



City of Ann Arbor

Meeting Minutes

Environmental Commission

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<http://a2gov.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

Thursday, December 1, 2016

7:00 PM

Larcom City Hall, 301 E Huron St, Second
floor, City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hutton called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Present: 13 - Christopher L. Graham, Susan Hutton, Sabra Briere, Benjamin Maier Muth, Allison Skinner, Jason Frenzel EC, Robert Needham, Jarin Marocco, Chip Smith, Karie Slavik, Mike Appel, Wayne Appleyard, and Mike Appel

Absent: 1 - Wendy Woods

ROLL CALL

Present: 10 - Christopher L. Graham, Susan Hutton, Benjamin Maier Muth, Allison Skinner, Jason Frenzel EC, Robert Needham, Jarin Marocco, Chip Smith, Karie Slavik, and Mike Appel

Absent: 2 - Sabra Briere, and Wendy Woods

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No minutes were available for review.

Approved as presented

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Nancy Shifler, Chair of the Ann Arbor Sierra Club, spoke about the MRF and recycling contract. She said that repairing the MRF is a priority, and that the City should stop baling unsorted recyclables. She requested that the City provide recycling vs landfill rates.

Caroline LaRose, a UM grad student, is concerned that the current hauler is pre-baling recyclables, and that the City is paying too much for its

emergency contract. She requests that the City remove the pre-baling requirement, speed up the RFP process, and get an impartial evaluation of the MRF.

Dan Ezekiel, retired science teacher, who started Recycle Ann Arbor, said that the City has a lot to be proud of in its history but is currently squandering its goodwill. Baling recyclables is worst practice. He stated that the City needs to reopen the MRF immediately, form alliances, and think regionally. He stated that the County has a progressive solid waste plan being developed.

Aaron Burman stated that he is frustrated that the City shut down the MRF, and that it is a waste of money. Additionally, he is concerned that up to half of the plastic bottles may get lost due to pre-baling.

Ford School Student Presentation on Energy Efficiency as Economic Development

Two graduate students from the Ford School of Public Policy gave a presentation about how energy efficiency efforts can have economic development impacts. They said that Ann Arbor spends roughly \$214 million per year on electricity and gas, which is a "high energy spend". According to the students, Ann Arbor has leaky buildings and generally lacks LED lighting. While smart meters exist, there is currently no sharing of utility data in the City. They shared that energy efficiency projects tend to have negative costs (the savings is more than the cost). They are basing their proposal on a project out of Minneapolis. Their recommendation is to establish an Office of Energy Efficiency in Ann Arbor to be staffed with full-time staff from the City, UM, and DTE. The students will present their findings to the Energy Commission and to the Climate Partnership. Commissioner Graham asked about the timing of the proposal. Commissioner Appleyard asked about the possibility of including information about the residential market in their future presentations.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Hutton announced that Commissioner Briere will be retiring, and introduced Mike Appel.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

A motion was made by Graham, seconded by Councilmember Smith, that Commissioner Hutton be elected as Chair and Commissioner Skinner as Vice-Chair. On a unanimous voice vote,

the Chair declared the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Michigan Recycling Council Presentation - Kerrin O'Brien

The CEO of the Michigan Recycling Coalition, Kerrin O'Brien, gave a presentation on the history and future of Ann Arbor's recycling programs. She reported that the City's participation in the MRC has declined over the years, and that the MRC would "love" more involvement from the City. She reported that infrastructure in the City is important state-wide. She presented that there are many different models of how the City could redevelop its recycling program, and that continuous improvement is important. She said that recycling markets fluctuate up and down all of the time. She continued that the County markets their materials to preferred MI manufacturers, and that the City could attract manufacturers to the region to reuse its materials. She concluded by saying that organics is the lowest hanging fruit.

State of Michigan Recycling Presentation - Matt Flechter

Matt Fletcher, staff of the MRC, spoke about Ann Arbor's recycling programs. He reported that Ann Arbor was the poster child sixteen years ago but that other jurisdictions are leaving the City behind currently, especially in regard to connecting with local manufacturers.

Commissioner Hutton asked how active the City has been in the MRC. O'Brien responded by saying that Christina Gomes is still a member but there is not a lot of involvement. A question was asked about what other programs are leading. MRC staff responded by highlighting Muskegon's programs which work with MI state to complete the supply chain. The City of Kent is also looking at whole product lifecycles. MRC staff concluded by stating that several nonprofits provide great services. Recycle Ann Arbor is a "gem" and is leading the way among nonprofits. The MRC needs the City's support at the state level.

Commissioner Smith asked if the MRF is a resource for the City, and MRC staff responded that the MRF is a regional resource, and that if MI is to double its recycling rate, the state needs the City's MRF to be operational.

Commissioner Hutton asked whether the City's MRF should be locally or state-run and how many staff the City's programs should employ. MRC

staff replied by saying that there are many different ways to conduct business, that more collaboration should take place across levels of government, and that funds can be leveraged. MRC staff replied that the trend is towards processing big volumes of single-stream materials at high speed.

