

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission

March 26, 2015

Action Meeting

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

Roll Call:

Present – 9

Wayne Appleyard, Sabra Briere, Jason Frenzel, Chris Graham, Katherine Hollins, Susan Hutton, Benjamin Muth, Bob Needham, and Wendy Woods

Absent - 4

Mike Anglin, Allison Skinner, Patti Smith, and Missy Stults

Quorum present

Staff Present:

Matthew Naud

Approval of Agenda:

Approved

Motion by Commissioner Graham, second by Commissioner Muth

Motion Approved on Voice Vote

Approval of Minutes:

Action Meeting Minutes – February 26, 2015

Motion by Commissioner Graham, second by Councilmember Briere

Motion Approved on Voice Vote

Public Commentary:

Dan Raybon – Representative for Greener Michigan a University of Michigan student group

Spoke in support of reducing waste and the group's focus to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags. Proposed solution to ban single-use bags at the point of purchase and expressed interest in working with the commission to reintroduce an ordinance to City Council. A policy brief was distributed to City Council.

Commissioners discussed a single-use bag ordinance, and the student group responded to questions.

- Councilmember Briere noted the challenge with regulating national chain stores and the potential impact on small businesses. County Commissioner Rabhi and Briere previously discussed a countywide effort.
 - Many examples of small cities that have enacted ordinances especially in California. Student group is willing to conduct research to address legal barriers.
- Are you willing to work with Washtenaw County?
 - Yes. Initial interest in statewide ban, but given resources plan to start small and move outward.

- Commissioner Woods acknowledged the success of the ordinance in California and is willing to work on.
- Have you looked into a fee for all bags?
 - Open to other options. Proposed ban based on previously proposed ordinance.
- Commissioner Graham stated the issues with recyclable plastic bags.
- Commissioner Muth noted a referendum to repeal the plastic bag ban in California.

Barb Shoales – Backyard Beekeeper in Ann Arbor

Spoke in support of making Ann Arbor a bee-safe, bee-friendly town. Proposed solutions including: plantings, reducing mowing in city-owned parks for bee forage areas, education to support native pollinators, and rooftop gardens. Spoke in support of reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides.

- Is there an organization?
 - Shoales and Eileen Dickinson launched Backyard Beekeepers Biodynamic version. Dickinson is certified biodynamic beekeeper.
- Commissioner Graham suggested trip to Leslie Science Center and potential to be an addition to its current programming.

Jeannine Palms – Ann Arbor Resident

Spoke in support of Cobblestone Market, its success, and the goal of becoming a zero waste farmers market. Requested commission explore partnership opportunities with farmers market to support local food access goals of the Climate Action Plan. Requested the City waive the \$1300 fee charged to the market for use of the park. Stated Cobblestone Market furthers four different strategies in the Climate Action Plan.

- How often is the farmers market?
 - Once a week on Tuesdays May through October on the grass at the Cobblestone Farms park.
- Have you presented at Park Advisory Commission?
 - Expected to present in May.

New Business:

Presentation on Remote Sensing in the Huron – Rachel Menge, Pioneer High School

Menge, a senior at Pioneer High School, presented “I Sense Huron to Something” discussed alternatives to increase accuracy and efficiency of monitoring and sampling along the Huron River. The [full presentation](#) is available online. Menge responded to questions from commissioners.

- What application is used to check the sampling?
 - Any device on station 1’s wifi with the correct IP address
- Commissioner Frenzel noted the Huron River Watershed Council has looked into remote sensing options, including looking at Limnotech sensors used to monitor Great Lakes. The cost is prohibitive and challenge is placing on land or water sites.
 - Are currently exploring different options for placement.

- If monitoring system is put on public land, may be able to focus on small stretch as a pilot.
 - Focus for data depends on collecting data on all parts of river.
- Why is the data is collected only from April to September?
 - Weather and safety conditions.
- What do sensors measure? Does it measure chemicals?
 - Temperature, pH is monitored. Potential for several measurements to be taken.

Downtown Premium Prioritization Information & Input – Megan Masson-Minock, Principal at ENP & Associates

Masson-Minock provided an overview of the City's efforts to evaluate the current downtown premiums and solicited feedback from commissioners. ENP & Associates was hired by the City's Planning and Development Services and the Ordinance Revisions Committee (ORC) to evaluate downtown premiums. A [memorandum](#) from ENP & Associates to the commission is available online.

