

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission

January 28, 2016

Working Meeting

City Hall

Call to Order:

7:03 pm

Roll Call:

Present – 10

Wayne Appleyard, Sabra Briere, Chris Graham, Katherine Hollins, Susan Hutton, Jarin Morraco, Benjamin Muth, Allison Skinner, Chip Smith, and Bob Needham

Absent - 3

Missy Stults, Jason Frenzel, Wendy Woods

Quorum present

Staff Present:

Matthew Naud, Emily Drennen

Approval of Agenda:

None

Public Commentary:

None

Review of Commission Workplan:

Chair Hutton suggested that the Commission consider adopting two resolutions for Council – one being a resolution supporting climate adaptation work being done through the Huron Valley Watershed Council; another being a pilot of community outreach and education on microclimates in a selected City neighborhood. Both of these will be action items in February. Councilperson Briere supports the pilot program being funded through the solid waste fund.

Commissioner Skinner would like to add the status of the Gelman plume to the list of projects. Staff Naud reported that there was an article in today's paper. It is up to a group of (state-level) elected to decide how to do clean-up. Councilperson Briere stated that the City has tried to insert itself into the current lawsuit but has no jurisdiction. She talked about the need for the State of Michigan to change the actionable level of 1,4 dioxane from 85 part per billion to 3.5 parts per billion. When that happens, the court decree can be changed. Staff Naud reported that the Department of Environmental Quality will be soon releasing new standards for approximately 309 chemicals. However, a 6-8 month rulemaking process would follow, followed by a legislative approval. Commissioner Graham noted that DEQ has had their budget cut 65%-70% in recent years and have been told not to regulate. Councilperson Briere asked for a staff update on 1,4 dioxane in February. Staff Naud agreed to the staff update and reported on previous attempts for a political process re: the Gelman plume.

Commissioner Graham reported that the Natural Features Subcommittee of the Environmental Commission will bring a report to the Commission's February meeting. He sees an educational function to bring groups of property owners together to pore over maps and discuss hyper-local ecosystems. He reports that it is much more than stormwater and that 2-3 staff could educate

residents for stewardship opportunities. Climate change makes this issue even more important. Councilperson Briere said that the Natural Features Subcommittee's work is actually required by Council.

Commissioner Skinner stated that items in the workplan needed to be much more specific, measurable, and actionable. Chair Hutton continued that the Climate Action Plan, for instance, should be broken down into its constituent parts.

Councilperson Smith reported that the Energy Commission's Solar Subcommittee is currently very active. Commissioner Appleyard invited the Environment Commissioners to join the Solar Subcommittee if they are interested. Chair Hutton stated that so much of solar is state-based and beyond local control. Councilperson Smith stated that the Solar Subcommittee is looking to reduce solar "soft costs" by streamlining the permitting process. He gave an example that it costs \$600 to go before the Historical District Commission. Commissioner Skinner stated that she wrote reports for the Clean Energy Coalition on reducing solar soft costs. Commissioner Graham asked how much a typical residential solar system costs. Commissioner Appleyard answered the question and brought up his idea for the City to buy SRECs (Solar Renewable Energy Credits) from homeowners as a way to reduce the financial hit from property taxes.

Commissioner Skinner asked if workplan item leads could come back with actionable metrics at the next meeting. Commissioner Appleyard stated that the top four workplan items are "loosey-goosey".

Councilperson Briere asked how the Commission should tackle the Huron River Impoundment Management Plan. She suggested that a group of the 7 interested Environmental Commissioners should get together for an hour and "plow through it". Staff Naud will think about appropriate staff to bring with to that meeting, and will send a link re: the Huron River Impoundment Management Plan. Councilperson Briere believes that a resolution on this issue could be brought back to the Environmental Commission in April.

