

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Commission – Work Session Minutes

May 27, 2011

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

Commissioners Present:

8 - Rita Loch Caruso, John German, Susan Hutton, John Koupal, Gwen Nystuen, David Stead, Kirk Westphal, David Wright

Commissioners Absent:

Christopher Graham, Carsten Hohnke, Valerie Strassberg, Margie Teall

Staff Present:

Jamie Kidwell

Discussion on Vacant Commission Spot:

- Council appointment to fill spot, interested party can contact his or her council member
- Interest in representation from University of Michigan, link to Center for Sustainable Systems
- Interest in policy/law oriented commissioner

2011/2012 Work Plan Staffing:

1. Sustainable Communities Committee

Leader – Kirk Westphal

Members – Margi Teall, Chris Graham, John German

Scope

- Review State of Our Environment Report (update for June 10th Green Fair)
- Look at holistic approach to sustainability (economic, environmental, social)
- Potential to work with sustainability framework

2. Water Committee

Leader – Valerie Strassberg

Members – Gwen Nystuen, Rita Loch Caruso

Scope

- Green streets (looking at stormwater benefits, porous pavement)
- Creekshed group

3. Transportation Committee

- No real leader, Susan Hutton will look into transportation issues

Scope

- Washtenaw Corridor
- Street lights
- ALT Committee (may not be the best fit for commission to work with, staff driven)
- Green Fleets Policy

Next Steps

- Presentation by Eli Cooper
- Susan Hutton to follow up with some contacts (Anya Dale, Washtenaw County and Terri Blackmore, Washtenaw Area Transportation Study)

4. Natural Features Committee

Leader – Chris Graham

Members – Gwen Nystuen

5. Solid Waste Committee

Leader – David Stead

Members – Margi Teall

Parking and GHG Presentation:

- Study looks at greenhouse gas emission relative to 500 new garage parking spaces from the library lot
- Study conducted by Matt Naud in response to a settlement in a case against the City
- Garage parking events (event = trip into and out of parking garage) have been increasing for the past five years despite only a small increase in garage parking spaces and efforts to discourage driving (increased bus service, bike facilities)
- If the expectation is that increasing parking spaces leads to an increase in trips to downtown, an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, and an increase in parking events, THEN, little or no increase in parking spaces should not increase trips or parking events, and this has not been the case in Ann Arbor
- Study shows that additional parking spaces will not result in a net increase of greenhouse gas emissions
- Even if the additional 500 spaces at the library lot structure produce 1,600 mTCO₂e/yr of greenhouse gas emissions the City's GetDowntown program and LED street light program mitigate this increase in emissions

Comments –

- Might look into overlaying parking event data with DDA revenues
- Garage parking event is not best term
- Graphs/charts and total numbers of parking spaces need to be labeled and stated more clearly

Pesticides:

Local Ordinance Exceptions in MI Pesticide Act

- Possible loophole in state legislation on pesticide, but may still be too strict of standards
- Investigate requiring more informative postings when pesticides are used (e.g., specific identification of pesticides used)
- David Stead to follow up on this

Education

- Best option at this point
- John Koupal to look into examples like Madison Healthy Lawns
- Look into Pesticide Action network and see if this is still active
- Provinces in Canada are making ornamental pesticides illegal
- Should check in with City of Ann Arbor and review pesticide policies

Green Fleet Review:

- Work with city staff to review and update the Green Fleet policy
- Next Step: set up meeting with relevant city staff (Matt Naud, Tom Gibbons, Nate Geisler, Andrew Brix)
- Interested in reviewing: John Koupal, John German, David Wright
- Work with energy commissioners to review as well (Wayne Appleyard and other interested commissioners)

Traffic Signalization:

- Met with Les Sipowski in a previous commission session, but not clear what changes should be made, or if commission should follow up on this initiative

Sustainability Framework Update:

- Working on collection of executive summaries on each of the City's 26 plans
- Summaries are assigned to city staff and each plan will be represented by one-page that includes key vision of the plan and its key goals
- Next steps: Form internal working group, collect summaries and share this product with public, commission, staff
- After internal working group of staff established themes to organize goals will bring these themes to environmental commission for comment
- Refer to the blog on the Sustainable Cities Institute for more information:
http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/forum/sustainability_planning___processes/topic/bef0a8f3-9764-4207-ac67-d51abcc7ceb4

Public Meeting Presentations:

- Eli Cooper, Transportation Programs Manager or Jennifer Lawson, Water Quality Manager to present at next commission meeting
- Other possible presentations:
 - Update from Energy Commission
 - Update on Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) from Wendy Barrott