

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission

February 26, 2015

Action Meeting

G.C. Larcom, Jr. Municipal Building, Basement Conference Room
301 E. Huron, Ann Arbor, MI

Call to Order:

7:03pm

Roll Call:

Present – 10

Mike Anglin, Wayne Appleyard, Sabra Briere, Jason Frenzel, Chris Graham, Susan Hutton, Allison Skinner, Benjamin Muth, Bob Needham, and Wendy Woods

Absent - 3

Katherine Hollins, Patti Smith, and Missy Stults

Bob Needham and Jason Frenzel, both newly appointed commissioners, in attendance.

Quorum present

Staff Present:

Jamie Kidwell-Brix

Matthew Naud

Approval of Agenda:

Approved

Approval of Minutes:

Action Meeting Minutes – December 4, 2014

Motion by Commissioner Graham, second by Commissioner Hutton

Motion Approved on Voice Vote

Public Commentary:

None

New Business:

Green Rental Housing Presentation – Jamie Kidwell-Brix

Jamie Kidwell-Brix, sustainability associate at the City of Ann Arbor, provided an overview of recent work to increase energy efficiency in rental housing across Washtenaw County funded through a HUD Sustainable Communities grant. The presentation can be found online at:

<http://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2233704&GUID=4A2913ED-E47E-47BF-AC62-85A010D7A9FE>.

- Estimated 27 million square feet of rental properties in Ann Arbor, which is estimated at nearly \$30 million spent annually on energy costs
 - Saving just 10% would keep \$3 million annually in local economy
- Programs targeted at tenants and landlords
- Program information and videos posted online at: www.a2energy.org

Kidwell-Brix and Naud responded to questions from commissioners.

- What was the response rate for the www.a2gov.org/sharedata program?
 - Under 100 responses. Participants could upload energy bills or share energy use in a google form posted online
 - Required in City Code that landlords provide an energy budget to tenants at time of lease, but landlords do not always have access to this data
 - Created a video targeted at tenants to disclose energy use to landlords
- Landlords do have access through DTE
 - DTE landlord portal is a tool that is making access easier.
- DTE Energy sends out letters comparing energy use to neighbors. What data is being used in this effort?
 - This is a DTE-run program and is not administered by the City
- Have you reached out to sorority or fraternity houses as part of this effort?
 - Through Energy Hour, the meeting-in-a-box program, reached out to sorority and fraternities, cooperatives, and other student organizations
- DTE Insight App provides a way to learn more about energy use in your home
- Hard to compare energy use year-to-year with frequent turnovers. Financial savings might help people change behaviors. Is saving money part of the messaging in these efforts?
 - Yes, and we do highlight costs in the educational brochures that were created
 - Also produced materials on cost-sharing between landlords and tenants. High turnover rate makes this challenging
 - Educational efforts also targeted at helping renters learn more about the lease signing process and how to negotiate before they move into a rental unit. For example, tenants willing to sign a longer-term lease may be able to work together with the landlord to find ways to increase energy efficiency

Unfinished Business:

Resolution to Adopt Work Plan Priorities for the Environmental Commission

- Added Councilmember Briere as leader of “Implement the Huron River and Impoundment Management Plan”
- Commissioner Hutton asked representatives from other commissions to share their work plans with Environmental Commission

Motion by Commissioner Graham, second by Commissioner Hutton

Motion Approved on Voice Vote

Deer Management Meeting Update by Commissioner Graham

Commissioner Graham provided an overview of recommendations made at a recent deer management public meeting.

- City Council passed a resolution and hired a consultant to explore recommendations for deer management
- Discussion of non-lethal and lethal methods

- Recommendation to hire a wildlife management coordinator and appoint a deer management committee proposed by Commissioner Graham and the Washtenaw Citizens for Ecological Balance

Commissioner Graham responded to questions from commissioners.