Commissioner Hutton asked about which programs contract out their services. MRC staff replied that that happens mostly in more rural areas. She followed up by asking about what level of staffing is ideal. MRC staff replied that recycling calls for "at least a person" who has administrative and political skill sets. Operating facilities requires a different person. She continued by asking how the City can regain its leadership position. MRC staff replied that the City needs a recycling leader, that the City should build on its strengths, and look for points of innovation, especially organics.

Commissioner Skinner asked whether having \$15 million dollars sitting in an unrestricted fund is common. MRC replied that enterprise funds are common but that that kind of fund balance is not, and that the City should use the funds wisely.

Commissioner Needham asked what legislative changes are needed. MRC staff replied that doubling the state's recycling rate requires changing statutes.

Staff Presentation on MRF and Recycling

Systems Planning Manager, Cresson Slotten, gave a comprehensive overview of the City's solid waste, composting, and recycling programs. According to Slotten, the MRF is 20-25 years old, requires repairs to every door, needs its scale repaired, and its conveyor equipment may need to be repaired as well. The fire and alarm systems and furnace also need repairs. While these repairs are being carried out, recycling service to the City's residents continues uninterrupted, and that the recovery rate of 11% is the same as previously. Slotten reported that the Interim Operator of the MRF will be a short-term operator with an early to mid-February start date. The goal is to have a long-term operator in place by the end of 2017. The Organics Management Plan will have draft recommendations in February, and there is funding in the FY 2017 for pilots stemming from that Plan. Slotten went over budget details for the recycling, compost, and solid waste operations in the City.

Commissioner Skinner asked whether the MRF assessment will be made

public, and whether other consultants were considered. Slotten replied that Waste Management has operating expertise and that the City will seek a second opinion if necessary.

Commissioner Smith asked if there is a list of other things to fix at the MRF, and the costs for each repair. Slotten replied that the repairs can be done using general maintenance dollars.

Commissioner Skinner asked inspection of facilities will be part of a future contract to run the MRF. Public Services Area Administrator Craig Hupy replied that the previous contract underfunded investment in the facility, that safety is a major concern, and that staff needs to ascertain what the real cost of performing services is while reinvesting in the whole program.

Commissioner Needham asked how the City's 11% residual rate compares to industry standards. Staff replied that the industry standard is 25% but that the City's goal is 10%. He further asked whether single-stream recycling was the most efficient way to get things recycled. City Administrator Howard Lazarus replied that it wasn't.

Commissioner Appel asked how the upcoming contracts will be able to respond to rapidly changing market conditions for recyclables.

Commissioner Skinner asked that the solid waste update engage the entire community and the Environmental Commission as well.

Commissioner Frenzel asked how Commissioners can help. Slotten replied that Commissioners can be engaged through the RFP process.

Commissioner Graham stated that the City used to employ seven employees in this area, and questioned whether two staff will be sufficient. Slotten replied that the City's new organizational model is a different business model, which means that there are more than just two people in this area. Commissioner Graham asked about how relations were between the City and the County. Slotten replied that the City is looking regionally as they develop the RFP for the long term operator of the MRF. Realignment in the county could take years. Hupy continued that the City is working with the County on Drop-Off Facilities, which the staff sees as a regional problem. The City is also pushing the County to think regionally in their plan.

Commissioner Skinner asked why budget projections are always

negative when most of the years the City realizes surpluses. Slotten replied that the City has to have a multi-year financial plan with low, medium, and high projections. Skinner replied that projected landfill costs do not need to be "so high". Hupy responded that the City should expect a 30-50% increase in tip fees.

Commissioner Frenzel stated that running at a deficit every year is not sustainable. Hupy responded by asking whether solid waste should be picked up by a contract and not the City. Frenzel asked how the City can envision a future with more recycling. Hupy replied by saying that market conditions vary tremendously.

Commissioner Smith stated that getting to zero waste is the end goal, and that the City has a willing public and other assets to make that happen.

Commissioner Skinner asked whether the City was looking for what it wants in the next solid waste plan or for negative financials. Hupy replied that the last plan was lofty but did not include financials, which this next plan will include. Skinner replied that many of the goals of the previous solid waste plan have not yet been met.

Commissioner Smith cautioned that, similar to the Climate Action Plan and the Sustainability Framework, the City needs to talk about dollar amounts at the same time it talks about goals. Lazarus concluded that the City's 47% diversion rate is "exceptional", that everything needs educational efforts, and that the City will become more agile and flexible.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES AND CHAIR

Reports were skipped due to time.

REPORT FROM STAFF

Update on Gelman Site and Armen Cleaners

Environmental Coordinator Matt Naud reported that the City has filed a lawsuit re: the Gelman site with a court date in mid-December. He also reported that the EPA has met with residents and property owners impacted by Armen Cleaners. Significant levels were found in one basement, and mitigation efforts are being undertaken. He reported that this is a case of the federal and state governments working with local government well.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Future agenda items include: an update on HRIMP; an update on pollinators; and a report on EPA Region 5 Superfund.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is January 26, 2017.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

No public commentary.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 by Chair Hutton.

All persons are encouraged to participate in public meetings. Citizens requiring translation or sign language services or other reasonable accommodations may contact the City Clerk's office at 734.794.6140; via e-mail to: cityclerk@a2gov.org; or by written request addressed and mailed or delivered to:

City Clerk's Office
301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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