

## Sustainability Commission Meeting December 6, 2021

Meeting called to order at 5:36 pm by Renee Ruchotzke

Roll Call: MaryJane Stone, Renee Ruchotzke, Rick Hawksley and Andrew Scholl (arrived at 5:44pm), Ad Hoc members present were Ms. McCarty, Mr. Wilen and Ms. Nelson.

Absent: Wilder Hritz;

Mr. Hawksley made a motion to excuse Mr. Hritz. Motion was seconded by Ms. Stone, motion passed 3-0.

Staff: Patti Long, Assistant to the City Manager

Bridget Susel, Community Development Director

### **Approval of the agenda:**

Mr. Hawksley made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Stone. Motion passed 3-0.

### **Meeting Summary Minutes:**

Mr. Hawksley moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Stone seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

### **Public Comment**

John Thomas of 1621 Chadwick Drive spoke about the Intergenerational Village project at the old Allerton Apartments site. He expressed concerns of the negative impact the project will have on the natural landscape and wildlife habitat. Mr. Thomas asked the Commission to consider the situation at either the current business meeting or the next meeting in January. He added that it is important that the University and City work on projects together with the community in a democratic fashion with transparency and informing the community of progress.

### **Work Session**

Ms. Long updated the members about the presentation to Council, stating that it was well received and that this meeting Renee will be facilitating the gathering of information and ideas for moving forward.

#### **Round table to introduce members of both teams:**

Ms. Ruchotzke – Joined the Sustainability Commission in 2018, became the chair a year ago.

Ms. Long – Staff member for a year and a half now.

Ms. Stone – Joined the Commission this year. Joined to find out what is going on and to learn how to be a part of it.

Mr. Hawksley – This is the second appointment for the Sustainability Commission, beginning with the creation of the Environmental Commission (which became the Sustainability Commission) and now re-appointed at the beginning of this year.

Mr. Wilan – Appointed to the ad hoc for the Climate Action Plan four years ago. Also showed the Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> Plain Dealer article about Ohio being the world's 26<sup>th</sup> largest emitter. In the US, Ohio is 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Ms. McCarty – With the Ad Hoc Committee since it began four years ago.

Ms. Nelson – Ad Hoc member since the beginning.

Ms. Susel – Community Development (CD) Director. The Sustainability Commission falls under her department. Since CD has 11 Board and Commissions under their purview the Assistant to the City Manager has been the staff member for the Commission because of the excess load on CD.

Dr. Scholl – Joined the Sustainability Commission shortly after the Ad Hoc was created.

After the introductions were completed, Ms. Ruchotzke offered a recap of the presentation to Council and added that it was well received. The vote will take place at the December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. After that point there will be an un-drafted copy of the report sent out to the group and posted on line. Ms. McCarty expressed her appreciation of how the report was condensed to a few slides. Mr. Walen asked for if the Ad Hoc was to help get the report and come up with the mitigation plan. Ms. Ruchotzke said that is why the group is meeting tonight all together tonight, to get that plan started.

Round table to come to a shared understanding of past work and how to move forward:

Ms. Nelson – During the data collection the Ad Hoc Committee also worked on the Climate Action and Resilience plan as well while waiting. There was a zoom meeting in early 2020. Ms Long will try to locate that video. The group utilized the ICLEI tools to review vulnerability and risk assessment. There was a group call on 3/12/2020 with Harrison and ICLEI. Mr. Hawksley asked if there were notes taken then and who took them. It was Harrison however the notes in the drive only go to December of 2018. Ms. McCarty has the notes from the Resilience plan. Ms. Susel added that some of the “brain storming” ideas were consolidated into a smaller list and she might be able to locate that list. The Phase 3 Work Plan is a document that can be used moving forward. This was the last document the Ad Hoc worked on before meetings were paused by Covid-19. Ms. Nelson mentioned the cohorts that ICLEI set up so that communities could collaborate, rather than starting from scratch. She and Ms. McCarty participated in the ICLEI training series.

Ms. McCarty – Stated she needs to go back and review all of her notes of the steps to take, according to the ICLEI training. Ms. Ruchotzke mentioned that there seems to be a need for project management and she asked Ms. Susel if project management is included in the process. Ms. Susel clarified that there was no funding appropriated for that position. In going through the process of the GHG emissions, it became evident that there either needs to be a staff member hired or a consultant to carry the project forward. Ms. McCarty read through part of the list on the Phase 3 plans and Ms. Ruchotzke stated that it seems like the Ad Hoc had a good grasp on what needs to be happen next.

Mr. Walen – Didn’t add anything to what has already been discussed but he presented an action plan infographic found in the New York Times showing possibilities of how to reduce emissions by sector. Ms. Ruchotzke added that something similar would be good to get out to the community rather than the full report. It would serve as an introduction and if more information was desired, the community would have the report available as well.

Dr. Scholl – Nothing to add to what has already been said.

Mr. Hawksley – Expressed his desire to have the notes of what has been done either

discovered or recaptured so as to not start from scratch. He added that looking at what cities around Kent have done would also be helpful to the group.

Ms. Stone – Nothing to add at this time but will be ready to help out when plans are formulated, particularly with PR and getting the information out to the community. She asked what is included in the residential sector. Ms. Susel clarified that it is emissions from things used in our homes. Dr. Scholl added clarification that it is the home structure only in the residential category, not the mowers and vehicles. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested the group works to develop a deeper understanding of what the sectors are so that we can look at the reality of what the data shows and address those issues rather than focusing on what some perceive as the issue.