Commissioner Skinner asked about the expanded organics management pilot in the DDA area (for downtown restaurants). She is working with Recycle Ann Arbor on a pilot proposal and a draft survey for local residents on organics management in the DDA. Staff Naud will have a budget for the pilot and Commissioner Skinner will have a proposal for review at the February meeting. Commissioner Skinner reported that Zingerman's has been added to the Resource Management Priority Team of the Climate Action Partnership. Staff Naud reported that there is an expanded scope for the organics management contract which includes funds for a public survey, which will likely take place in March. Commissioner Appleyard asked for a timeline for organics management. Staff Naud replied that the biodigester feasibility study will be six months maximum, and that it could be budgeted as soon as the latter half of the 2017 City budget. Commissioner Skinner invited participation with the Resource Management Priority Team which is meeting every other week at Recycle Ann Arbor. Staff Naud stated that there will be two advisory groups for the organics management contract, one for residential and one for commercial/industrial. He reports that each group will meet four times, with public engagement toward the end of the project. Chair Hutton replied that Commissioner Needham would like to sit on one of those advisory groups.

Commissioner Graham reported that he and Staff Naud met with the CEO of the Ann Arbor Community Foundation regarding environmental issues. The highest priorities for donors were community services for housing, etc. Staff Naud reported on the Partners for Places program to spur local philanthropy on environmental issues.

Commissioner Needham suggested that the Commission work on curbing demolition waste as a workplan item. Commissioner Skinner replied that it might be hard to get the attention of all of the people working on the organics issue while it is still underway. Councilperson Briere suggested that this issue be brought to the new Community Services Area Administrator. Commissioner Appleyard would like building inspectors to gather demolition and construction recycling information. Councilperson Smith replied that building inspectors will not check dumpsters, and that the City doesn't have enough Community Standards Officers to even write tickets for unshovelled sidewalks. Councilperson Briere encouraged the group to think "beyond enforcement" to where construction and demolition issues should be housed. Commissioner Appleyard wanted it to be an entry on a form. Commissioner Skinner thinks that more research needs to be done. Commissioner Graham talked about the difference between sorting on-site or off-site. Commissioner Skinner suggested that the City enter into franchise agreements with haulers.

Commissioner Hollins brought up the coal tar resolution, and Councilperson Briere asked for these issues to be brought by staff to the March meeting.

Councilperson Briere stated that the idling ordinance needs ongoing education and outreach. Staff Naud replied that he had met with UM re: air quality monitoring equipment. He reports that the City would need internal staff, hire the UM, or wait for a research project to come along to get these readings done. Wood smoke also does not have a simple answer. Both of these air quality issues would need to be addressed with money and by scientists. Chair Hutton reported on a school study she read about through the EPA. Councilperson Briere suggested that the City's middle school STEAM students could be involved.

Chair Hutton asked that deadlines and metrics be formalized for each of the top workplan priorities. Staff Naud replied that staff will update the Commission's workplan spreadsheet with calendar dates and the specifics covered at this meeting.

Councilperson Briere reported that Accessory Dwelling Units are currently being enacted by the County. They may come before the Environmental Commission for stormwater, parking, and etc issues. Councilperson Briere went on to report that the biggest deficit in housing types is for people who would pay \$900-1200/month who are not students (making 30%-80% area median income). She reported that Ann Arbor Public Housing is refurbishing all of its stock, and adding 70 new units. She opined that Ann Arbor needs a diversity of housing types to make a healthy community.

Commissioner Skinner would like an update on the County's plastic bag ban/fee legislation at the February meeting.

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

None

Items for Next Agenda:

- Resolution supporting climate adaptation work being done through the Huron Valley Watershed Council
- Resolution supporting pilot of community outreach and education on microclimates in a selected City neighborhood
- Report from the Natural Features Subcommittee
- Resolution supporting a pilot of expanded organics management for downtown restaurants
- Commission's Workplan

Next Scheduled Meeting:

February 25, 2016

220 North Main Street, Board Room

Public Commentary:

None

Adjournment:

Adjourned 8:43 pm