

Meeting Minutes

City of Ypsilanti
Sustainability Commission
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
1 S Huron St.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Monday, February 12, 2018, 7:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:05 pm

II. ROLL CALL:

Sustainability Commission:

Commissioner Emily Drennen	Present
Commissioner Nancy Heine	Absent
Commissioner Natalie Sampson	Present
Commissioner Thomas McKee	Present
Commissioner Brett Zeuner	Present
Commissioner Julia Bayha	Present (left at 8:35)
Commissioner Keith Michalowski	Present
Commissioner Thomas Kovacs	Present

Staff:

Commission Secretary Seth Torkelson-Regan	Present
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III. CONSENT OF AGENDA

A. Approval of Agenda and approval of Minutes for January 8, 2018

Kovacs: Asked Seth to revise section 8A of the January meetings to make sure it is clear that Commissioners Bayha and McKee showed interest in the Planning Commission subcommittee and McKee was chosen by the commission.

Bayha: Asked Seth to revise, in section 8D, the phrase "connecting" to "trying to connect."

Kovacs (second Sampson) moved to approve the minutes with amendments and the agenda as submitted. Unanimous approval. Motion passes.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE:

V. PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

VI. RESOLUTIONS/MOTIONS/DISCUSSIONS

A. Community benefits staff response review - Waste Stream Reduction

Michalowski: Requested to discuss this topic next meeting after commissioners have reviewed it in their own time.

VII. LIAISON REPORTS

A. Sustainability Plan Subcommittee

Zeuner: Stated the subcommittee met last month to discuss how they will break out the framework and distinguish for themselves the framework and the plan. From this came a plan to engage with the Planning Commission chair... They will meet with her in lieu of their normal meeting on Thursday to discuss the framework and understand how it intersects with the Master Plan update.

Drennen: Added that anyone else can come to the meeting.

Zeuner: Added that it will be at the library at 7:30 pm on Thursday.

Michalowski: Stated he will announce the meeting to the mailing list. Only four commissioners can attend because of the quorum limit.

B. MGC Challenge Subcommittee

McKee: Stated he and Beth Bashert worked together. The next meeting was on Sunday February 4th. He and Keith looked at sources that Beth and McKee had found and came up with a standardized reporting form. In the process of looking over the sources, they have identified eight bronze items they qualify for. He pictures the next step is getting those in and going for some silver items. If it means too much work, it will be something for next year. There is opportunity for the most improved city.

Drennen: Asked if Ypsi applied in the past.

Michalowski: Responded no.

Kovacs: Asked if Ypsi could meet eight of at the bronze items, and how many are needed for bronze certification.

McKee: Responded yes, we qualify for eight bronze items, and six are required.

Michalowski: Suggested the commission completes as much as possible and then chooses what certification to qualify for.

McKee: Clarified that Ypsi doesn't choose which level of certification it is trying to qualify for. Added that the subcommittee plans to have a ready to submit application at the next commission meeting.

Michalowski: Asked about the next subcommittee meeting.

McKee: Responded no, but he is willing to match up schedules with those who are interested.

C. Outreach Subcommittee

Bayha: Stated she has spoken with a contractor who specializes in making affordable housing about coming to give a presentation to the commission. Added that a gathering space has been created at the Riverside Arts Center has begun as a type of free warming center on the Thursday-Saturday, 3-8/9 pm. Encouraged commissioners to visit it. Stated that the county meeting she attended on January 17th was interesting, with lots of discussion, but little results. She took lots of notes. Discussed the future of the recycling center in Ypsi. Stressed that Pete Murdock stated that discussion around this topic appears the same as it was thirty years ago. The question was raised, 'What is wrong with the Ann Arbor location?' Single stream recycling is a sorting issue. Added that education around recycling is an interest to her—how the process works, why cleanliness is important, etc. Added that she made Earth Day calls to WCC and EMU. Asked a commissioner to contact her rep from WCC regarding Earth Day events.

Michalowski: Responded he will follow up with the WCC rep.

Bayha: Stated she called EMU, but got little feedback. Recommended holding an event as their (the SC) own in the downtown area for Earth Day. Added that she will invite all commissioners to a presentation of hers in April regarding what the SC is doing.

Kovacs: Stated it is difficult for EMU to do Earth Day events because it is during final exams and just before graduation. Added he will be happy to help contact EMU.

