

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission

September 26, 2013

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

Call to Order:

7:06pm

Roll Call:

Present – 10

Sabra Briere, John German, Chris Graham, Susan Hutton, Rita Loch-Caruso, Chuck Warpehoski, Kirk Westphal, Patti Smith, David Stead, and Missy Stults

Absent - 3

Wayne Appleyard, Valerie Strassberg, and Jamie Woolard

Quorum Present

Staff Present:

Jamie Kidwell
Matthew Naud

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Commissioner Smith to approve agenda, Seconded by Commissioner Stead
Motion Approved

Public Commentary:

Ranad Sharma

- Sharma noted he was a student interested in environmental concerns for a class public policy project.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Councilmember Warpehoski to approve minutes, Seconded by Commissioner Westphal
Motion Approved

Officer Elections:

Motion by Commissioner Stead to nominate Commissioner Graham as chair and Commissioner Hutton as vice chair, Seconded by Commissioner Smith
Motion Approved

Unfinished Business:

Environmental Commission Work Plan

Motion by Commissioner Westphal to approve work plan, Seconded by Commissioner Stults

Discussion:

Commissioner discussed the Environmental Commission Work Plan, commissioner work plan assignments and work groups, and forwarding the work plan to City Council.

- Environmental Commission will submit work plan to City Council as a communication item
- Work plan establishes new work groups
- Commissioners should work with staff to post notifications of meetings, which are open to the public
- Councilmember Warpehoski made a correction to work plan assignments noting that Commissioner German and Commissioner Loch-Caruso are leads on the bike lane recommendation project

Motion Approved

Discussion of Green Streets Policy

Naud and Kidwell provided an overview of next steps for the Green Streets Policy, since Commissioner Strassberg was absent. Commissioners discussed next steps for the Green Streets Policy.

- Resolution for Green Streets Policy is available to commission and will be brought forward for action at the October 24th meeting, along with a presentation on the policy
- Next meeting will be an agenda and may move to a work session if Green Streets Policy is the only action item
- Resolution recommends that City Council adopt new policy statement, which is attached to the resolution
- City Council does not typically hold public hearing on resolutions and Environmental Commission might provide opportunity for public hearing
- Commissioner Loch-Caruso noted this policy will impact city streets and will not impact private citizens and will improve infiltration of stormwater
- Opportunities for public comment will be available at Environmental Commission meeting and at City Council meeting

New Business:

Resolution for Ann Arbor to Apply for 100 Resilient Cities Centennial Challenge Grant

Motion by Commissioner Hutton to approve resolution, Seconded by Commissioner Stead

Naud introduced the resolution and grant to the commission and commissioners discussed details of the grant and next steps.

- Rockefeller Foundation is providing a 100 million dollars in grants to promote resiliency within communities
- Grant due in middle of October and would hire a Chief Resiliency Officer
- Grant contest is international
- Staff welcomes participation from the commission to work on grant application

- Resolution tonight supports applying to grant, and resolution will also go before City Council for approval
- Resiliency extends beyond climate change and also involves economic and social factors
- Current City Council policy requires approval by City Council before applying for grants
- Commissioner Stults noted the alignment with the Sustainability Framework and the Climate Action Plan
- Commissioner Loch-Caruso noted the need to include safe drinking water since water comes from the Huron River which is vulnerable to pollution and climate
- Commissioner Stults suggested acknowledging resiliency is about moving forward and not just bouncing back after extreme events

Motion Approved

Reports from Committees and Chair:

Water Committee Update by Commissioner Caruso

- Green Streets Policy will come to commission next month
- Committee is looking for next areas of focus and may focus on sidewalks

Solid Waste Committee Update by Commissioner Stead

- Solid Waste Plan expected to go to City Council in October
- Approval has previously been delayed at City Council

Transportation Committee Update by Commissioner German

- No formal transportation committee currently exists, but Commissioner German will work towards work plan items

City Council Update by Councilmember Briere

- Barbara Lucas from Washtenaw County will release a press release about Environmental Commission working on an idling education program
 - Commission Hutton proposed a presentation on idling to commission at next meeting to share work on idling education program
 - Commissioner German noted that Lucas is also looking into impact on emissions due to vehicle speeds and suggested a recent report from Oakridge National Laboratory, a Department of Energy national lab, may be a useful background document but report is not yet available online
- City Council approved a resolution to request that Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) establish new standards for 1,4 dioxane
 - Washtenaw County is also looking into legal repercussions
 - MDEQ contacting staff and electeds to discuss moving forward
 - Commissioner Loch-Caruso stated that Pall Life Sciences is proposing new clean up standard criteria