- Does the City have data on how many deer are in the city, or recommendations on the appropriate number of deer per square mile?
- City recently did an aerial survey of deer. Metrics are difficult, since the population is disperse. Washtenaw Citizens for Ecological Balance proposed metrics for success: 1) complaints of garden damage goes down, 2) damage to indicator species stops, 3) deer vehicle collisions goes down, and 4) elimination of illnesses transmitted from deer
- Are there confirmed cases of tick-borne Lyme disease in Washtenaw County?
 - Yes, not many
 - Not confirmed that disease was contracted in the county
- Are there any comparisons to communities of similar size and density that we can compare deer-vehicle collision numbers to?
 - Difficult to make comparisons because difference of road systems. Deer and vehicle collisions are in the tens of thousands. Growing and costly program across the country and in southern Michigan
 - Commissioner Muth noted that University of Michigan Dearborn completed a deer cull
 - Commissioner Graham noted the natural features of this campus, and that the cull occurred on Wayne County portion of the property. Then City of Dearborn culled on the property as well
- Was this cull confined to parks area?
 - Yes, the cull was completed in natural areas. City of Ann Arbor has parks system where this could occur. Selecting safe area depends on the structure of management plan
- Will the Environmental Commission vote on this?
 - No clear what opportunity for commission to comment in the current process is. Potential to bring plans and actions through the Environmental Commission.
 - Councilmember Briere recommended after City Council has seen report from staff and its released to the public, Environmental Commission should reintroduce topic for discussion
- In terms of culling wildlife, what guarantee is there that population problems will not become a challenge again? Are there steps residents can take to help keep population numbers down?
 - Suburban and ex-urban housing units creates habitat for deer. This habitat keeps population unchecked by predators. Deer management program would need to continue. If numbers are lower, then management becomes easier. Food sources are more abundant in urban settings and fewer hunters are present. Hunting deer does not change reproductive behaviors.

Local Food Summit Update by Commissioner Frenzel

Commissioner Frenzel provided an overview of the Local Food Summit and its history.

- Recently held 7th annual Local Food Summit

- Over the last seven years, local food movement has greatly influenced local food fabric and system
- First summit in 2009 was invite-only, and each year attendance has grown
- Summit's rotate between different university campuses in the area
- This year's agenda included:
 - Judy Wicks, restaurateur and entrepreneur from Philadelphia, as keynote speaker
 - Presentation from Washtenaw Food Policy Council for County Commissioner Rabhi
 - Local food victories
 - Local food lunch with 95-98% locally-sourced food donated and then prepared by University of Michigan (UM) chefs
 - Presentations from community, beekeeping, food system supply chains, etc.
- Moving to year-round planning cycle

Commissioner Frenzel responded to questions from commissioners.

- Local food is in the Climate Action Plan (CAP). How might this effort fit in?
 - Slow Food Huron Valley is the parent organization for the summit. CAP could be similar to transition movement. Transition movement was about divesting from fossil fuel usage. Food movement supports portions of the CAP. Moving food costs a lot of energy. Potential to strengthen neighborhoods through local food.
- What do you mean by local?
 - A lot of models with different definitions of local food, but it depends on context. In 2010, set 20% locally sourced by 2020 goal in the county. Sparked conversation and how to develop the infrastructure to support this goal.
 - Ann Arbor Farmers Market is a local-only market. Every market has different sets of rules.
- Is there any data on what portion of food comes from outside Michigan?
 - Not sure.

Report from Committees and Chair:

Update on CAP Implementation Meeting by Commissioner Hutton

- Second round of Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)
- Community solar projects
- Ecology Center is looking to convene community meetings
- UM dashboard that group is looking to transition to community dashboard
- Putting together draft of current CAP actions underway at March meeting
- Discussed ways to better liaise between commissions
- Developing business and residential education program and what non-profits might be willing to partner
- Incentives for sustainable buildings needs support from Planning Commission
- Air quality and construction and demolition ordinance on target to occur this year
- Urban heat island opportunities with DDA Street Plan
- Idling ordinance and Styrofoam ban and food waste package ordinance
- Reusable bottle ordinance

Update on Community Resilience Committee by Commissioner Hutton

- Reviewed plans and efforts underway from cities and organizations
- Still in initial planning phases

Update on Energy Commission by Commissioner Appleyard

- Energy Commission started a committee looking at mechanisms to fund climate work in the community
- Need financial support not just for staff support but also for energy efficiency and renewable investment
- Expect resolution for financial support in March proposing interim funding
- Over the course of next year will investigate mechanisms to create sustainable funding source
- Putting together a list of what this funding should support
- Looking at Boulder, CO, which has a carbon tax based on electricity use that is collected by the utility
 - Enacted in 2006 and passed again in 2012
 - \$1.3 to \$1.8 million generated annually through this program

Update on Train Station by Commissioner Muth

- No updates as report has not been released
- Councilmember Anglin noted that a parking structure may not be part of the equation and not all train stations accommodate parking
- Councilmember Briere noted that parking structure feasibility is part of the study
 - Based on requirements of Federal Rail Administration

Report from Commission Representatives:

