

Sustainability Commission Meeting October 2, 2018

Meeting called to order at 5:40pm by Chairperson Nadine Gomez.

Roll Call: Julie Morris, Nadine Gomez, Judy Nelson, Andrew Scholl, and Miriam Jackson

ABSENT: None

Staff: Harrison Wicks, Executive Assistant to the City Manager

Review of Meeting Summary Reports of September 11, 2018:

Mrs. Morris made a motion to approve the minutes from September. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gomez and was approved with a 5-0 vote.

Public Comment

None

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Gomez made a motion to move the new business item to the beginning presented by Mr. Charles Ramer with NOPEC. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Morris and approved with a 5-0 vote.

Ad-hoc Committee Update- Mrs. Nelson confirmed the committee met on September 18th and the next meeting will be a conference call on October 8th. There has been no significant changes and committee members are still working to collect data. Dr. Scholl and Mrs. Nelson confirmed that the next in-person meeting for the ad-hoc committee will be on October 29th in the community room of the new Police Station. Mrs. Nelson will be out of town at this time and Mrs. Morris confirmed she can attend in her absence.

Farmers' Market Update- Ms. Gomez asked when the commission would like to attend the market next. Mrs. Morris presented ideas/materials to have for tabling at the market including inviting Kent State students to attend and present on their projects. Dr. Scholl commented that tabling could be a good environment to showcase what local community members, businesses, and companies are doing related to sustainability. Dr. Scholl commented that these initiatives could have a short explanation with pictures that show what people are doing, as well as have a method of measuring interest and the most popular item could be created into a workshop for a future event. Dr. Scholl commented a poster board of ideas on the table for community members to rate by interest could be an effective way to measure interest level. Mr. Wicks commented participants could place a dot on an image they think is interesting and the image with most dots will be a workshop in the future. Mrs. Morris commented that tabling materials should include items that explain the mission, vision, and values of the Sustainability Commission, such as the three pillars. There was a consensus that attending the market and having a presence is a positive thing. Ms. Gomez commented she can ask Market Manager Andrew Rome for available times in November. Past ideas that the commission has done at the market include composting, rain barrels, food drives, seed bombs, etc.

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Chickens on Residential Lots Update- Mrs. Nelson commented that there will be a presentation during the Council Committee meeting tomorrow night, October 3rd. Draft legislation allowing chickens on residential lots smaller than 2 acres will be discussed. Mrs. Nelson confirmed that language requirements for permits is not in the draft legislation, however there are setback limitations of 30 feet off the back property line and 10 feet off side property lines. Mrs. Nelson commented that under the current legislation, setbacks could eliminate a lot of residents from owning chickens legally. Mrs. Morris commented on the predator proof containers for feed and refuse and the need to keep refuse hermetically sealed. Mrs. Nelson agreed, commenting refuse can be added to a compost pile or garden. There was a consensus that the draft legislation is a starting point for the discussion and can be changed. There was a consensus that commission members should feel free to attend the council meeting tomorrow night if available.

Single Use Plastic Straws- Ms. Gomez asked if the commission should continue the awareness campaign. Mrs. Nelson presented the idea of featuring local businesses and their work on limiting single use plastic straws. Ms. Gomez commented she could create a write up for all commission members to take to local businesses downtown to present information on the awareness campaign. Mrs. Nelson commented that sit down restaurants could be a good place to start. Mrs. Nelson commented that compostable containers and paper containers used by Grazers and paper straws used by Tree City Coffee highlights current actions and commitment by some businesses downtown. Mrs. Nelson commented that a reusable container that could be returned to businesses downtown by patrons to be washed, sanitized, and reused could be a good method of including businesses and helping patrons remember to return containers because they could be returned to multiple locations. Dr. Scholl commented that some universities have started doing this with reusable containers. There was a consensus that this was a good idea and should be something to look in to. Ms. Gomez brought up a similar idea of a company that could provide reusable carry out boxes to all businesses downtown. With a consistent carry out box across numerous restaurants, patrons can return them to multiple locations. Mrs. Nelson finally commented continuing the awareness campaign and working with Kent State students would be beneficial.

Community Outreach Update-

- a. Kent Environmental Council (KEC)- Mrs. Morris commented the KEC is sponsoring a permaculture garden workshop with guest speaker Renee Ruchotzke. She is giving a talk at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent on Monday, October 22nd at 7pm.
- b. KSU Office of Sustainability- The Green Energy Ohio (GEO) tour previously scheduled for Saturday, September 29th was cancelled. Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Nelson spoke about plans for future events. Civic engagement ideas around gun rights and finding common group between social groups could be beneficial. It is important to create a space for dialogue. Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Morris confirmed they will meet with Melanie/Leah on Friday, October 5th.

