

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission

February 27, 2014

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

Call to Order:

Called to order by Chair Graham

Roll Call:

Present – 9

Mike Anglin, Wayne Appleyard, Sabra Briere, John German, Chris Graham, Susan Hutton, David Stead, Patti Smith, and Valerie Strassberg

Absent - 3

Rita Loch-Caruso, Missy Stults, and Kirk Westphal

Quorum Present

Commission has one vacant position

Staff Present:

Matthew Naud

Approval of Agenda:

Motion to Approve by Commissioner Stead, Seconded by Commissioner Hutton

Motion Approved on Voice Vote

Approval of Minutes:

No minutes to approve

Public Commentary:

None

Presentation - Biofuels and Carbon - John DeCicco, University of Michigan

John DeCicco from the University of Michigan Energy Institute and School of Natural Resources and Environment provided an overview of rethinking biofuels in the context of municipal climate action plans. DeCicco discussed the carbon impacts of biofuels and stated that there is no local CO₂ reduction benefit to using biofuels. DeCicco suggested looking into carbon offset programs like reforestation.

Discussion:

DeCicco responded to questions from the commissioners.

- Isn't 10% of any 87 octane gasoline purchased ethanol?
 - Yes, but claims of climate benefits for this are not well grounded.
- If energy crop was directed to marginal farmland, would this lead to a greater benefit?

- Marginal farmland, or less productive lands, may have more productive uses as ecosystems than farmland. This land is a plausible source for feedstock, but have to consider other uses of the land.
- Is there potential fuel crop that is efficient enough to overcome the land use concern?
 - Not at this time.
 - Commissioner German noted that cellulose is better for carbon than crop-based, but still does not result in a carbon reduction.
- Where are we at in developing numbers to quantify the amount of carbon related inputs to grow crops and the amount of carbon sequestration due to land use type?
 - Land use impact of biofuels is large
 - EPA models that land use impact of corn ethanol in a carbon since is 10 times more than amount of carbon from burning ethanol
 - Commissioner German noted that in the U.S. 4,000 gallons of gasoline are used every second
- Is the best approach to be as efficient as possible and reduce annual production in farming and move to perennial land use models?
 - People have looked at growing mixed prairie grasses as a feedstock, which can build soil carbon. Looks good on paper, but not fully proven. Reforesting or restoring prairies is still the best option in terms of climate benefit.

Presentation - Draft Urban and Community Forestry Management Plan - Kerry Gray, Systems Planning

Kerry Gray, Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Coordinator at the City of Ann Arbor, provided an overview of the draft Urban and Community Forest Management Plan. Gray discussed the benefits of the city's urban tree canopy; challenges and impacts to the forest; the process of developing the plan; and goals and recommendations from the plan.

A draft of plan is available online at: www.a2gov.org/urbanforestry. Public comment on the draft Urban and Community Forest Management Plan is being accepted through **March 28, 2014**. Plan is expected be complete in April, and expected to go to City Council for review and action in June.

Discussion:

Gray responded to questions from the commissioners.

- In terms of maintenance, what does care entail?
 - For younger trees, it is mulching, pruning, and watering. For larger trees, it is mainly pruning.
- What is happening to maples now in terms of health?
 - Would have to see the trees to identify specific problems. Maples in the community are getting old, which causes them to decline in health.
- How much discussion was there about climate change and changing tree mix to adapt to climate impacts?
 - Already know that some species, like sugar maples, are doing poorly and so are not planting as much. Have not initiated a full out switch in planting yet. Wait-and-see approach and are trying to diversify the tree canopy to reduce vulnerability.

- Naud added that the Huron River Watershed Council has a Climate Resilient Communities project and developing recommendations for trees that are more adaptive
- Are there any plans for fruit trees?
 - Discussion did come up in the plan, but the recommendation was not included, because of maintenance issue. These trees do not make sense as street trees. Potential to consider in parks.
- Is there a wide climate threshold for the current planting of trees species?
 - Yes, can handle the climate of Cincinnati as some predict
- Should there be a break on stormwater utility for private property owners maintaining trees on their property?
 - Have not had this discussion, but could look into this.
- When we replace a dying tree, how large is the tree it's being replaced with?
 - Varies based on site, lawn extension, other trees, public utilities
- Where is the City in contemplating how to significantly increase the residential tree canopy?
 - Part of reaching this goal is maintaining the trees planted now; many young trees planted now.
- Is there a discussion about what to do about wildlife degradation and deer?
 - Not included in plan. Has not been an issue with city-owned trees.
- Is there a way to encourage private property owners to plant, grow, and invest in the right trees? Is this just an educational approach?
 - Plan looks at incentivizing, but need funding from non-public sources
- Commissioner Stead noted that his insurance company recommended cutting down his tree for safety reasons
 - Should get an arborist to look at the tree. Contact Naud with experiences like this.
- Commissioner Graham noted there might be an opportunity to connect trees more closely to stormwater impacts in plan
- Where is forestry funded from?
 - Park trees are funded from parks millage and street trees are funded from stormwater
- Are there ideas as to where funding sources should come from?
 - Have clear idea of budget needs (located in Appendix D), but have not identified funding sources
 - Commissioner Graham recommended considered increasing stormwater rates and a forestry millage
 - Seven year pruning cycle would be a stormwater utility rate increase of \$2.75 for 28 quarters
- Naud noted that in the commission packet was a copy of a health impact assessment completed by Michigan Department of Community Health that looks at tree planting in low-income neighborhoods in Ann Arbor

Unfinished Business:

[Resolution Recommending Staff Resourcing for Community Energy Efficiency](#)

Commissioner Hutton introduced a revision of a resolution from the January meeting looking at staff resources to address the Climate Action Plan. This resolution was also passed at the Energy Commission.

Motion to Approve by Commissioner Appleyard, Seconded by Commissioner Smith

Discussion:

Commissioners discussed the scope of the commission in terms of budgeting issues and the issue of supporting more funding to support the Climate Action Plan. Commissioners referenced the bylaws to discuss scope of the resolution.

Motioned Approved on Voice Vote (7 Ayes, 2 Nays – Stead, German)

New Business:

None

Report from Staff:

Draft Commission Bylaws

- Movement at City to align format of commission bylaws and establish uniform term dates
- Added sections:
 - Attendance policy
 - Ability for representatives from other commissions to send alternates
 - Ethics section with conflict of interest component
 - Quorum requirements – need seven members to pass a motion

Commissioners discussed revisions to the bylaws.

Staff Update by Naud

- Michigan Green Communities fourth annual conference was held earlier in the week in Flint
- Will share report on staff Climate Adaptation workshop held in September
- Wind project with public schools is now only likely to be education focused

Report from Committees and Chair:

Update on Commission Chairs Meeting by Commissioner Hutton

- Met with chairs and vice chairs from Park Advisory, Planning, Environmental and Energy Commissions to discuss current projects

Next Scheduled Meeting:

March 27th, 2014
Council Chambers
7pm

Adjournment:

Adjourned