Zeuner: Stated he thinks the SC's Earth Day event could be interesting. He did an Earth Day event at the Corner Brewery two years ago, and it was successful, and they use solar and geothermal energy and compost at their brewery. It could be a meet and greet for commissioners, too.

Bayha: Suggested doing something downtown, such as at SPARK East, to promote diversity of businesses they support.

Zeuner: Added that he was not representing the SC when he did the Earth Day event.

Sampson: Stated she likes the idea but it is coming up and thinks we need to delegate tasks.

Bayha: Suggested keeping it as simple as possible—just a meet and greet.

Zeuner: Suggested doing it at a restaurant because SPARK East requires different things for food to be served. Thinks a two hour meet and greet is something worthwhile.

Michalowski: Suggested throwing together a couple short presentations, too.

Bayha: Added she could do a green brainstorming activity. Wondered how they could schedule their event on that Sunday around what the Ecology Center and Leslie Science Center are doing.

Michalowski: Suggested those interested create a subgroup and propose a plan at the next commission meeting in March. Asked if Bayha could begin planning some sort of recycling education program and share about ideas at the next meeting.

Zeuner: Stated that Governor Snyder signed a letter of intent for policy that would increase the fee for waste, which would raise funds for recycling and remediation efforts in Michigan. If he can get the state legislature to pass this, that will be a good thing and result in lots of grant opportunities for us that could help us with Water St and recycling.

Michalowski: Added that it could result in \$9 million on solid waste, \$15 on recycling.

Zeuner: Suggested we share monthly updates on this policy update.

D. Housing Affordability and Access Committee of the Planning Commission

McKee: Stated the subcommittee had its first meeting on Wednesday the 7th. It has 19 members. The chair called it the “steering committee” for the housing and affordability update will take. Meeting consisted mostly of introductions. Added that Ypsi is generally a progressive city, but in the subcommittee there are still a lot of different viewpoints. The chair outlined the process for updating the Master Plan, which must be evaluated every five years, which for Ypsi will be October 2018. The subcommittee hopes to recommend updates by then. The three phases are 1) intensive info gathering, 2) create specific strategies, and 3) consolidate strategies and make recommendations. Hope to create working definitions of affordability and accessibility; research similar work by other cities; and include an inclusive housing plan. The next meeting is March 7th at a venue TBD. Asked commissioners to share ideas for how he can best represent the SC in the subcommittee. Referenced two documents shared in the meeting packet that he developed for the subcommittee.

Kovacs: Stated he read the report fully. Stated McKee’s assessment of the current Master Plan was much more than just housing affordability and accessibility, and could be used for the sustainability plan subcommittee.

McKee: Stated the report he did was also for a class, so that is why he went into further depth. Thinks there are things the city needs to consider beyond housing affordability and accessibility.

Kovacs: Stated that this rating system seems similar to the STAR rating system. Wants to make sure the different efforts are congruent and not competitive.

McKee: Added that STAR is not there now, and the subcommittee is.

Kovacs: Stated that one of the most interesting statistics to him was the decrease in the median family income in the city, despite the increases in the city and county.

McKee: Stated that diversified income is a stated goal of the Master Plan. As a community, Ypsi has seen a decrease in the median family income, but this is specific to family unit households (2+ family members living together).

Kovacs: Stated the trend is what most concerned him.

McKee: Added that he thinks this speaks to why the subcommittee exists. Families are struggling more than ever to afford good housing, and family income is part of this.

Kovacs: Emphasized the importance of looking at broader definitions of accessibility and affordability, including location to transportation, work and food.

McKee: Responded that he also emphasized this topic in the first subcommittee meeting and will continue to do so as the rep of the SC to the subcommittee.

Zeuner: Stated that the American Community Survey's margin of error is almost 3000.

McKee: Added that this is not a full picture, but it is supporting why we are doing this.

Zeuner: Agreed.

McKee: Added that this is not the data that will be used by the subcommittee for its recommendations.

Zeuner: Stated he thinks using the American Community Survey can lead to misleading or confusing conclusions. Speaks to the value of doing a city or community survey.

McKee: Stated that Ypsilanti is too small to do a one year survey. Added that this Friday and Saturday he will attend an event at UM about how the built environment has been racialized, and encouraged others to attend.