Planning Commission Update by Commissioner Westphal

- Public feedback regarding downtown zoning changes underway
 - Premiums usually based on environmental premiums and feedback may impact current premiums
 - Expect results in a week or two

Park Advisory Commission Update by Commissioner Stults

- Focus on downtown parks, including potential locations and pros and cons
 - Conducted survey with 1500 respondents and held two public meetings
- Investigating dog parks
 - 1500 respondents on survey and respondents indicated number one priority was walkability
 - Two public meetings held
 - Developed criteria to evaluate potential locations
- All survey responses are online on the PAC website
- Walkability is defined as within one-mile of house

Community Resilience Team Update by Commissioner Warpehoski

- Community resilience team met before this meeting
- Focus of team is how to use community self organization and social capital as a part of community resilience
- Exploring a small grant model from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods to incentivize community activities
- Looking to pilot for one year
- Next meeting is October 23rd at 6pm

Staff Update by Naud and Kidwell

- Housing and Urban Development Green Rental Housing Grant
 - City is working with Washtenaw County to increase energy efficiency in rental housing stock, focused on low-income and student populations
 - Piloting an “Off-Campus 101” program with Beyond the Diag and Planet Blue Student Ambassadors to provide students moving on campus with information
 - Piloting Eco-bee thermostats in public housing sites, which is funded through Energy Fund
 - Convening a broader advisory group and will look for Environmental Commission to participate
 - City of Ann Arbor has approximately 30 million square feet of rental properties and represents a large energy spend in the community
- Health Impact Assessment of Targeted Tree Planting
 - Michigan Department of Community Health worked with City to evaluate impacts of planting trees in low-income neighborhoods
 - Study will inform current planting practices
 - Commissioner Stead noted that Chicago is planting different types of trees due to climate shifts
- Sustainability Action Plan draft underway using City budget goals
- Sustainable Ann Arbor series for 2014 scheduled for second Wednesday of January, February, March, and April at the Ann Arbor District Library
- Working with Energy Commission on legal underpinnings of commercial energy disclosure
- Investigating Electric Vehicle infrastructure planning, such as working with city fleet and Zip Car
- Home Energy Affordability Loan pilot project with DTE and Clean Energy Coalition (CEC)
 - Zingermans, City of Ann Arbor, University of Michigan are participating
 - 100 free energy audits for each participant
 - CEC evaluates the effectiveness of the work

- Hypothesis is that working with an employer-based model will be more effective
 - 27 city employee are already signed up for introductory sessions
- Community Climate Partnership funded through the Local Sustainability Matching Fund as part of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network
 - Worked with Ecology Center, Huron River Watershed Council, and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
 - National foundations will match up to \$55,000 of local dollars raised to support this project
 - Grant will support a community-based approach to support the City's Climate Action Plan
- First round of Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program is finishing up
- Big Belly Trash compactors installed in parks with Department of Energy funding
 - Successful installations – trash cans communicate fullness by email
- Great Lakes Adaptation Assessment for Cities (GLAA-C) Climate Adaptation Workshop held for staff on Tuesday, September 24
- Working with DTE to install solar on non-park City-owned sites
 - Two to three acres needed
- Working on new web design of the State of Our Environment report to reframe report as State of Our Sustainability report
- Current progress with MichCon site
 - Councilmember Briere shared that MichCon put out request for information (RFI) which specified that public developers needed to provide public access to the site but not public ownership
 - Commitment to guarantee public access but not public ownership
 - Results from RFI has not been released and site may require rezoning
- Environmental work at 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main
- 721 N.Main - Buildings taken down and the floodplain has been deed restricted creating dedicated open space
- Working on landfill closure
 - Looking to deed restrict Southeast Area Park
 - Will be public meeting as part of closure process

Public Commentary:

Ranad Sharma

- Sharma asked what will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Loch-Carusio provided an overview of the Green Streets Policy
 - Policy proposes new criteria for new and reconstructed streets for infiltration and decreased runoff
 - Large portion of runoff to the Huron River comes from city streets
 - Policy formalizes the process to have stricter infiltration standards

Next Scheduled Meeting:

October 24, 2013 in Council Chambers

- Green Streets Policy and Presentation
- Idling Presentation

Adjourned 8:02pm