

Sustainability Commission Meeting April 4, 2022

Meeting called to order at 5:35 pm by Renee Ruchotzke

Roll Call: Wilder Hritz, MaryJayne Stone, Andy Scholl, Renee Ruchotzke, Rick Hawksley
(arrived 10 minutes late)

Staff: Patti Long, Assistant to the City Manager

Approval of the agenda:

Mr. Hritz moved to approve and Ms. Stone seconded. Approve by vote, 5-0.

Meeting Summary Minutes:

Minutes filed, no adjustments recommended.

Public Comment

None

Old Business:

- a. Light Pollution – Ms. Stone shared a presentation with the group via email prior to the meeting and shared some of the highlights. The presentation focuses on health aspects of light pollution such as hormone and melatonin disruption, specifically in the blue lights. She shared that the PC amber lights do not have that negative impact and they put off far less heat and she hopes that the City would use the amber lights when LED lights replace the current lights. Ms. Stone added that the new section on the hike and bike path does not have amber lights, like the section just south of it does. They are the brighter (blue spectrum) lights along the new trail.
Mr. Hawksley shared that he has been emailing Jon Giaquinto about placing shades on the street lights on N. Water to reduce glare in the neighborhood.
- b. Community Gardens – Ms. Ruchotzke stated there is a dedication of the Thomas Anderson Garden on April 24th. The Kent Cooperative Housing has a new person in charge of the garden near the Rec Center. Dr. Scholl added that KSS is putting gardens in on the property in front of their building on Water St. His family is sponsoring a plot. He is unsure if it will be raised beds or ground level plots. All produce goes to feed people in need at that location.
- c. Farmers Market booth – Ms. Stone stated that she received an email from Mr. Rome and responded that the Commission wanted a table for River Day. Ms. Ruchotzke clarified that the tables are set up at the end of the Farmers Market area. May 21 is the date of the event. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested that two members cover the 9-11 shift and two cover the 11-1 shift. Ms. Stone is unsure of her work schedule that day. Mr. Hritz will be out of town. Ms. Ruchotzke is available. Ms. Long is willing to help. Mr. Hawksley offered to take a shift. Ms. Stone will check her schedule and try to request time off and cover a shift. She prefers to come one time rather than setting up then coming back again for the 11-1 shift like last year. Ms. Ruchotzke

asked Mr. Hawksley to cover 11-1. Dr. Scholl can cover a shift. Ms. Ruchotzke and Ms. Long will cover remaining slots. Ms. Long will bring the equipment. Ms. Ruchotzke shared her hopes for bringing information about the initiative to the event to share with the Community. Information about 2-cycle engines could be available for attendees. Ms. Long suggested that people could snap pictures of the infographics rather than having handouts.

Dr. Scholl added that he asked Mr. McKay if the Shade Tree Commission was planning to set up at the Farmers Market and he was unsure. Dr. Scholl added that it would be great to have more than one Kent Commission at a table at the market. The Shade Tree Commission usually has an event where they give out trees for planting, perhaps for Arbor Day. He hopes that a busier booth will attract more people.

- d. Pollinator Pockets – Ms. Ruchotzke presented a handout of the ordinance that Akron had recently been revised. The revision points to the OAC (901:5-37-01) for the list of noxious weeds. Dr. Scholl stated that he likes the state code list, because it actually represents invasive weeds. Ms. Ruchotzke mentioned that if the state revises the list then Akron naturally follows suit by design. Ms. Ruchotzke asked Ms. Long how the Commission could go about requesting an amendment to the current ordinance. Ms. Long will ask the Clerk of Council and let Ms. Ruchotzke know. Ms. Ruchotzke stated that it might be better to bring the Dark Sky ordinance information to Council at the same time rather than the presenting ideas multiple times. Ms. Long expressed the opinion that the pollinator pocket would likely be well received by the City, as Kent has placed large pollinator areas around the police building.

