

# Engaging Citizen Volunteers in A2 Sustainability Activities

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March 23, 2017 (similar to presentation given to Energy Comm. on 3/14)

# Current State of Sustainability in Ann Arbor, page 1 of 2

- A2 Sustainability Framework Dashboard goals and targets are generally not being achieved / progress toward them is behind schedule.
- The City's Climate, Solid Waste, Huron River Impoundment, Waste Management and Organics Recycling Plans alone include well over 100 recommended actions – most of which are actually projects, not a tasks, in their own right – few of which have been implemented or are currently resourced and being worked on.
- Current Ann Arbor City sustainability-related resources are limited to:
  - Two permanent staff ; and
  - \$165,000 p.a. for additional staffing, consulting and project work.\*
- Five priority projects have been identified by A2's Climate Partners and members of the Energy and Environmental Commission and provided for City Administration and Council for their considering for inclusion in future FY budgets.  
Recommended resourcing amounts to ~ \$1,000,000 p.a. just for theses five projects.

\* Per M. Naud

# Current State of Sustainability in Ann Arbor, page 2 of 2

- Increased City resources may not become available soon or ever, at least to the degree necessary to achieve targets, due to:
  - Projections of increasing City budget constraints and demands (e.g. for infrastructure, pedestrian and bike safety, public safety, etc.)
    - ***City costs are rising 2.5% p.a. whereas revenue is only growing 1% p.a.***
  - In a January meeting with City Administrator Lazarus on solar taxation in A2, he mentioned he hopes to provide the ***non-recurring*** resources requested for the five priority projects; however, only ***reoccurring*** funding was requested. Even if projects were to be fully or partially funded for one year, that leaves future funding in question as outlined above.
  - Even if resources are budgeted, long lead-times to approve and make funds available will delay the application of those resources to their intended projects.
- In the past, the Energy and Environmental Commissions have largely filled an advisory role and have developed recommended actions but have tended not to work on their implementation.

# Posit

Ann Arbor can accelerate the implementation of its sustainability-related programs, projects and individual actions and thus the achievement of its Sustainability Framework Dashboard goals and targets by the recruitment and effective and efficient engagement of local volunteers to work on sustainability projects.

# Evidence of Potential Positive Impact of Volunteer Support

- Energy, Environmental and other commissioners, board members, sub-committee and ad hoc group participants came forward to volunteer their time and talent; more like-minded people are in our community, especially if they are confident they will make a difference.
- Over the last several months we have welcomed two new Energy Commissioners and several others have attended Energy Commission meetings to express their interest in becoming more engaged in energy activities.
  - Unfortunately, up to now, while new commissioners have regularly come to meetings, as far as I know, we have not engaged or even asked them to participate in program / project work even there is a good chance they would be willing to contribute more.
  - Similarly, we have not immediately engaged recent Energy Commission attendees nor did we officially record their contact information.
- There are non-Ann Arbor residents who identify with Ann Arbor as the center of their civic and cultural life and come regularly to A2 sustainability events who would likely be willing to volunteer and could put to good work.
- Finally, in the aftermath of January's successful A2 Solar Club kick-off, it's notable how much that program (and the Community Solar initiative we are working on in parallel) has been driven by volunteer help **and** what has been accomplished.

# Proposed Volunteer Engagement Process and Responsibilities, 1 of 5

- Identify priority programs, projects and actions
  - Review Climate Action, Solid Waste, Huron River Impoundment and other City Plans
- Identify sub-set of the above which are suitable for volunteer support
- Determine if these are best worked on through a standing (sub-)committee or through individual, ad hoc program / project / action teams
- Recruit / assign a commissioner or NGO partner to lead each sub-committee / program / project / action
  - Identify positions / work need
  - Determine qualities required to accomplish above project work
  - Brainstorm a few types of people that may have these qualities
- Develop outreach materials
- Brainstorm outreach methods / locations (see slides 8 & 9, Recruit volunteers)
- Conduct outreach (see slides 8 & 9, Recruit volunteers)

# Proposed Volunteer Engagement Process and Responsibilities, 2 of 5

- Create and implement on-boarding information / training
  - Onboarding / training will likely vary depending on each volunteer's background and the activity to which they are assigned
- Determine and conduct volunteer delegation
- Create feedback mechanisms to monitor project and volunteer progress (at least annually); provide regular updates in Energy and Environmental Commission meetings
  - Sub-committee / project teams and volunteer activities would focus on planning and execution; decisions and commitments would be made by the responsible Commission and City Staff member
- Disband ad hoc teams when they have fulfilled their charge

*Responsible (for all of the above): City staff and Energy and Environmental Commissions (or one or two ad hoc sub-groups); by end April*

# Proposed Volunteer Engagement Process and Responsibilities, 3 of 5

- Recruit volunteers on an ongoing basis with the shown responsibilities:
  - At the beginning and end of each Energy and Environmental Commission meeting (add to agenda); *responsible: Commission Chairperson*
  - At events such as A2's four annual Sustainability Forums and Green Fair; *responsible: City staff*
  - At our planned solar power hours for our new Geostellar bulk buy program; *responsible: Energy Commission (through CEC)*
  - From local members of clubs and organizations like Sierra Club, the Ecology Center, The League of Conservation Voters, HoW, Newcomer, etc. (with their permission); *responsible: City staff*
  - Using social media, e.g. Facebook, Meetup, etc.; *responsible: City staff and commissioners*
  - Through the U of M (Sustainability Office, Erb Institute, Energy Institute, etc.); *responsible: City staff*



# Proposed Volunteer Engagement Process and Responsibilities, 4 of 5

- Through an a2gov.org webpage similar to <http://www.a2gov.org/departments/Parks-Recreation/administrative/Pages/Volunteer.aspx> with links to it on sustainability-related webpages; *responsible: City staff*
- Postings / flyers at high-profile locations (AADL, U of M buildings, etc.); *responsible: ???*

# Proposed Volunteer Engagement Process and Responsibilities, 5 of 5

- General
  - Adopt A2 Parks and Recreation and NGO best practices and lessons learned
  - Ensure proposed process is acceptable to City Administration (check with Administrator / Legal Office)
  - Investigate an A2-wide volunteer recruitment and engagement process coordinated by a (volunteer?) Volunteer Coordinator
    - Per Councilman Frenzel, City staff have a proposal to hire a boards and commissions coordinator in 1-2 years; it's possible this role could be expanded to include volunteer engagement

*Responsible (for all of the above): John Mirsky with City staff and Councilman Frenzel support*

# Next Steps

- Comments / questions?
- Agreement to proceed?
  - Energy Commission support received at the March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting
- Environmental Commissioner volunteer to help set-up process?
- Energy-related pilot project: building a project team to link “Solar for All” with “Charge Up Ann Arbor” (transportation electrification) [and potentially also with “Energy Smart Ann Arbor”] and develop a project implementation plan proposal for Commission review and approval
  - Potential project team members already identified and several are already interested
  - I and/or another Commissioner would lead / support the project as a Commissioner rep(s)
  - The team would present its proposal to both Commissions in May (to be confirmed)
- Environmental-related pilot project?