

## **Sustainability Commission Meeting, June 12, 2023**

### **Meeting Summary**

SC Members in Attendance: Judy Nelson, Mary Starbuck, Andrew (Andy) Scholl, Rick Hawksley, MaryJayne Stone

Others in Attendance: Julie Morris, City of Kent; William (Bill) Wilen, Ad Hoc Committee member

Judy Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:39pm and roll was taken.

Discussion was had around the open comment section from the previous agenda, its removal from same, and the new procedure of folding this item into the working session of the meeting. Concerns were expressed about not having a formalized item on the agenda before meeting adjournment, and that the current procedure would make it so that if other public guests came, or members had items to share or want discussed that we would have to bring the meeting in and out of order during the working session.

Members decided that it would be better to add the Good of the Order/Public Comment agenda item back to the formal meeting before adjournment. Rick motioned to amend the agenda as described, and Mary seconded. Hearing no discussion, the vote was called, and unanimous approval was had.

During the active Good of the Order/Public Comment section of the meeting, Mary brought two items to the Commission's attention. One was related to news regarding area township moratoriums on solar projects and Mary thought Kent was in a township which caused her concern for related impacts to the Commission's work and whether the Commission should have a response. Rick clarified that Kent is not in a township, it is its own City entity, and members advised the Commission would not respond, but as an individual, Mary could talk to the townships various leadership to express her concerns and provide education around the issue.

The other item Mary had for discussion was related to sprinkler usage on KSU's esplanade lawn, in addition to a pool water rebate that had been discussed at a Kent Environmental Council breakfast meeting. Residents can obtain this rebate because this usage keeps heavy outdoor water usage out of the sewers. Members discussed possible options for alerting the public to same, including placing a notice on the City's utility bill statements, or having an informational blurb or article about same in the next Tree City Bulletin. Rick and Andy advised it may not be a simple process to get a separate meter to have water diverted from the street source away from the house intake. Julie advised she will have to get more information about what the process involves and more clarification regarding what the City's program for same involved before any kind of recommendation for action or articles can be made. She will bring information back to the next Commission meeting, as part of our continued prioritization discussions to be had during the July meeting's working session.

Judy discussed the new trash and recycling contract that was awarded to Republic which will last for 5 years. She explained that Portage County Recycling will be collecting their recycling bins and Republic will be providing new ones. Judy advised she is now a member of the Portage County Solid Waste District's policy committee representing the general public on same. Judy has discussed her involvement with this committee with Bridget Susel regarding any potential conflicts of interest and Bridget has advised Judy is clear to sit on both the Commission and the SW District committee.

Judy advised that KERAMIDA has completed filming for a promotional video for KERAMIDA's services, and educational videos regarding Kent's CAP. Judy, Julie, Bridget, Melanie Knowles (Sustainability Manager at KSU) and Kathryn Burns (Environmental Studies major and intern in the KSU Sustainability Department) participated in the filming. KERAMIDA will hopefully be providing a variety of videos of different lengths (short for social

media, mid-length for City website, and possibly a long one to use for presentations etc.) that can be used for CAP education and outreach. The videos are being provided with no additional cost.

Judy advised they were ready to adjourn. Rick motioned to move adjournment to go into working session. Judy seconded, and discussion was offered. Hearing none, and with unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned.

Julie provided materials for review to start the working session that included Long and Short Summaries of all the CAP initiatives to guide prioritization discussions, and a trifold brochure, as well as an information card about the CAP that can be used for tabling materials. She explained the format and possible uses for each.

Members agreed that the tools Julie provided are helpful, but it was expressed that something is needed in our materials and our website links that allows the public to provide input (in addition to learning more) about the CAP. Julie advised that she had met with Patti Long at the City who has an intern that is helping to develop subpages on the City's website. Julie provided a walkthrough of the proposed structure and subpages that were discussed during that meeting that will be able to house information about the CAP, and that will eventually have a place for the public to add feedback, sign up for volunteer or other list-serv type information, or other items as needed to connect them to the CAP. Additional updates to the Commission's subpage were discussed and may be needed in the future.

Julie noted that the above described website work and the Keramida videos mark the start of work on two of the suggested CAP Outreach components related to same.

