

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

## 08/26/2020 MEETING MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Aaron Wright, Chair, Phil Dietrich, Vice Chair, Gail Walter, Eric Brown, Ian Magnuson, Joe Bower, Sharon Devers, Wayne L. Bond, Scott Schmidt

**EXCUSED ABSENCES:** Bobby Glasser

**UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:** Kevin Weller

**STAFF:** Malissa Drzick, Staff Liaison; Amber Jane Schneider, Recording Secretary; Joe, Information Technology (IT)

**OTHERS:** Jeanne Hess, City Commission Liaison; Jamie McCarthy, Development Project Coordinator; Dr. Denise Keele, Professor at WMU in Political Science & Environment Sustainability; John Lee, owner & operator of the Kalamazoo River Guide

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 4:39 pm by Mr. Wright, after confirming a quorum of 8.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

- There were no changes to the agenda.
- Post-Talk addition to agenda proposed by Mr. Magnuson: add “Make Sure Video Is Being Recorded” after rollcall to ensure videos are being recorded in the future.

**APPROVAL MINUTES (June & July):**

- Changes were submitted via e-mail from Ms. Walters.
- Ms. Devers has some additions available for her talk
- The minutes were approved with the recommended changes.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Students return to school

**NON-AGENDA COMMENTS BY OTHERS:**

- None

**GUEST SPEAKERS/PRESENTATIONS:**

**Jamie McCarthy:**

- Sustainability planning, resuming 4-5 focus groups in September; committee member to sit in/report back. Using the Tree committee meeting next Tues to discuss forestry related items.
- Department met last week, working in restrictions with COVID 19 and still moving forward.
- Significant challenges – use focus groups heavily and have draft plan by end of this year. Public engagement in the future.
- Phase II of Natural Features Protection ordinance: Proposed Phase II Map – expand. More information and map available at ImagineKalamazoo.com website. People interact online to tell us about things may have been missed. Accepting public comment through Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, view in person at City Hall and Rose St. Lobby – same map, same opportunity for input. Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> – planning commission. The City Planner & Staff are proposing rezoning (particularly downtown Kalamazoo).
- Divine Compost Challenge – Ms. Devers shout out - volunteers for a micro-pilot study pick up composting buckets pick up Thursday. This study gives an idea of household volume (also important information for the Bike Farm regarding demand and capacity). Conducting a survey. Hopefully going forward, people will continue to use a service (i.e. Bike Farm) for a subscription fee, or compost in their own yard. More info in a couple weeks.
- Senate Bill 597 at Michigan Senate Committee on Energy & Technology - City of GR Sustainability Director is drumming interest for signing a letter regarding this bill (via email sent all over the state). They originally wanted this organized by Labor Day. Ms. McCarthy will request additional information from the City of GR and will update the committee.

- *Video began recording. See Post-Talk Addition to Agenda above.*

**Dr. Denise Keele:** Representing the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition (KCCC) to discuss Sustainability & Action

- 20 incoming freshman (Medallion Students) – all want to work on climate change – proposed moving forward with WMU & Community Climate Action Planning – moving forward with action planning at community and governmental level
  - KCCC, in Coordination with Environmental Concerns Committee & Mayor Hopewell, passed Climate Emergency Declaration and want to see those declarations put into *action*
  - KCCC desires to move forward with the local governmental authorities on Climate Action Plan (CAP)
  - Focusing on two primary items from the CAP: 1) Food 2) Building and Energy Efficiency
  - Buildings and Energy Efficiency = KCCC primary focus
    - Climate Justice Proposal: Searching for grants to write a proposal, include marginalized communities and a weatherization energy efficiency process
    - Working on getting partners in place and ensuring proposal makes sense
  - Committed to keeping Climate Action on the agenda, assist the City & its staff moving forward
  - Asking for a renewed commitment from the City by the end of 2020 to re-take up Climate Action Planning
  - Offering support, grant writing and any talents they can offer to assist
  - Climate Voter Initiatives, working on proposal around Senate 597 to increase the cap
- Mr. Wright indicated that ECC sent a recommendation to the City Commission to get the Climate Action Plan/Sustainability Plan in place by the end of the year. This will be at the September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Dr. Keele provided a brief explanation of Senate Bill 597. The situation is complex. Initially, Michigan legislation set a cap on the amount of renewable energy that the energy companies can take in to 1%. This was done to prevent flooding the market. However, renewable energy has become more efficient and affordable, and we are producing way more renewable energy than before. Excess energy produced is reimbursed to the producers by the energy companies. But since there is a cap on the amount of energy the energy companies may take, much of the energy produced is being wasted, because the energy companies cannot take in much of the excess. If the cap is raised, energy companies could potentially take in more of the excess energy produced. This would significantly increase the reimbursement to people/companies that are producing excess, which is why there is some pushback to not raising the cap.