Update on Planning Commission by Commissioner Woods

- Will send work plan to Commissioner Hutton to share
- Working on organizing annual retreat, where commissioners get into the community to look at issues
 - May focus on affordable housing
 - May have panel of experts working on issues, such as Avalon or affordable housing developers
- Commission meets next week

Update on Park Advisory Commission by Councilmember Anglin

- Dog park resolution has been released
- Interest in approaching banks to help homeowners make energy efficiency improvements
 - Naud noted that state law does not allow residential PACE, but are other avenue for single-family homes, such as Michigan Saves. www.a2energy.org has links to financing programs
- Request to consider South Pond as site for larger plan associated with the river

Update on City Council by Councilmember Briere

- Council is focused on budget planning until May
- Amount of revenue projected does not leave any cushion
- Various requests for new staff and reallocations of staff

- Councilmember Briere to get briefing on deer management next week and will meet with the City Administrator about snow

Report on Ann Arbor Climate Partnership:

Update on Climate Partnership by Kidwell-Brix

- Marketing strategy underway and expected to be complete by April

Report from Staff:

Staff Update by Naud and Kidwell-Brix

- City is intervening in a DTE rate case to learn why utility is raising rates on LED lights and lowering rates on high pressure sodium lights
- Planning to move forward with proposing a solar plan at the airport in Pittsfield Township
 - No formal presentation has been made to Planning Commission
- Pall-Gelman site
 - Continue to monitor
 - Local units of government meet monthly Tuesday at 7pm at County building on Zeeb Road at Coalition for Action on Remediation of Dioxane (CARD) meetings
- Served on Michigan Department of Environmental Quality committee to propose new part 201 criteria cleanup standards
 - Six to nine months before proposal will be made
 - Target date for proposed changes unclear, and then after changes would have to go to public hearing and state legislature
 - All recommendations need to be approved before approaching Pall-Gelman to change cleanup standards
 - City interested in State working with Pall-Gelman to develop a contingency plan if the plume were to impact drinking water
 - Who pays for efforts needs to be discussed with the State
 - Mayor Taylor was in attendance at most recent meeting
- National Adaption Forum in St. Louis in May
 - City has been selected to host panel on how to finance climate adaptation and design of stormwater utility
- Working with Christina Gomes, recycling and solid waste program coordinator, to conduct a pilot program to increase recycling in multi-family units
 - Also have a undergraduate group looking at how to increase recycling in off-campus students
- Naud serving on Board of Scientific Councilors on Healthy and Sustainable Communities
- Sustainable Ann Arbor Forums continue in March and April
 - March 12th at 7pm at Ann Arbor District Library
 - Will focus on sustainable systems
- Sustainability Action Plan updates and web version underway

Items for Next Agenda:

None

Next Scheduled Meeting:

March 26, 2015

Public Commentary:

Ryan (from Saline High School) asked a few questions related to the meeting, and commissioners provided answers.

- Is Pall Chemical a superfund site?
 - No, That is a federal scoring system. It is one of the highest rated sites in Ann Arbor
- Are high pressure sodium lights more or less efficient than LED lights?
 - Less efficient
- How do culling techniques at UM Dearborn relate to potential techniques in Ann Arbor?
 - Range of weapons can be used. Key is the amount of space needed to discharge a weapon safely. Depends on space, typology, and management of space
 - At this point no committee or plan established in Ann Arbor

Asia Fields (from Skyline High School) asked a few questions related to the meeting, and commissioners provided answers.

- Are there wildlife population problems in the area, in addition to deer?
 - Coyotes are reported. Woodchucks and squirrels are more manageable. Beavers are close
 - In parks, ducks have been a problem, and steps have been taken in past to address this
 - Commissioner Graham noted the need to make feeding of wildlife prohibited in Ann Arbor. Even birdfeeding can be attractive to deer. No evidence that feed birds impacts the bird populations
- How would the train system work in Ann Arbor?
 - Inter-city trains do not require significant change in infrastructure and work collaboratively with existing bus and other transit systems
 - A connector transit system from Plymouth at US-23 to State Street to link UM Campus and City is also being investigated
 - This could be bus, light rail, or a mix and would impact infrastructure
 - System may or not be feasible given narrow street widths
 - Discussions also occurred around a non-UM light rail system, and this would replace bus system because function is the same
 - Bus rapid transit and dedicated bus lanes might more likely
 - Discussion tonight was based on inter-city trains and are Michigan Department of Transportation projects

Adjournment:

Adjourned 8:58pm