- e. Two-cycle engines – Ms. Ruchotzke mentioned that there are only 28 municipalities in the United States that have ordinances in place against their use. That limits the ability to use those as a model and that “push-back” would be anticipated. This suggests that perhaps education is the best strategy for now. Some ordinances only allowed leaf blowing certain times of the year to avoid disturbing insects. She also mentioned the health related aspects such as dust, lead chips and toxins in the air. She then asked for each member’s thoughts on the strategies to use regarding the 2-cycle engines.

Mr. Hritz agrees that the noise pollution is bothersome but also agrees the environmental factors are concerning. He added that while an ordinance could help those things, he feels that isn’t the best thing to do yet and perhaps another strategy would be better at this time. Ms. Ruchotzke agreed and stated maybe education is the way to go. Mr. Hritz agreed and added that most people don’t agree that leaf blowers are that great a problem.

Dr. Scholl agreed it is not something to push legislation over and that general education is where we need to begin. The group can provide information to help residents who are trying to decide what option they would like to use for leaves. Ms. Ruchotzke offered an idea of a “buy-back” program for owners to switch from gas to electric. Dr. Scholl agreed that those incentive programs work well but added that Kent is not in the position to do that right now.

Mr. Hawksely suggested designing a “Did you know...” fact sheet to have available at event tables. He offered to research items to include on the fact sheet.

Ms. Stone suggested that someone bring in a model of an electric blower and a gas blower to talk about the tools and the pros and cons to educate the public. Ms.

Ruchotzke suggested she check with Ace Hardware to see if they have a staff member who would present information at a booth.

Ms. Ruchotzke concluded that education seems to be the direction the group would like to go with this issue. Ms. Long added that since only 28 cities have this ordinance in place, it would be more difficult to enact at this time.

New Buisness

None

Good of the order

Add Tree City back into Old Business, from Pending Business. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested writing an article about leaf blowers for the fall issue. Ms. Long suggested that the article includes the health factors to help the idea to be well received. Dr. Scholl stated that noise factors should also be included. Ms. Stone suggesting including the decibel level where damage to the ear occurs.

Ms. Ruchotzke mentioned that she thought there is a site to lodge complaints in the City. Ms. Long asked if she was referring to GovQA. She said it was to complain about ordinances being violated. She wasn't sure if business such as landscapers were included in that. Ms. Long added that the refuse companies do get calls from our Service Department if residents complain of loud, early morning pick-ups. Ms. Stone shared her story of a loud early morning pickup and said she commented that when she called to complain, she was told there was nothing that could be done about it. Ms. Long stated that the Service Department calls the refuse company to ask them to pick up after 7:00am and that helps for a while but that calls need to continue as a reminder at times. Dr. Scholl added that there are separate ordinances for business and residential. Ms. Ruchotzke commented that it would be nice if the complaint process were clearer to residents. Ms. Long mentioned that at one point the City had reviewed an app for that. She also added that there is a module that may be added to the Civic Plus (website) platform to make for easier reporting. Dr. Scholl stated that having that app to report issues while out around the town is better than trying to remember to report it when back home.

Dr. Scholl asked about a pending item, Bicycle Friendly Community, and wondered if there is anything else going on with that or if it was still moving forward. He asked if an ad hoc committee had been formed. Ms. Long stated that there wasn't anything she had heard or done about improving Kent's status on that. Ms. Ruchotzke wondered about pedestrian and cyclist accidents in Kent. Ms. Long offered that the statistics are improved dramatically with the Summit St. improvements and when E. Main St. is completed that should yield even fewer accidents. Dr. Scholl added that one of the components of the report that was

lacking was having a committee formed. Another area we were lacking is in the percentage of our roads that have bike lanes. Mr. Hawksley has noticed divers are being more respectful of pedestrians and are actually stopping to let them cross in the crossings.

Adjournment

Ms. Stone made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Hritz seconded it. All in favor, 5-0. Meeting ended at 6:25.

Next Meeting

May 2, 2022 at the Kent Police Department Chief's Conference Room, 3rd floor.