E. Community Benefits Survey Subcommittee

McKee: Stated that a rough draft was prepared as is in the packet. The idea is to have a generic set of survey questions for when a development is proposed in the city. One idea is to have language to send to City Council that would keep this commission in control of a survey. Thinks this is appropriate because sustainability touches on all aspects of a CBO. Addressing Beth Bashert's questions, he thinks she misunderstood the survey. The survey he proposes has a

different purpose than the housing affordability and accessibility subcommittee. This survey is meant to be repeatable and capture attitudes and ideas of people who would be affected by developments. It could streamline agreements between citizens and developers. He does not think the Planning Commission is an appropriate entity to host the survey because they are enabling the development. The SC has a stricter agenda of sustainability. They are not necessarily more accurate. The big thing for McKee is that the open ended questions will help build better CBAs, and no nationwide survey can do that. Would like to refine the survey with the SC. Thinks they need to run a trial survey. Would like to bring proposal language in March to the commission.

Zeuner: Stated he likes the questions he proposed and the explanations for why those questions are included. Added that Sampson is a survey expert.

Sampson: Agreed with Zeuner. Thinks self-reported can be powerful, but the fear is putting this work in with the possibility that it will not be used.

McKee: Stated that it depends on what the CBO is. Looking at Detroit's CBO model, Ypsi could have a similar type of panel. Implementation of the survey itself would be labor intensive, but he does not think the info would be put on a shelf.

Kovacs: Asked why he did not include ethnicity, race or gender.

McKee: Responded that he wanted to keep the number of questions low, and wanted to be sensitive to those who would be taking the survey. Also, he does not think that knowing such information would change ideas.

Kovacs: Added that such info would help insure that the survey is being represented of the city.

Sampson:

Bayha: Stated that it sounds problematic to her that such demographic info is not required.

Michalowski: Suggested that such questions could be optional, like checkboxes.

Zeuner: Stated that by not gathering racial and ethnic data, the survey is then framed by class/SES alone.

Bayha: Added that is true regarding gender, too.

Zeuner (second McKee) moved to extend the meeting to 9 pm. Unanimous approval. Motion carries.

Drennen: Stated she thinks it is not sustainable to have volunteers to do survey work. Wondered if it could be mandated that developers or the city does surveying as part of the CBO process. Questioned whether the SC and citizens have the capacity to do it.

Michalowski: Proposed requesting funding for a self-addressed envelope survey program.

Sampson: Added that the problem is that we don't know the scale of the survey yet.

Bayha: Asked how many people would need to be surveyed.

McKee: Responded that it depends on the size and type of development. Stated he thinks the SC could commission the survey, but not necessarily do the survey. His proposal will include a request for funding. If future versions of the SC do not have qualified surveyors, they could contract out the surveying and still keep it within the framework created by the SC.

Drennen: Stated that she fears they may inadvertently pick a battle with the Planning Commission. This could be seen as "claiming turf" from the PC.

Michalowski: Added that the SC is really offsetting City Council, not the PC, and Council is so busy that he doesn't think this will be a problem.

Zeuner: Agrees that the SC could hold more of an oversight role than an actual implementation role.

McKee: Agrees with Drennen, but thinks it is important some type of outreach into the community occurs with the sole intent of evaluating sustainability, which is the role of this commission. Stated he would appreciate input from Zeuner and others about the questions in the draft and proposal language. Asked if this should be part of an outreach subcommittee.

Michalowski: Responded that it can stay in its own corner.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. NOAA Climate Resilience Program update

Michalowski: Stated there are no updates. Added that the youth member has resigned.

B. Report on Bike Share program

Michalowski: Shared that Darwin McClary has shared that the city is moving forward in support of the program

Kovacs: Stated EMU has completed a report and recommended to the president's office an MOU to Spin Bike and not to Lime Bike. Suggested starting with no more than 250 bikes by March 2018. Want to conclude in May 2019, which in that time would include an evaluation of

the program. Requested the following: safety trainings be required; the option for bike passes that do not require smartphones; local ads; hiring of local citizens firsts; hiring of local business for bike maintenance. Stated that Bike Ypsi invited him to share about the bike share program at one of their meetings this month.

McKee: Asked what the bike training safety would involve.

Kovacs: Responded it would be online.

Michalowski: Asked if a gift card program would work in lieu of a smartphone. Stated the city does appear to be on board and working with EMU.

Kovacs: Stated EMU is concerned about bike's being out of the right-of-way. Seattle and other cities have made parking changes to make streets more bike-friendly. Also suggested signage for bikers with suggestions for safe routes downtown.

