

Sustainability Commission Meeting May 2, 2022

Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm by Renee Ruchotzke

Roll Call: MaryJayne Stone, Rick Hawksley, Andy Scholl, Renee Ruchotzke

Absent: Wilder Hritz

Ms. Stone made a motion to excuse Mr. Hritz, seconded by Dr. Scholl. Approved by vote, 4-0.

Staff: Patti Long, Assistant to the City Manager and Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner

Approval of the agenda:

Mr. Hawksley moved to approve and Ms. Stone seconded. Approve by vote, 4-0.

Meeting Summary Minutes:

Minutes filed with one adjustment requested by Dr. Scholl asking to have his comment at the bottom of page two to “Kent is *probably* not in a place...” as he does not want to speak for the City.

Public Comment

Ms. Seidel did not have comments other than stating her purpose for attending is to listen to what is happening and to focus efforts on making sure that interventions and plans are designed to include those in our community who are disadvantaged.

Old Business:

- a. Light Pollution – Ms. Stone shared that she made a new connection, Lindsey Stefan, who is a lighting engineer on campus. Ms. Stone sent her an email to talk about dark sky but has not heard back from her yet.

Ms. Stone and Mr. Hawksley met to discuss dark sky and light pollution. Mr. Hawksley had asked the Clerk of Council about the background of the City’s lighting ordinance, which has no control over pedestrian nor roadway lighting. He has requested information on why those two segments are exempt and only private and business properties are governed. The current rule is to have zero foot-candles at the property line, however the moon emits 0.25 foot-candles. He also mentioned that Ms. Stone has conducted more research on dark sky ordinances.

Mr. Hawksley added that the two of them were brainstorming ideas to build awareness of both ideas. One idea was to work with KEC and present during a meeting or event and gather input to determine what the thoughts of the community are at the moment. Another idea was to create a poster for the River Day table, highlighting the issues with lights on the path along the river. Ms. Ruchotzke asked if the poster is something that could be created by Ms. Stone and Mr. Hawksley. They agreed and will have it ready for May 21st. Ms. Long added that we have a standing easel as well as a table top easel for displaying information. Ms. Ruchotzke suggested they include health issues related to light pollution as well and Ms. Stone confirmed that is the plan.

- b. Community Gardens – Ms. Long announced that there is work scheduled this month at the south end community garden. Ms. Ruchotzke added that KEC is hosting a garden tour in the south end. Walls Elementary has a garden and Mr. Hawksley will check to see if Holden still has a garden. Ms. Ruchotzke went on to say that the Akron Urban Agriculture is promoting community gardens in Akron with the help of the USDA. While it would be nice to have some in Kent, she was not sure if there was enough space for them other than in the south end or Silver Meadows.
- c. Farmers Market booth – For River Day May 21st. Ms. Ruchotzke will contact Andy Rome to secure a space. Ms. Long will take all of the items in storage to the event and assist with set up and tear down. Dr. Scholl and Ms. Stone will help with set up and work 9-11. Ms. Ruchotzke and Mr. Hawksley will work 11-1 and help with tear down. Set up will be at 8:30.

Ms. Ruchotzke will have information on 2-cycle engines available for attendees to review or take pictures of links for later review. She suggested we not include information on the climate action plan until the Ad Hoc is ready to roll something out. Dr. Scholl asked when the next meeting is scheduled. Ms. Long stated that a meeting is not yet scheduled and added that there has not been any additional historical information added to the drive folders. Ms. Long reached out to Ms. Nelson today to determine what week she anticipates meeting again.

- d. Pollinator Pockets – Mr. Hawksley asked if KEC is handing out wildflower seeds this year again. Ms. Ruchotzke confirmed they will do so at River Day. KEC also placed an announcement on the Portager for No Mow May.

Ms. Long provided information from the Law Department about how to change the ordinance to allow for promotion of pollinator growth. There would need to be a presentation to Council offering the recommended ordinance. The Law Director advised that the presentation only include the changes to the noxious weed ordinance and not add the 2-Cycle issue. The notions need to be separate. Ms. Long added that the Director likes the idea of following Ohio code like Akron does.

- e. Two-cycle engines – Ms. Ruchotzke asked if a Tree City Bulletin article could be written by someone outside of the Commission. Ms. Long said it could be. Ms. Ruchotzke may write it or get help from someone else to help educate the residents on the hazards of 2-cycle leaf blowers. She will include health related aspects and asked Ms. Seidel for her input on that.

New Business

None

Good of the order

While reviewing the tabled items list, Mr. Hawksley asked about the composting. The

digester at Kent State was discussed for those who missed that meeting and notes. Dr. Scholl stated there is a unit near one of the kitchens on campus (Midway). It is an enclosed unit where all of the food waste is placed, where it is ground up which speeds up the breakdown of the waste. There is a company that comes to pick it up and then it is sold to farms as fertilizer.

Ms. Ruchotzke added that when she spoke with Melanie Baker about a municipal composting site, Kent does not have the space needed for that. Dr. Scholl stated rigorous screening would be needed to make sure only organic matter was dropped off. Municipal composting is removed from the tabled list, leaving community composting.

Discussion ensued regarding the SPIN bikes and scooters. Safety is a concern of all members, evidenced by stories shared. Mr. Hawksley stated that he downloaded to app so he can report unsafe use, sharing that as an option for others.

Ms. Long suggested that the Communications Strategy for CAP also be removed since the Ad Hoc group is taking responsibility of that. Ms. Ruchotzke agreed.

Ms. Ruchotzke asked to have the Noxious Weeds item brought up to the Old Business section of the agenda.

Adjournment

Mr. Hawksley made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Stone seconded it. All in favor, 4-0. Meeting ended at 6:05.

Next Meeting

June 6, 2022 at the Kent Police Department Chief's Conference Room, 3rd floor.