

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission – Meeting Minutes

March 22, 2012

G.C. Larcom, Jr. Municipal Building, Council Chambers
301 E. Huron, Ann Arbor, MI

Call to Order:

Called to order at 7:43pm – meeting called to order when quorum was reached

Roll Call:

Present:

7 – Sabra Briere, John German, Christopher Graham, Carsten Hohnke, Rita Loch-Caruso, David Stead, Valerie Strassberg

Absent:

6 – Susan Hutton, John Koupal, Gwen Nystuen, Kirk Westphal, Cliff Williams, Jamie Woolard

Quorum present

Staff Present:

Jamie Kidwell

Presentations:

Presentation on GIS Environmental Data - KC Bemish, Systems Planning Unit

- Overview of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and city data that is available to staff and public
- Bemish focuses on critical infrastructure, such a water infrastructure, street trees
 - Lack of natural features data at the City
 - Conducted street tree inventory three years ago
- GIS spatially orients our city data
- City of Ann Arbor partners with Washtenaw County
 - Geocortex is new web-based mapping system
 - Pre-set maps are available on the city website at:
<http://www.a2gov.org/gis/Pages/default.aspx>
- New flood management maps recently posted
- Tree inventory can identify specific tree species on a street
(www.a2gov.org/urbanforestry)
- Data also accessible on city's data catalog:
<http://www.a2gov.org/data/Pages/default.aspx>
 - KML/KMZ (Google Earth) and shapefiles are available for download
- Private detention basins are not completely incorporated into GIS, but city staff, Jerry Hancock is working on this
- Washtenaw County drains are included in the storm main layer and the city share data with the county
- Bemish provided a demonstration of the geocortex tool available online to the public

Presentation on Climate Action Plan Inventory - Nate Geisler, Systems Planning Unit

- Overview of the greenhouse gas inventory for the city and Climate Action Plan under development by the city's energy office
- Geisler noted recent presentations at March 8th Sustainable Ann Arbor Forum and March Energy Commission
- Climate Action Task Force has been meeting since September of last year to develop climate action strategies
 - Commissioner Strassberg, non-profits, planning and energy commissioners, DTE, and university representatives serve on task force
- Past focus in energy planning was on municipal operations, but this is less than two percent of total community emissions
- Mid and Long-Range climate goals task force is looking to set
 - 25% reduction in emissions goal by 2025 with a year 2000 baseline
 - Aligns with University of Michigan goal
 - Baseline comes from a 2003 student report
 - 90% reduction in emissions by 2050
- Residential, commercial/industrial, university, transportation, and waste are GHG inventory sectors
 - Transportation is based on Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) data and this looks at vehicle miles traveled, which is calculated every 5 years
 - Commercial/industrial sector decreased in last few years, but university sector increased
 - Loss of Pfizer and growth of University of Michigan
 - Terry Alexander from University of Michigan is on the task force
 - ICLEI software used to model emissions does take into account increasing efficiency in vehicles
- Municipal piece in 2010 is only 1.2 percent of Ann Arbor's emissions
 - Community goals, like the Mayor's Green Energy Challenge, are important in reducing Ann Arbor footprint
- Climate Action Plan will include this inventory
- Ann Arbor is below the US average for Tonnes per capita GHG emissions
- Energy generation is a significant part of this
- Categories in Climate Action Plan will organize actions in alignment with sustainability framework
 - Categories for the plan include: energy and buildings, community and health, land use and access, and resource management
- Ann Arbor is working with a consultant, Clean Energy Coalition, to estimate impacts of different actions, such as the proposed statewide increase in the renewable portfolio standard
- Plan will aim to align with Solid Waste and Urban Forestry Management Plan
- Plan identifies over 80 actions, but even if these are all applied, this will not meet our plan goals
 - 2050 goal may be dependent on new technologies and unpredictable factors and outcomes
- www.a2energy.org is new city website that includes information for landlords, homeowners, renters on how to reduce carbon footprint

Questions:

Q: What is the breakdown of emissions per sector?

A: 22% residential, 25% commercial/industrial, 22% transportation, less than 1% waste, 30% University of Michigan

Q: What is the timing for the plan?

A: Scheduled for council work session in June, and hope to have a draft plan next month.

Idling Awareness Video

- Staff showed a video prepared by Barbara Lucas, Environmental Media Consultant at Washtenaw County Public Health
- Video addresses the myths and facts associated with idling
- Commissioner German participated in the video
- Video will eventually be posted on Washtenaw County website

Commissioners discussed potential to use this video as an education tool and the potential to show this video at the upcoming City Council work session on idling.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Commissioner Stead, Seconded by Councilmember Briere

Approved

Approval Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Stead to Table, Seconded by Councilmember Hohnke

Discussion:

- Need to provide abbreviated meeting minutes
- Should discuss minutes format at next working session

Motion by Commissioner Stead Withdrawn, but request made to shorten minutes and details of meeting are available through CTN recordings

Motion by Commissioner Stead to approve, Seconded by Councilmember Briere

Approved

Commissioners voted in support of shortening meeting minutes

Motion to move discussion of resolution forward in the agenda by Commissioner Loch-Caruso, seconded by Commissioner Stead

Motion approved

New business

City of Ann Arbor Resolution in Support of Green Streets Initiative of the Environmental Commission

Overview by Commissioner Strassberg

- Water Committee has been working on a resolution that directs city staff to work on a green streets policy
- City staff needs more time allocated to develop policy
- Resolution does not set specifics of green streets ordinance, but with additional staff time water committee and staff could draft an ordinance
- Green infrastructure is use of green materials (rain gardens, porous pavement) instead of gray material (pipes) to manage stormwater
- Resolution will help ensure green streets are more integrated

