Commissioner; Associate Members: Wayne Bond; Lauri Holmes; Nancy Appel, Cooper Township resident; Rick Welch and Cybelle Shattuck, Hope for Creation

1. ROLL CALL (Excused Absences)

- Aaron Wright completed roll call and determined that a quorum of members was present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- A motion to approve the agenda was made by Phil Dietrich and seconded by _____ and unanimously approved.
- Additionally, Rick Welch will be speaking to present his proposal about starting Styrofoam Recycling

3. APPROVAL MINUTES (February 2020):

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4. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Zoom meetings can be found on the City's website for those who would like to attend under New and Meeting Notices.
- There were three applications for individuals to join the committee, but they were told we were at full capacity at this time.
- Minutes
- Paul Manstrom has decided to resign his associate position with ECC. He offered to stay until the City had an Action Climate Plan in place, but it has not been decided. He may attend some of the working groups.
- The 10-year anniversary for the Kalamazoo oil spill is approaching next month and there will be an event planned. Sharon Dever will give an update when she received more information.
- Gail Walter updated everyone on the Peregrine Falcons. The youngsters have fledged to help with being grounded. They were dropped off at charm school for a while and brought back today. Things are going very well for them. Lauri Holmes inquired about if the falcons come back nightly to the nest to roost. Gail Walter relayed that they will be here until mid to late July. They may visit the nest from time to time but always return and will be around for at least another month. They are not catching food or feeding yet and are still be fed by mom and dad. Teenaged falcons can find food on their own, but the babies depend on mom and dad for feedings.
- Ian Magnuson announced that the Commission voted 6-2 or 7-2 to declare racism a public health emergency for the county. I believe in the next few meetings; this will bring conversations for environmental racism. These conversations will discuss how environmental damages effects certain communities more than others. It would be a good idea to get more knowledge on this topic as community members to be prepared if the subject arises. Aaron Wright states that Paul Manstrom shared an article specifically on this topic and he will forward it to everyone. The highlights of the article talked about how the communities that had the most negative impact were those that have the least amount of input on the citywide and countywide Climate Action Plan.

5. COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

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6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Presentation on Styrofoam Recycling Proposal

- Rick Welch and Cybelle Shattuck from Hope for Creation. Material on how Cooper Township run their recycling has been emailed to Aaron Wright for reference. The idea of this proposal is to keep the Styrofoam out of the landfill by recycling it. A warehouse is needed to store the Styrofoam until a 40-foot truck can be filled and picked up. Volunteers will be needed to maintain, sort, and bag it at the warehouse. Dart will be available to train those who want to participate. They are asking the City to provide a place for this project. Cooper Township have quarterly pick-up, but as Kalamazoo is much larger, Rick Welch is envisioning that ours would be a monthly pick-up. Rick Welch feels that the school can be partners as they also use a lot of Styrofoam as well.