Michalowski: Stated he shared these ideas with the non-motorized subcommittee, and suggested Kovacs talk to them.

Kovacs: Stated he sees downtown and depot town as resources for the EMU to utilize more with this program.

C. Report on Sun Shot challenge grant

Michalowski: Asked if commissioners have had a chance to send their letter to DTE.

Zeuner: Stated he is opposed to this. The PC is reconsidering a rezoning of this neighborhood, but from his research the rezoning was done to accommodate this. While he appreciates what Solar Ypsi is doing, he thinks the community should vet whether they want a solar project on a landfill in their area. Thinks citizens need to understand that they will not individually benefit from this project. He is curious how the PC's rezoning of this neighborhood would fit into the Solar Ypsi project. He is not opposed to a solar array on this site, but thinks we need to address the social and historical issues first.

Michalowski: Supported Zeuner's ideas. Asked Zeuner to talk with Bonnie and the PC chair and report back to the commission. Asked if the city has any surveying data of the neighborhood at this point.

Zeuner: Responded that he thinks the city has a handful of survey data.

Sampson: Asked Zeuner to share his research on this neighborhood.

Zeuner: Added that the last time DTE tried to come in, there were all these issues and that is why DTE pulled out. Therefore, we want to make sure that is not repeated.

Kovacs: Stated he is concerned, regarding the letter, about the potential issues of putting solar panels on landfills.

Drennen: Stated that there are companies that specialize specifically in this type of solar panel installation.

Zeuner: Added that this is an especially complicated site, which is why DTE pulled out—because of an over-caution regarding methane. Agrees with Drennen that this type of project has been done successfully elsewhere.

Kovacs: Stated they could invite a person to give a presentation on solar installations.

Zeuner: Added that it would be better to invite someone who specializes on brightfields (solar panels on landfills). Added that it is a contentious issue. The important thing this time around is the process. It's possible that Dave (Solar Ypsi) knows more than us.

Kovacs: Added that Dave has a deadline, so we want to make sure things have been vetted properly.

Zeuner: Stated he thinks this is a question for the Planning Commission.

D. Vacant commission seat update

Michalowski: Stated Leah has not officially submitted a resignation letter, but will do so immediately. The youth member is resigning and needs to send a letter. Currently seeking members and wanting to diversify to be a better representation of the community.

Kovacs: Asked if there is a timeline for this.

Michalowski: Stated he is seeking anyone for the position. Has requested a list of people who have already submitted an application for the position and will vet them.

E. Carbon credit panel report

Zeuner: Stated he is thinking about getting feedback from UM professors (environmental economics) regarding how this will impact local government. Hopes to bring his findings to the next meeting.

Kovacs: Shared that he took away that the Citizens Climate Lobby is trying to push forward a tax and dividend—a tax on carbon, with money generated given to US citizens. Each person would get a full share and every child a half share. There is a mechanism for companies that move overseas and export products to the US. Want to tax it as close as they can to when carbon comes out of the ground. He had a couple of concerns: 1) innovation, and 2) inflation. It

is a regressive tax that becomes progressive because people of low-income receive the same amount as high-income homes. Fears that the “increase economic development” that is supposed to happen as a result would increase consumption and production, and thus increase pollution. The sponsors are bi-partisan.

Zeuner: Stated that he has learned cap-and-trade is problematic. Wonders how this could be made international, and how it could impact US-China trade relations. Fears about the social consequences that could result.

McKee: Asked why Kovacs fears about innovation and taxes on companies like Tesla.

Kovacs: Responded that he is not sure where the tax would be applied.

Zeuner: Added that where the tax is applied affects the political landscape too because of whether or not the consumer or producer bears the burden of the tax.

Kovacs: Added that the dividend makes sense, but he felt the panel was short in details.

Drennen: Stated that Ann Arbor City Council just endorsed it.

IX. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

X. PROPOSED BUSINESS

A. YCS Goals for 2018 (next meeting)

McKee: Stated that Arbor Brewing just committed to using aluminum cans only. It may raise our profile and be a way to recognize sustainable business actions if the commission had a way to honor businesses like Arbor Brewing in a public fashion for such sustainable practice.

Sampson: Suggested it could be an annual recognition.

Drennen: Suggested allowing a business to come speak at a commission meeting and then give them a press release.

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, March 12, 2018

XII. ADJOURNMENT: 9:25

Kovacs (second McKee) moved to adjourn. Unanimous approval. Motion passes.