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- c. Haven of Portage County- No update. Mrs. Morris confirmed Haven of Portage County is having a rummage sale at a local church.
- d. Family & Community Services- No update. Mrs. Morris commented that Kent Social Services has many people in their building during the day and donations of food are much appreciated. Mrs. Morris said she will share updates of future fundraising activities for Kent Social Services.

Tree City Bulletin- Mrs. Morris commented on a draft of the Sustainability Commission's article for the winter 2018 Tree City Bulletin. She recommended that item number #7 and #8 be changed. Mrs. Morris recommended that item #11 be moved to the end of the list and become item #15 since it will be a nice ending summary statement. Mr. Wicks recommended the side note paragraph be removed. The draft was approved by the commission with the changes recommended.

NEW BUSINESS

Sustainable Energy Sources from NOPEC Speaker Charles Ramer (moved to beginning)- Mr. Ramer described his previous experience as the Executive Director of the Portage County Solid Waste District and current tenure as the Senior Relationship Manager for NOPEC. When at Portage County, Mr. Ramer helped create the current recycling program and spoke on how it was a historic achievement as one of the first in Ohio. Mr. Ramer explained the mission of NOPEC and its goal to serve member communities. Mr. Ramer confirmed Service Director Melanie Baker is a thought leader for NOPEC, helping to guide the board develop new ideas. Mr. Ramer said there are currently 900,000 accounts administered by NOPEC. Mr. Ramer explained a new program being offered by NOPEC in 2019 to encourage the investment in sustainable programs and initiatives including: charging stations, solar installations, and others. NOPEC is supplied by NextEra for electricity and natural gas. NextEra currently receives a large portion of their energy from 'clean' sources with a goal of having a 100% renewable option available to member cities in 2019. As a regional governmental body, NOPEC realizes that sustainable energy sources are important either by providing clean energy sources or buying from local energy sources in Ohio. For example, the City of Cleveland recently pledged to be powered by 100% clean energy by 2025. In 2019, NOPEC is proposing pilot projects that will include charging stations, solar energy cell phone charging stations, and small-scale solar generation that select member cities can take advantage of. Mr. Ramer explained that NOPEC released 6 million dollars-worth of grants in 2018 that was issued to member cities to use for sustainable projects. The City of Kent is eligible to receive around \$72,000. Mr. Wicks confirmed he can find out more regarding this grant. Mrs. Nelson asked if these grants are primarily directed at local governments? Mr. Ramer confirmed the grants are available to NOPEC member communities and at their discretion related to sustainable projects that are needed in their jurisdiction. NOPEC has prioritized these grants due to decreases in other funding sources for local governments at the state level, such as the Local Government Fund. Mrs. Morris asked

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Mr. Ramer if he was aware of solar buyers' cooperatives in Ohio? Mr. Ramer commented he is not familiar with their structure. Mrs. Morris commented solar co-ops share the burden of initial solar costs and help provide residents access to solar and larger installations that would otherwise be too expensive. Mrs. Morris asked if there is an opportunity of partnerships for renewable energy? Mr. Ramer commented that NOPEC has negotiated a preferred lower price on the member's behalf, and that NOPEC's energy supplier NextEra has made investments to use renewable energy sources. In the past, NOPEC member cities have been able to pursue solar if they were interested, however, there is no larger solar co-operative that exists. Mrs. Nelson spoke on the Stark County solar co-op and their ability to purchase solar. Mrs. Morris commented that solar is costly, which is why a co-op is beneficial to lower the cost burden across multiple entities. Mr. Ramer confirmed NOPEC is moving towards more sustainable projects and resources that cities can take advantage of, however, there is also a competing need for best price and keeping costs low. Mr. Ramer commented that many NOPEC member cities are more concerned with keeping prices low and do not have the financial resources to implement solar or other sustainable solutions. Grants from NOPEC allow member cities to focus on what is important to them. An example of local action included news that Athens, Ohio, under the Southeast Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC), approved a carbon fee for electrical users in a ballot measure in May 2018. SOPEC's actions can be used as a potential example for NOPEC. The revenue from the fee will go towards a community solar program.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Gomez made a motion to remove an item from new business on sustainable energy sources from NOPEC, presented by Charles Ramer. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Nelson and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Mrs. Nelson made a motion to add an item to new business on hosting an informational solar energy workshop/gathering. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Morris and approved with a 4-0 vote.

Ms. Gomez discussed the idea of a food rescue smart phone app and potential application in Kent.

NEXT MEETING

November 13, 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gomez and was approved with a 4-0 vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28pm.