- Lauri Holmes asked what Dart does with the Styrofoam when it is received. Rick Welch replied that they regrind it and make molding for homes and picture frames.
- Sharon Dever wanted to know the concerns for contamination and what shape does the Styrofoam have to be in order to be viable for use. Rick Welch stated that it would have to be clean, meaning no food left on the container. The sorter would take the different types of Styrofoam, such as those for food or for computers; and separate them.
- Phil Dietrich asked about how the Styrofoam be collected. Rick Welch feels it would have to be taken to the drop-off facility/warehouse sites that will be designated. The volunteer staff would then sort and bag it for pick up. Dart provides the bags according to the types. It is suggested by Rick Welch that we could recruit churches and school to also be drop-off points and possibly have volunteers to deliver it to the warehouse. Dart will have no financial gain in this process.
- Nancy Appel from Cooper Township talked about how successful their program has been. The residents have been grateful to have a place to take their Styrofoam in the community. She explained that food stains on the Styrofoam is ok if the food is not loose in the container. They do take both the black and white Styrofoam. The recycling center is in Mason, Michigan and a sample of all the items they make was sent to her. As of right now, they only make rulers, crown molding for homes, and picture frames. She thanked the Committee for their consideration.
- Aaron Wright asked Malissa Drzick and Jeanne Hess if they are aware of any facilities that are available. Malissa Drzick stated she did not know if any and James Baker would be a better person to ask. Jeanne Hess stated that her son said there are many facilities available but would have to be researched. She asked Rick Welch if the process was free and would it be all volunteers performing the service? Rick Welch responded and said that his group, Hope for Creation cannot afford to pay for a facility, and this is the reason they are proposing this to the City.
- Jeanne Hess said they would need to know what this would cost and asked about what size facility is needed pertaining to square footage. Rick Welch did not have an answer for that question but estimates that 1,000 square foot should be good enough. Cybelle Shattuck stated that whatever is the equivalent to a semi-truck would be sufficient, as that would be the time when Dart would come for a pick-up.
- Aaron Wright inquired about how often Dart would come and Cybelle Shattuck responded that they would come as often as the truck is filled.
- Volunteer staff would be at the designated site to open the warehouse to receive contributions from the community. Aaron Wright has concerns on whether there would be a guarantee that the facility would function properly since it would be staffed with volunteers as opposed to paid employees.
- Cybelle Shattuck feels success in Cooper Township with their facility is a result of a City Board member that heads the staff.
- Sharon Dever suggests moving the discussion to the sub-committee with anyone from the public welcome to attend and Aaron Wright feels more information is needed.
- Aaron Wright asked Malissa Drzick to gather more information from City official about whether there are any city facilities available to use.
- Nancy Appel would like to suggest having a facility centrally located to serve the community if available.
- Ian Magnuson suggest using the Farmers Market for housing. He wondered if there would be space available at the Farmers Market and would Dart be able to drop off the container or would they only come and pick-up when the container is full? Would there be charges if the container is not full?
- Rick Welch said Dart prefer that the container be kept inside.
- Gail Walter shared a story about how a program from years ago used Best Way to store a semi to use for their recycling program. This would be a good idea to use and would not have a need for having a facility to house the containers.
- Sharon Dever talked about how there were a few talks with a focus group on having a facility for Composting. She feels the Styrofoam and Composting can be combined if a city location for collection. She will touch basis with Jaime McCarthy on where things are with that project.
- Aaron Wright stated that the ECC Committee is on board with the idea of Styrofoam recycling with stipulations on staffing, storage, and cost.
- Jeanne Hess will make a motion to the Commission but need more details and a solid plan in place first. She suggests visiting it again and having it on the August agenda.
- Rick Welch will investigate Gail Walter's suggestion about having a semi at Best Way. He feels confident on having volunteers to run the project.
- Gail Walter suggested to Rick Welch that it would be good if one of the churches would be willing to donate space and Rick Welch thinks it is a good idea and said he would check into it.

City of Kalamazoo Sustainability and Climate Action Plan Progress

- Jamie McCarthy sent an email which was shared with the committee as follows:
- During the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting Stay-At-Home Executive Order, the focus group was delayed.
- The waste focus group and 1:1 resiliency interviews were held in March prior to the executive order.
- A summary of some of the resulting recommendations can be found on the website www.imagineKalamazoo.com/projects/sustainability.
- During the quarantine, staff focused on sustainability planning for City operations and facilities.

- Top priorities have been tree canopy and energy efficiency goals and actions.
- The City has FFE funding to plant almost 1,000 trees which will be focused in neighborhoods with the least tree canopy (e.g., Edison, Stuart, Northside, Milwood). Check out the attached map that our WMU graduate student intern created from a tree canopy analysis he completed. The current city-wide tree canopy coverage is approximately 33%.
- In May, the City partnered with the Michigan Municipal League and the Art Institute to submit a grant proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- The project would provide an opportunity for Kalamazoo to learn about circular food economy concepts from partners in Finland and the Finnish Embassy.
- Awards will be announced in early Fall.
- The ECC committee showed the canopy map and ask the question of what the average percentage should be. It was noted that the higher percentage was in the 43-45% range (Oakland/Winchell, Oakwood, Hill N Brook, Westnedge Hill, Eastside and Burke Acres), and the lower percentage was in the 9-24% range (CBD, Stuart, Northside, Edison, Milwood, WMU/KRPH, etc.).
- Ian Magnuson suggest the focus area be Northside, Stuart and Milwood.
- Jeanne Hess suggest adding a target percentage, such as increasing them up to 40%. Ian Magnuson suggested creating a city-wide minimum percentage to work from.
- There was a motion made by Aaron Wright and seconded by Ian Magnuson to move forward with this project and to continue discussion with Jamie McCarthy at the next meeting.
- Phil Dietrich feels a policy being established for tree canopies would help with the Tree Committee business push-back.
- Joe Bower relayed that the American Forest recommends urban forest canopies of 40%.
- Gail Walters states that Westnedge Hill's percentages are probably a lot lower than what the map shows. Consumers Energy recently cut down all the trees on Fairfax Street to install a new high-voltage power line.
- Phil Dietrich stated that high-voltage power line project was in the works for many years. The trees were planted hundreds of years before the houses were built.

