

Sustainability Commission Meeting September 9, 2019

Meeting called to order at 5:40pm by Vice-chairperson Judy Nelson.

Roll Call: Renee Ruchotzke, Judy Nelson, Andrew Scholl, and Miriam Jackson

ABSENT: Nadine Gomez

Staff: Harrison Wicks, Executive Assistant to the City Manager

Mrs. Nelson made a motion to excuse Ms. Gomez. Motion was seconded by Dr. Scholl and was approved with a 4-0 vote.

Review of Meeting Summary Reports of August 12, 2019:

Mrs. Ruchotzke made a motion to approve the minutes from August with select revisions. The motion was seconded by Dr. Scholl and approved with a 3-0-1 vote. Mrs. Nelson abstained.

Public Comment

Bill Steiner, Portage County Solid Waste Management District (PCSWMD), 3588 Mogadore Road, Kent, OH- Mr. Steiner presented on the state of recycling in Portage County, nationally, and globally. Mr. Steiner confirmed the PCSWMD budget is in the toughest position since its creation. For current recycling efforts, contamination is the largest problem and the challenge is informing the public of what is acceptable to be recycled. For instance, “wish recycling” is a significant problem leading to contamination. Mr. Steiner confirmed he would like to have public outreach and education at all education levels as well as outreach on social media. Mr. Steiner recommended that companies making products need to take a larger role in managing the end of life cycle for their products. A positive example is a switch to aluminum for water bottles by Dasani as a way to recycle and keep plastic out of the waste stream. Mr. Steiner confirmed the recycling market is forecasting a negative outlook for another year (2020). The PCSWMD will be doing more education and outreach during that time. Mr. Steiner provided some facts about the recycling infrastructure in Portage County:

1. The Closed Loop Foundation helped with the acquisition of bins, trucks, etc. with a \$3 million loan.
2. PCSWMD is the largest municipal customer for the company Waste Management (WM) in this area.
3. PCSWMD recycles more material than the City of Akron. In 2018, Portage County collected 13,375 tons of recyclables.
4. PCSWMD has a contamination rate of 22%, compared to the City of Akron with 38%.
5. PCSWMD has 8 curbside trucks and 3 other trucks that run everyday.

Mr. Steiner confirmed that PCSWMD is researching fines for repeat offenders contaminating the waste stream. Residents that place unacceptable items in their bins could

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be fined if the proposal is approved by the Portage County Commissioners.

Mr. Steiner commented that glass is not identified on the bins given to residents but confirmed that glass is accepted and allowed. Mr. Steiner also confirmed that PCSWMD will take plastics numbered 1 & 2 ONLY and **NOT plastics numbered 3 through 7.**

Mr. Steiner confirmed that the primary contaminants to the waste stream are food waste, yard waste, batteries, carpeting, construction debris, curtain rods, and plastic bags. Mr. Steiner commented that plastic lids are OK to stay on water bottles and on jugs, however these plastic lids are not accepted by other localities like the City of Akron.

Mr. Steiner confirmed that recyclables collected by PCSWMD go to the following locations:

1. Glass - Goes to Pennsylvania.
2. Cardboard - Goes to Kentucky
3. Mixed Paper - Goes to Indiana or Illinois
4. Plastics - Goes to the Carolinas

Mr. Steiner commented the single stream recycling system has created a completely new system and residents have not caught on to the change or have become complacent. Due to contamination, current productivity at the processing facility is 48 tons per day, **however these facilities are able to process 35 tons per hour.** Plastic bags getting caught in the equipment is a large reason why this slowdown occurs. Mr. Steiner confirmed that PCSWMD is currently paying to have recyclables processed as opposed to earning money. How long this continues is uncertain but the short term outlook is still negative.

OLD BUSINESS

Ad-hoc Committee Update- Mr. Wicks and Ms. Susel are continuing to meet with Mr. Boateng to discuss the ICLEI Clearpath software. They are meeting on a bi-weekly basis.

Farmers' Market Update- Dr. Scholl and Mrs. Ruchotzke are not available to attend the next tabling event at the Farmers' Market on September 14th. Ms. Gomez previously confirmed she can attend in the morning and Mrs. Nelson and Ms. Jackson confirmed they could attend in the afternoon. Mrs. Nelson confirmed she can bring a sandwich board to advertise the Kent Green Energy Ohio (GEO) Tour on September 28th.

Informational Solar Energy Meeting- Mrs. Nelson confirmed there was interest to create a support group of those getting installations as a result of participating in the Portage County Solar Co-op this past summer. The individual organizing this support group is Mr. Albert Barber. Mrs. Nelson mentioned the possibility of doing a similar solar co-op program in 2020. More information is needed.

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Single Use Plastic Public Awareness Campaign- No update.

Community Outreach Update-

- a. Kent Environmental Council (KEC)- No update. Mrs. Ruchotzke confirmed the Fall Form date has not been identified at this time.
- b. KSU Office of Sustainability- Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Ruchotzke confirmed they attended a GEO Tour planning meeting earlier today. Mrs. Ruchotzke confirmed the 'Meet & Greet' event will be held Friday, Sept 27th from 7-9pm at Madcap Brewery in Kent. A raffle for GEO Tour participants and passport holders that visit a specified number of locations will be at the clean transportation cruise-in, next to the Kent Creativity Festival. There was a consensus that the Sustainability Commission should have a table at the cruise-in event. Mrs. Nelson confirmed that 15 e-vehicles are scheduled to attend.
- c. Haven of Portage County- No update.
- d. Family & Community Services (F&CS)- No update.

Tree City Bulletin- There was a consensus to write an article on the 'Top 10 Common Recycling Mistakes' and a recycling narrative on the state of recycling in Portage County. Mrs. Ruchotzke confirmed she can work on the narrative portion. The deadline for articles for the Winter Tree City Bulletin is September 27th.

2020 Environmental Film Series- No update.

NEW BUSINESS

Waste Stream Reform- See public comment portion with PCSWMD Director Bill Steiner.

Bicycle Friendly Community- There was a consensus to review the application documents before the next meeting in October 2019.

OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING

October 7, 2019

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Scholl and was approved with a 3-0 vote. Mrs. Ruchotzke left the meeting early. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10pm.