Masson-Minock proposed three key questions to the commission:

- Are the current premiums, especially those dealing with energy efficiency and green building, effective?
- If not, what changes do you suggest?
- Would it be better not to have them at all?

Commissioners shared feedback and Masson-Minock responded to questions and comments.

- Have you looked at the City's track record evaluating the implementation of premiums and how was this verified?
 - Majority of premiums have been residential and is tracked by if units were built. For LEED, planning has worked with projects throughout the process to certification. Has been a concern with programs. In Arlington County, projects pay certification fee upfront and it's placed in escrow. If the project does not get certified, money is used for education.
 - Councilmember Briere noted there is a financial penalty if they fail to deliver on specifications needed to achieve premiums.
- Is energy efficiency required to receive any of the premiums?
 - Need at least two LEED points.
- Need to incent non-motorized transportation over parking.
- What is the height limit for D1 zoning?
 - D1 depends on the street and on overlay zones.
- Vary residential premiums based on housing type desired and placing more value on design guidelines.
- Interest in going beyond LEED and shift focus to green roofs, white roofs, and solar arrays. Need solution to manage blocking solar access.
- Important to build in periodic review, and support for escrow-type solution to encourage full implementation.
- Are there setbacks for buildings downtown?
 - Yes, side, rear, and front setbacks exist but vary on different streets. Premiums address the height of the building.
 - Planning and Development notifies developers of future development potential, such as whether a building may be built next to or adjacent.

- Are there constitutional, either state or federal, limitations to premiums that can be provided?
 - Yes, but encourage commission not to focus on this, but rather to provide ideas.
- Among current premiums, the green building premiums are unique in that they should be applied to all development. Should this be a qualification for all Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR) premiums?
- Support for requiring utility data
- Commissioner Woods asked the commission for their thoughts on mandatory design review.
 - What is the connection between design review and sustainability?
 - Could connect to sustainable materials and building and existing City policy, like the Climate Action Plan.
 - Some communities do have mandatory design for FAR bonuses, but a design review board allows for slightly more flexibility and less uniformity.
 - Are historic districts a good model?
 - Potential to provide a design review board the same authority.
- A construction and recycling demolition ordinance is part of the commission's work plan.
 - Share materials to see if makes sense to incorporate into premiums.
- What was the most used premium?
 - Residential.
- What is timeline for collecting feedback?
 - April 1st through April 21st will include public meetings and a survey.
 - Community coffees
 - Large public meeting will be held on April 23rd.
 - Is it possible for commission not to meet to attend meeting?
- Living Building Challenge has a requirement for beauty as one of the components. Argument to consider design review component.
- Was the affordability premium not used because it was not incented enough?
 - Residential premium was more appealing. Student rental developers noted the safety perception of affordable housing.

Resolution Supporting Community Energy Resourcing

Commissioner Appleyard introduced the resolution which requests continued funding to support the Climate Action Plan.

Motion by Commissioner Graham, second by Commissioner Hutton

Motion Approved on Voice Vote

Commissioners discussed the resolution.

- Is this the same tone as the resolution from last year?
 - Yes, but last year resolution focused on staff person. Energy Commission subcommittee is looking into sustainable funding.
 - Councilmember Briere noted that council is looking at additional funding for staff.
 - Public hearing on first Monday in May on budget as venue to speak in support.

Unfinished Business:

None

Report from Committees and Chair:

Update on Idling and Air Quality by Commissioner Hollins

- Expected to bring content to commission by next meeting
- Recommend tabling monitoring as commission work item

Update on Business and Residential Education for the Climate Action Plan by Commissioner Hutton

- Prioritizing water and solid waste as goals
- Looking at collaborating with Ann Arbor Climate Partnership and other non-profits, such as Huron River Watershed Council and Ecology Center

Report on Ann Arbor Climate Partnership:

Update on Climate Partnership by Commissioner Hutton

- Marketing strategy underway

Report from Staff:

Staff Update by Naud

- City has new and improved stormwater model calibration
 - Can model the impact if every residence puts in a rain barrel
 - Model still in early stages, will come to commission eventually

Items for Next Agenda:

- Policy for herbicide use by City (employees and contractors) and use of Roundup
 - Naud will send materials to commission before next meeting
 - Potential update from staff from Natural Area Preservation

Next Scheduled Meeting:

April 23, 2015