Lake St/Stockbridge Development

- No updates to report
- Jeanne Hess feels they are waiting for a grant to be received before continuing discussions.

Former Vermeulen Property Update

- Lauri Holmes states that discussions are quiet and suggest that it may be that way for a while. There have been ongoing negotiations with the owner of the property. He has made it clear that he has no intentions of abandoning his plan of building a car wash. He sent a letter to the Chair of the Council in hope that others shared his views.
- Sharon Dever stated that Mayor Anderson said the project is on pause and are not making any recommendations at this time.

Kleinstuck Preserve Update

- There is a capital fund drive to raise \$700,000 for this project. Joe Bower stated he spoke with Erin Fuller who said they have raised around \$300,000 through fund raisers. Joe Bower asked the Committee and specifically Jeanne Hess if she was familiar with Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. She does not.
- Joe Bower would like to suggest that Kalamazoo join forces with the Stewards of Kleinstuck and submit a grant request to the trust fund board. The Municipality is required to partner and match funds.
- The grant is not due until April 2021. The awards take time to be disbursed. The trust fund awards grants to every county.
- Joe Bower says the property that is for sale would be used as a City park and not be owned by the Stewards of Kleinstuck.

EEE Spraying

- Gail Walter said that thing have been put on hold for now. She thinks the committee should considers having a presentation put together for the next meeting. The contact information for the person in charge will be forwarded to the committee.
- Concerns are with the toxicity of the chemicals being used and is one reason why the citizens of Kalamazoo opted out of spraying. It is said that the spraying will destroy all insects, not just mosquitoes.
- The committee is considering weighing against how toxic it will be to humans as opposed to insects.
- More research will be performed, and discussion will continue at the next meeting.

Graphic Packaging Air Quality Meeting

- Aaron Wright and Mayor Anderson attended a public meeting at the beginning of the year and the State heard from the residents that the smell is an issue.
- A plan is in place for Graphic Packaging to do a study this summer.
- Graphic Packaging has not agreed to plug in to the City's odor monitoring system yet.

Woods Lake Salinization

- Malissa Drzick stated she forwarded information to Joseph Bonhomme. Jean Talanda will be helping Malissa Drzick with this project.
- Aaron Wright will get in touch with Chris at Woods Lake Association and give an update of where we are and that we are still working on it.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Review ECC in Code of Ordinance

- No report

Regional communication/cooperation

- No report

ECC Field Trip?

- No report

8. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

NFP Review Board

- The Review Board started meeting virtually in May.
- Reviewed and approved a site plan for a new independent living facility planned at the Heritage Community of Kalamazoo in the Milwood neighborhood.
- The Board is currently working with staff on recommendations for expanding the NFP overlay district. They have been working with a WMU graduate student intern to map natural features throughout the City.
- The Board is developing the first draft of an expanded overlay district.
- The City will be seeking community input in July and August to develop a final recommendation that will go before the planning commission this Fall.

Air and Water Quality

- No report

Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection

- No report

Waste Management/Litter

- No report

Planning Commission

- No report

Tree Committee

- No report

Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council

- No report

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

- No report

Wellhead Protection Program Committee

- No report

9. ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at

Respectfully submitted,

Recording Secretary