Motion to recommend City Council adopt resolution by Commissioner Stead, Seconded by Commissioner Strassberg

Discussion:

- Suggestion to reorder “whereas” clauses to make intent clearer
- Intent of resolution may not be clear, identifying outcomes would help with this
- Staff is eager to work with water committee, but needs a directive to help enable staff to dedicate time to the effort
- Resolution is first step to securing staff support to work with the water committee to create specific objectives
- Focus of resolution should be policy development and not on implementation
- Jennifer Lawson and Jerry Hancock are city staff working on this effort
 - Water committee is providing value by bringing together residents and helping facilitate communication and staff is supporting
- Water committee is working on a green streets educational video and will aim to have this completed by April
- Commissioner Strassberg will present when resolution goes before City Council
- Before going to City Council, should prepare:
 - Estimate of potential cost-savings and benefits
 - Estimate of staff time to create policy

Revised resolution with changes included at the end of the minutes

Motion approved

- Commissioners discussed the need for time limits on presentations and the potential for a presentation on the green street improvements at the Justice Center

Report from Committees:

Update of Solid Waste Committee by Commissioner Stead

- 12-member committee working on the new solid waste plan
- Commissioner Stead and Councilmember Briere serve on committee
- Meeting for since January with goal of a draft plan by June
- Reviewing draft over summer and aiming to start public process in September
- Two major subcommittees focusing on drop-off station and organics management
- Will likely look at funding and how to work with other jurisdictions
- Committee meets once a month, subcommittees meet as needed and steering committee with staff and Commissioner Stead and Councilmember Briere meets more frequently

Update of Natural Features Committee by Commissioner Graham

- Working on a plan to increase natural features information available
- Meeting scheduled for April with key staff from forestry, stormwater, natural features, committee members, GIS staff, Eastern Michigan University staff
- Interested in quantifying natural features and use this to help steward natural resources
- Interested in natural feature stewardship regardless of ownership

Update of City Council by Commissioners Hohnke and Briere

- Working on the solid waste plan
- When idling ordinance comes back to council, environmental commission should focus on educational component and the key steps of implementation
- On-going group meeting about idling, next meeting is April 12th

Discussion:

- Potential to tie in role of local government in idling video

Staff Update by Kidwell

- Over 110 people attended the March 8th Sustainable Ann Arbor Forum on climate and energy
- Next forum is April 12th and will focus on community
- Public meeting to solicit feedback from 6pm to 8pm March 29th at the Ann Arbor District Library

Items for Next Agenda:

Committee Discussions
Discussion of Minute Format

Next Scheduled Meeting:

Thursday, April 26th, 7pm

Adjourned:

Meeting adjourned

Revised City of Ann Arbor Resolution in Support of Green Streets Initiative of the Environmental Commission

..Title

City of Ann Arbor Resolution in Support of Green Streets Initiative of the Environmental Commission

..Memorandum

For the past two years the City of Ann Arbor's Water Committee, a committee of the Environmental Commission, has been discussing the City's water resources improvements, practices, and policies. The Water Committee decided to focus its efforts on improving stormwater management within the City's street system. To make sure it's goals are both attainable and desirable in the community, the Water Committee recently held a series of "Green Streets" focus group meetings to discuss the past, present, and future of stormwater practices within the City's road right-of-ways.

The terms Green Streets or Green Infrastructure are adaptable terms used to describe an array of products, technologies, and practices that use natural systems – or engineered systems that mimic natural processes – to enhance overall environmental quality and provide utility services. Green Streets usually treat and/or infiltrate storm water which improves water quality and reduces the volume and rate at which stormwater leaves the street.

As a result of the discussions at the Green Street focus group meetings the Environmental Commission Water Committee encourages the City to consider policy changes that would make "Green Streets" the new standard for street design.

..Staff

Prepared By: Environmental Commission

..Body

WHEREAS, impervious surfaces are major contributors to stormwater runoff pollution and volume;

WHEREAS, pollutant load is significant in stormwater, especially in the first flush (first ½" of rain during any rain event);

WHEREAS, in Ann Arbor, the City right-of-way includes 2.9 square miles of impervious area, which represents 25.9% of the total impervious area within the City. Since road surfaces are directly connected to the stormwater management system, it is estimated that 50% of all stormwater runoff within the City is generated from the right-of-ways;

WHEREAS, new materials and strategies exist with proven success for stormwater management;

WHEREAS, the term “Green Streets” includes green infrastructure which is an adaptable term used to describe an array of products, technologies, and practices that use natural systems – or engineered systems that mimic natural processes – to enhance overall environmental quality and provide utility services.

WHEREAS, the US EPA has accepted alternative strategies for stormwater management across the nation;

WHEREAS, the City of Ann Arbor’s NPDES permit requires action related to stormwater management;

WHEREAS, the City is subject to a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) restriction by the State of Michigan for biota (total suspended solids), E. coli and phosphorus from storm water;

WHEREAS, stormwater is delivered untreated to the Huron River, which is recognized as a valued natural resource for the Ann Arbor Community;

WHEREAS, weather models are predicting increased frequency and intensity of intense stormwater events;

RESOLVED, that the Ann Arbor Environmental Commission is fully supportive of the Green Streets Initiative of the Environmental Commission Water Committee, and hereby recommends Ann Arbor City Council directs City Staff (from the Systems Planning, Project Management, and Field Services Units of Public Services; Parks and Recreation, and Planning from Community Services) to work with the Environmental Commission in the development of a Green Streets policy.