**John Lee:** owner and operate Kalamazoo River Guide, speaking on the Morrow Lake Dam

- The Kalamazoo River is significantly impacted by the actions taken at the Morrow Lake Dam
  - The Morrow Lake Dam conducted an unregulated drawdown (lifted the gates) which resulted in decades worth of sediment washing into the Kalamazoo River, which has destroyed the bank and backwater habitat of the Kalamazoo River from the Dam to past Lake Allegan. Much of the efforts to mitigate the damage (so far) have resulted in further damage. The Kalamazoo River is experiencing distress to the natural resources (dead birds, fish, plants...)
  - Eagle River has been willing to work with Mr. Lee and others, but the “red tape” has prevented them from fixing the gate in a timely manner, which would allow the reservoir to refill and the River to begin healing itself
  - Mr. Lee is spreading the word, gathering support, and is motivating in finding resolution to mitigating the current damage and preventing situations like this from happening again
  - Mr. Lee is afraid that waiting for a public hearing and for approval of proposals etc. is delaying the fix. Delays are resulting in continuous damage to the ecosystem.
  - Desires support in encouraging the authorities to expedite resolutions/damage mitigation
- ECC Role: request the City Commission to voice our concern for the current state of the Kalamazoo River to DNR & EGLE, and Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, and to ask them to expedite whatever they need to do to address the state of the River and put processes/procedures in place to prevent this from happening again. Possibly propose a statement from Jim Ritzema to pass a resolution and move that on to the appropriate entities that do have jurisdiction to take care of the problem.
  - Mr. Wright recommended we first obtain documentation regarding what did happen, and what needs to happen now. Mr. Magnuson volunteered to collect this information and to pullet point the specifics of what we should include in this statement/recommendation to the City Commission.
  - Suggested coordination/partnering with County Commission and any other power on river management, including the Kalamazoo River Watershed council. Also contacting additional groups such as the Kalamazoo Paddle Group (Facebook) for support once we have language drafted.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

#### Styrofoam Recycling Proposal, Ms. Devers

- Still looking for a location. Need a location that can store up to a semi-worth of Styrofoam on *voluntary* basis (ideally), 9 am – 1 pm, every other Sat, for people in community to drop off their Styrofoam.
- Bronson Hospital has a compactor, they rent from Dart for \$300/month
  - Possible linkup/working with the hospital if we could use the compactor
  - Can take 15-30 minutes per cycle, so it would be a staffing/manpower issue
  - Will know more information at the next meeting
- Dart can pick-up recycling on the way (from Bronson Hospital), we have the volunteers for running it, the only holdup is the location
- It was suggested to coordinate with Dr. Keele & WMU on finding a location and potential partnership

#### EEE Mosquito Abatement, Spraying Updates, Mr. Wright

- 2 cases in horses (Montcalm & Clare County)
- Typically, we see humans and horses concurrently. However, we are unaware of any non-equine cases.
- Pilot study at Bishop's Bog, limited testing area
- No testing on mosquitoes yet this year due to COVID19 supplies; however, testing is finally starting to resume with no EEE in mosquitoes detected yet and testing will continue until the first frost (October?)
- In case of an outbreak: Not ready to make a recommendation for to spray or not to spray
  - Hopefully will not need to make a recommendation to City Commission this year.
  - Last year, Marris 3.0 has the least side effects and least side effects in non-target species
    - need surveillance data (unavailable last year)
- Difficulty in this decision is balancing environmental impacts (spraying) to human health concerns (EEE).
- Longer term recommendation: prevention.
- Proposal/approach: Black boxes around bogs – WAS mostly about surveillance, but the proposal suggested was to see if these black boxes could have chemicals for female mosquitoes to cut off the spread (rather than waiting until cases and resulting in widespread spraying).
- Refer to Dr. Walker's presentation for additional information. Will discuss further at future meetings.

#### Graphic Packaging

- City will vote Sept 21<sup>st</sup> to allow/not allow a second expansion including \$20-million tax abatement
- People associate the odor with negative health affects; haven't seen any data supporting this yet
- Odor taskforce – back together after Labor Day; will discuss this further and provide additional information
- New Report conducted by a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party (ordered by the City, partnered with Graphic's Packaging): does not support Graphic's stance that the odor is not Graphic Packaging. States the odor is coming from Graphic Packaging, specifically the pipe of Graphic's wastewater outlet.
- The Community is concerned there is an environmental issue here. Struggle with Environmental Issue v. Jobs Issue.
- Commission unsure about giving out the tax break – worried if they don't give the tax break, Graphic Packaging might move, removing a significant number of jobs.
- With the new expansion, they are cleaning up the Checker Cab Site (lead). This is a plus.
- Mr. Magnuson mentioned possibly requesting an escrow account for future remediation.
- Not talking about just the smell, but 30 years of the smell plus other impacts. Trying to obtain documentation/information regarding hydrogen sulfide nuisance odor v. health concerns.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

- Time constraints prevented discussing new business (aside from the guest speakers) at this time.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- *Kalamazoo River*
- *Kalamazoo Environmental Council*
- *Portage Environmental Board*
- *City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission*
- *Tree Committee*
- *Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council*
- *Parks & Recreation Advisory Board*
- *City Master Plan-*

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 6:11 p.m.