Julie provided a summary of additional work underway towards some of the other CAP initiatives to help inform prioritization discussions:

- Bridget will be starting the process to get a consultant hired for the GHG Inventory Update in July
- Julie advised she and Bridget had a meeting with NOPEC today to discuss their various sustainability initiatives. Julie noted that NOPEC expressed they are very interested in supporting sustainability efforts in Kent and Julie hopes the relationship will develop such that they can eventually be a partner in helping various CAP initiatives including the development of the MEMP CAP suggested initiative
- Julie is currently writing a grant offered through the NOPEC Foundation (administered through the Cleveland Foundation) that will assist with obtaining a survey of Kent residents regarding various aspects of energy audits to generate data that will provide the foundation for development of the larger CAP suggested subsidized energy audit program
- Julie advised based on general discussions with NOPEC today, there may be room to begin work on the CAP suggested initiatives related to expanding solar energy by gaining more insight into the funding mechanisms for procuring renewable energy including onsite self-generation solar, community solar, utility supply options, and community choice aggregation
- Julie advised that KERAMIDA had offered in previous discussions around submitting a proposal for the GHG Inventory Update that they may be able to include if not a full feasibility study, perhaps an EV siting study for the City of Kent as part of same for free – Julie clarified this was not a guaranteed provision and may not be offered if they were contracted, just that it had been part of some original discussions around the GHG Inventory Update possibilities, and that she brought it up in the context of that associated CAP initiative possibly having work started on same in the near future
- Julie advised work has started on some of the 16 different CAP suggested activities to build energy literacy with the public:
  - Collaboration with NOPEC regarding their program offerings

- Tabling at events with the next opportunity to table being at the upcoming Heritage Festival and Haymaker Farmer Markets
  - Julie advised she met with Andrew Rome, manager of the farmer's market regarding resuming Commission tabling at same in July and in addition to CAP education and outreach, we can begin work on the CAP suggested activity of promoting sustainable tourism by helping provide information about the Market Farm Tours that Andrew advised would also be resuming in July
- Julie advised she is beginning conversations with Melanie Knowles at KSU regarding the formation of the CAP suggested partnership with KSU to develop a structure for receiving Sustainability related projects and provide experiential learning opportunities
  - It was asked what the status of the KSU Sustainability plan is – Julie advised they are having to weigh the plan against potential impacts of Ohio House Bill 83 and are looking at ways to move forward in light of same

Further discussion about tabling was had. Julie advised the Commission will have one chair at a City table available to sit the Heritage Festival event on July 1<sup>st</sup> and can use the trifold brochures and informational cards to hand out, and talk with the public about the CAP. Members can also collect contact information while tabling for people who are interested in learning more or getting connected further to the CAP

Scheduling discussion for the Heritage Festival was had – it was decided members will table between 11am and 3pm that day. Members will check their schedules and with email Julie with their availability to coordinate further.

Discussion was had around what items regarding the CAP can be talked about while tabling. A focus of providing education around what's talked about in the CAP – clarifying terms, explaining concepts presented in same etc. were agreed to be good areas of discussion with the public for now. Mary suggested that we should also be sharing about the creation and existence of Julie's position, in addition to gathering the public's input (let them talk to us) around people's observations of and concerns around issues of Sustainability.

Discussion was had around resuming Farmer's market tabling. Julie will contact Andrew to find out which dates in July would work best for him to have the Commission table and she will email the members to confirm scheduling. Further discussion was had around ways to talk about and additional materials that could be developed to help share about the CAP and engage with the areas of interest the public may have in different areas of the CAP. It was agreed that a broad overview of the CAP is where to start with tabling information so that we could then gather input regarding which topics are of interest to the public that then shapes future tabling topics. It was noted that Renee Ruchotzke (previous commission member) had made some materials that could be used, in addition to having a small demonstration house/model that was used to engage children while tabling as well. Members agreed they'd like to continue to use these materials if available and add a smaller table to make the house lower to the ground/more accessible to kids while tabling.

Judy noted the Commission should expand it's tabling to different venues beyond the Farmers Market to reach and engage audiences with different backgrounds and awareness of the CAP and/or issues of Sustainability. Mary suggested the members make a list of these other entities to reach out to. Rick agreed and requested that item be added to our next working session.

Rick advised that he wants to figure out a strategic plan for items that as volunteers, Commission members and other community experts can participate in and/or help organize, as much of the work being done so far is relegated to City staff. It was agreed this needs to be a focus of our prioritization discussions. It was decided

members will review and decide which areas of the CAP they are most interested in for our next working session.

Bill Wilen expressed concern around issues of funding, noting that without same, none of this work can really be done and suggested that Bridget go to council to request funds in addition to finding grants etc.. Julie advised that Bridget and the City are aware that funds are necessary to get the CAP implemented. Julie explained that her position created a Sustainability section and line item in the budget which additional funding for CAP implementation can be added to. All avenues are being explored with active conversations around same being had to figure out ways to create a needed funding block.

Members ended the working session at 7:03pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Overholt building.