

Sustainability Commission Meeting, April 1st, 2024

Meeting Summary

SC Members in Attendance: Judy Nelson, Mary Starbuck, Maryjayne Stone, Andy Scholl

Excused: Julie Grant

Motion was made by Judy Nelson to excuse Julie Grant, Andy seconded. Hearing no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

Others in Attendance: Julie Morris, Bill Wilen

Judy Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:37pm and roll was taken.

Judy opened the Good of the Order/Open Comments section of the meeting.

Maryjayne advised she had been talking with someone from the Architecture department at Kent State who was discussing the practice of mass timber building (including for skyscrapers) with her as being sustainable. She asked the group whether they felt this practice really was sustainable and discussion around same was had.

Andy advised there lots of logistical hurdles to work through around the practice – city codes, height issues, old forest versus new planting/other harvesting issues that all needed to be considered. When comparing mass timber to other materials such as concrete or steel, in some ways it could be considered more sustainable, but the variables all need to be thought through for a true analysis or ability to make a statement that mass timber is really a sustainable practice.

Maryjayne advised the person told her they were going to a mass timber conference in Portland, OR soon. Mary asked whether this person would like to come and speak to the commission, or make something available to share their knowledge on the topic. It was suggested that perhaps this person get connected to the Reeds and Roots Skillshare group that hosts workshops on various types of building skills and techniques (among other topics) and may provide a more targeted audience.

It was noted that should the Commission get to a point where they would like to explore the topic of mass timber further, they could consider at that time inviting this person to come and speak to the group.

Mary asked when the next Open House Series event will be held. Julie M. advised that nothing has been planned yet – the ideas and timing for same are still being explored. Members expressed interest in having the topic be focused on biking infrastructure initiatives and suggested timing it around the Heritage Festival in July. It was felt having a bike session ahead of the Heritage Festival might encourage more folks to bike to or during the festival.

It was suggested that additional bike racks be added to the Heritage Festival event. Previous festival biking accommodations were discussed and it was felt that having some kind of designated bike parking area, perhaps with orange fencing around same that also featured an attendant would encourage people to feel safe locking up their bike and leaving.

Members advised it could be useful to pair the Open House event with a community engagement session to provide input on biking infrastructure plans. The Safe Routes To School engagement session was brought up as an example. It was noted having community input to counter or inform suggestions made by out of town consultants is important – that community knowledge is important and needs to be brought into the plans and discussions. Members agreed it would be their recommendation to make sure the Open House events were

paired with community input sessions. In the case of an Open House focused on the biking and walking infrastructure initiatives, members suggested Jim could provide the informational presentation and another person could facilitate the interactive community component. Mary had a list of bike clubs that could be invited or involved.

Julie M. advised she'd have to discuss the possibility with Jim Bowling as the Bike and Walk Infrastructure initiatives are headed by his department and he would need to be able to plan and present on same, in addition to any potential community components of the session.

Julie M. advised that the basic default structure of the Open House Series events would always include an opportunity for the community to engage with questions and feedback. Judy reiterated same, referring to how the recent CAP Open House meeting offered the informational component and then the opportunity for the community to engage and ask questions. Members continued the Open House Series discussion more broadly advising there could be City (Kent) interest in what other cities are doing related to bike and walk initiatives, or other possible topics, and they (other cities) could be invited to participate in panel discussions.

It was asked how often the series was going to be held. Julie M. advised at this point, they are being considered for quarterly events but that is all still being decided. It was noted that the Commission could be thinking about ways to scope the series content – potentially by topic and/or by completed implementation work, or other ways as well. The format of the series sessions can be tailored to best fit what we are trying to convey and do, and Julie M. can review format options with Bridget for what is possible as well.

Maryjayne brought up the example of the importance of community input around all topics, and provided the example of any decisions around LED lighting decisions the City is making. She also provided an example of the upcoming roundabouts that are being planned – reiterating the importance of having opportunities for the community to learn more and provide input around their concerns and needs. Judy confirmed that what she heard Maryjayne saying was not to make decisions based on only one perspective, and it was asked how the City plans to make sure various perspectives are included in the decisions, program development, and recommendations as we implement the CAP, and in particular, the upcoming World Kinect report for the City's Carbon Audit.

This led to a broader discussion around how community input can work and be integrated into the City's decision-making. Julie M. advised that the City wasn't yet at the stage of making the downtown LED light decisions, but in general, the process has a consultant being hired to provide analysis and recommendations based on their expertise (this generally includes case studies and peer city best practices reviews, in addition to technical expertise) and community input is gathered, either as part of a review of the consultant's completed analysis, and/or gathered as part of the consultant's process. The community input is then provided to the consultant that provides place-based context to the recommended actions and the consultant's recommendations could be amended accordingly as applicable. Perhaps this process happens again with any amended suggestions and ultimately, a proposed plan, program or initiative is developed out of same to go before council. Julie M. advised it is part of her responsibility to help facilitate obtaining and ensuring this kind of community input is included in the decision making processes for the CAP initiatives and she will be working to do same.