Ms. Ruchotzke asked if we should use the template that the group can use in Google docs. Ms. Susel will reorganize the Google drive to make it easier to find the information needed from this point forward. She also added that we still have ICLEI as our support resource.

Ms. McCarty asked about how social justice plans fit in. Ms. Ruchotzke mentioned that we should stay focused on GHG emissions. Ms. Nelson stated that it is not possible to separate the two since we need to recognize the vast socio-economic differences within our community. For example a large portion of the community cannot afford electric vehicles. The plan needs to include all residents.

Mr. Wilen suggested a proposal to Council expressing the need to raise money to help with reducing GHG, possibly through a tax. Ms. Susel reminded him that the first levy for the new police station failed. It is an intense campaign. Mr. Wilen understood. Ms. Nelson added that if the Build Back Better bill goes through, the aim of the group could be to make sure our community gets its fair share. Mr. Hawksley added that perhaps some of the infrastructure bill could be helpful. Ms. McCarty stated that we need to gain understanding and develop an educational plan to share with the community. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested there needs to be a way to get people engaged, generally conflict works to get attention. Ms. Long suggested that there are plenty of low cost habit changes that can add up to have impact on GHG and the household bills. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested maybe the City could offer credits or incentivize going solar. Ms. Nelson added that carbon sequestration needs to be a component too, maintaining green space and planting trees. Dr. Scholl stated that the City is actually doing a very good job in the area of tree planting.

Ms. Ruchotzke offered to allow Ad Hoc members to either continue or not as we move into the next phase. She also asked if the group felt like more members are needed. Dr. Scholl asked who is still on the committee and the response was those in attendance and Melanie Knowles. Mr. Hawksley asked for clarification of the Commission and Committee roles for the short term. Ms. Ruchotzke stated the Commission would be offering clarity and support to help focus the work of the Committee. The goal is for an onboarding process for new members who want to join.

Ms. Ruchotzke asked what would be helpful moving forward. Ms. McCarty likes the idea of an onboarding process. Ms. Nelson is hopeful for a City staff appointed for the

project to set the agenda and pace for the plan. Ms. Susel plans to determine how much that staff person would cost then will go to Council in February to request the budget appropriation to cover the new position. She would like hire locally so they would be present. Ms. Long will work with Ms. McCarty and Ms. Nelson to summarize the notes they have to create a document to share with the future coordinator. Ms. Susel suggested modeling our plan after cities in the ILCEI cohort that are ahead of us at this time. Dr. Scholl suggested we think about what to do before the staff member is hired. Ms. McCarty said we can take the time to re-familiarize ourselves with phase 2 and 3 and summarize the notes. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested that the group translates “scopes” and “sectors” into laypeople terms and create infographics to increase understanding for all. There is an ICLEI document that can be shared. Infographics could be added to the website. We can link people to resources to what can be done at home to make a difference.

Ms. Ruchotzke asked what support Ms. Susel might need to go to Council in Feb and offered a letter of support. Ms. Susel stated that would be appreciated and included with the request. Will add to the agenda for January’s meeting.

Ms. Ruchotzke asked the Ad Hoc members how they felt about working together with the Commission until the coordinator can be hired. Ms. McCarty likes the idea of getting the messaging cleared up with each other before taking it out to the community. Ms. Nelson feels like the two Commission members on the Ad Hoc are the leaders and Harrison was always there too to keep things moving but it is the Ad Hoc member’s responsibility to do the work. She added that now is a good time get the Commission and the Committee all at the same level of understanding of where we are and where we need to go. Mr. Wilen feels it is time for the community to understand the problem we are facing. Perhaps an article in the paper would be helpful to explain what we are doing. Mr. Hawksley added that the industrial component in Kent needs to be made aware of the problem and given ideas on mitigation. Ms. Nelson added that Harrison was the point person. Ms. Long asked how often the group met. It varied but they were scheduled and everyone would report back to the group on findings discovered in between meetings. The group agrees the new staff person should be leader of the Ad Hoc moving forward.

Ms. Nelson suggested that all members be cautious of sharing opinions as Commission members. She also warned that we need to be aware of triggering business owners with how we approach them. She suggested finding out the companies that include sustainability in their core values and starting with those businesses first. The goal is to first bring them on board with improving emissions.

Check out round

Ms. Stone shared her appreciation for the information shared at the meeting and reminded the group that we ought to begin with telling people what they’re doing right before telling them what they’re doing wrong.

Dr. Scholl feels like the group is re-centered now.

Mr. Hawksley would like a 3-4 month plan at the next meeting.

Mr. Wilen would like better definition of the sectors.

Ms. McCarty felt the meeting went well and liked the overview and reminders of past work.

Ms. Nelson feels like everyone is now on the same page.

Mr. Thomas suggested that we look at previous programs (Storm Water monitoring) and use that as a template for this program.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Stone made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Hawksley seconded it. All in favor, 4-0. Meeting ended at 7:10.

### **Next Meeting**

January 3, 2022 in person at the Kent Police Department Community Training Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Fl. Joint meeting with the Ad Hoc Commission.