Andy advised that what the City includes in their RFPs for consultants is extremely important and getting language into same that reflects the variety of needs and/or community concerns at the very start of the process is helpful. Maryjayne agreed and advised that she knows while the CAP initiatives are focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, those aren't the only environmental or other concerns that need to be addressed when thinking about the suggested strategy. Julie M. advised that she won't always have capacity

to work with other departments ahead of an RFP that falls under a different department's purview but she feels that having the CAP adopted, and increased awareness of its strategies by the various City directors and staff has and will go a long way to having the kinds of environmental concerns being discussed be considered. Julie M. advised that while the CAP is not the plan that all other departments review their work through, it is her hope to help make connections with staff around understanding how areas of the CAP apply to their work, so that it can be considered when initiatives are developed across the City. Julie M. advised that having Council's full support of the CAP and it being considered a priority helps bring it to the fore of City work, but Julie M. reiterated that how that gets actualized is dependent on department legalities, capacities, and feasibility issues as well.

Mary asked whether Julie M. would be giving her CAP Overview presentation to council this week and Julie advised that she is, on Wednesday, April 3rd at 7pm.

Meeting structure changes were discussed. Julie M. advised she had spoken with Bridget Susel and the following changes are being made to ensure the meetings end at 7pm (or as close to as possible) in consideration of everyone's time:

- Julie M. will no longer provide summary updates regarding the work she is doing during the meeting working sessions. She will email those updates out to members on the Fridays before the scheduled Commission meeting and members can contact her with any questions separately, or members can bring the questions to the working sessions, but they will otherwise no longer be a regular part of the working sessions.
- If there is a speaker scheduled for the meeting, that will be the only item on the agenda and any other matters and/or the working session will be tabled for a future meeting.
- The working sessions will be focused on only one activity, component, or item to shorten the number of things trying to be addressed during same. The item of focus can be a carry-over of work from the previous month's meeting, or it can be a new item, but the session will have only one topical item to work on.

Julie M. advised there was no need for a vote to make these changes. If the changes are tried and they don't work to help reduce the overall length of the meetings, then more changes can be discussed and implemented.

It was asked whether the agenda item around Julie Grant's proposed resolution for council needed to be tabled given her absence. Julie M. advised yes and it was tabled until the May meeting. Members asked whether Julie G. could provide information about her idea ahead of the next meeting and Julie M. advised she would ask her to do so.

Julie M. advised Judy had sent her an email advising clarification in the minutes was needed around the different types of fuels discussed during last month's discussion around same and Judy provided the clarifying information and resources in that same email. Julie M. advised the minutes were typed following the way it was discussed during the meeting, but Julie M. would send the updated resources Judy provided out to the group. Judy also had sent a copy of PARTA's drafted transportation plan as an additional resource. Julie M. advised she had the final version of that plan and would include same in the resource email she would send out to the group.

Mary asked, given the time, whether everyone was ready to adjourn and move into the working session. Judy asked for a motion to adjourn. Mary motioned to move adjournment to go into working session. Andy seconded, and discussion was offered. Hearing none, and with unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned at 6:25pm.

Julie M. began the working session. Judy asked for an update on the status of the World Kinect/NOPEC press release. Julie M. advised that the draft had been completed, approved on the City's end, that our contact at World Kinect also liked it. It was sent to their marketing department and has not yet been approved. Julie M. reviewed the ways that it has been publicized so far – the original letter was submitted to council and is of public record, a copy of the NOPEC letter was provided at the Open House event, the partnership and work was part of the CAP Open House presentation, and she will be talking about it again in her upcoming presentation to Council.

Julie M. started the Newsletter content review as the focus of the working session. Members received a hard copy of the draft to conduct the review and Julie M. advised there was one more article and the proposed calendar section that needed to also be created and added. Julie M. requested the members review and provide feedback around the basic structure of the newsletter, its components, the title and subtitles, Julie Grant's article and any other pieces the members had suggestions or ideas for. Julie M. advised a possible topic for the remaining Around the City article could be around the City's new electric floor sweeper that was recently purchased to replace the gas-powered version they had that had reached the end of its life. Another option was to talk with Eric Helmstedter about businesses utilizing components of NOPEC's services. Julie M. also advised that we can run reports on how many permits for solar are pulled and that could be another article topic.

Julie M. explained more about the articles she had already created and the current format of same. Members briefly discussed the GHG Inventory update, when it could be added to the website, and whether they could have a copy of the new one. Julie M. advised it will be added but the City is undergoing a whole website update and it may have to wait until same is completed next month. She advised she will double check that she can share the executive summary now.

Members discussed the various components, structure, and recurring elements, and suggested changes. Julie M. made note of the suggested Around the City article topic and the other agreed upon changes, and will incorporate them into the final newsletter which will then be reviewed and approved by Bridget before being sent out on the listserv.

It was asked what the frequency of the newsletter will be. Julie M. advised that at this point, probably quarterly, but should the work eventually warrant it, possibly monthly.

Bill asked whether one of the newsletter's recurring components could include news about Kent State University and work that I do there in my position. Julie M. advised that wouldn't work for the future as the shared position with KSU will be ending due to university budget cuts. She noted she will be transitioning to working at the City full-time, most likely this July. Julie M. reiterated that the City will still be working closely with KSU around the shared initiatives in the CAP and it doesn't change that we will still be collaborating closely with them.

Members discussed whether they needed to see the newsletter again after the changes have been made. Julie M. advised she will talk with Bridget about how to do that since the goal is to get it out ahead of the next meeting and group conversation around it can't happen over email. Julie M. will aim to get it out to the group for additional feedback once tonight's changes are made, but all agreed on the importance of trying to get it out ahead of Earth Day's events that would be featured in the calendar section.

Julie M. advised they would discuss the logistics of the upcoming tabling event shifts via email to save time, and that for now, the same tabling materials we have been using are the focus of same – let people know about the CAP.

Members ended the working session at 7:05pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, May 6th, 2024, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Overholt building.