

Sustainability Commission Meeting, January 8th, 2024

Meeting Summary

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

Excused: Judy Nelson

Others in Attendance: Julie Morris, City of Kent

Mary Starbuck called the meeting to order at 5:40pm and roll was taken.

Motion was made by Maryjayne to excuse Judy Nelson; Andy seconded and it was passed with unanimous approval.

Mary opened the Good of the Order/Open Comment section of the meeting and asked whether anyone had any items to discuss.

Maryjayne offered comments about her experience interviewing with Council for her reappointment to the Sustainability Commission. She advised she was asked a lot of questions and, in her memory of the event, was given a reminder by Council Member Heidi Shaffer-Bish that Council was expecting Sustainability Commission Members to bring issues and legislation related to the climate action plan before council for review. Maryjayne was surprised by this and asked for clarification as to whether that was part of the commission members' role. Julie advised she would go back and review the video from that Council meeting to hear Heidi's exact comment and to be able to help clarify. Julie explained that the Sustainability Commission is an advisory committee and would not be responsible for creating legislation that goes to Council. Staff is responsible to draft any associated legislation, and the Commission can provide their input regarding the proposed programs/legislation, but it would be brought to Council via staff for review and consideration of same. Maryjayne also remembered Council Member Roger Sidodi as being surprised by what the Sustainability Commission does, but she couldn't be sure these were the exact questions that were asked, which is why she wanted to clarify.

Julie advised that regardless, it sounds like there needs to be some education provided regarding what the role of the Sustainability Commission is and reviewing same for input could be work the Commission chooses to do in the future so that the application and website can all provide accurate information for folks interested in applying to same, in addition to clarifying the role with Council if needed. Julie will provide some more information about this issue as part of next month's working session updates.

Mary asked whether there were any further items to discuss. Hearing none, Mary advised they were ready to adjourn. Andy motioned to move adjournment to go into working session. Maryjayne seconded, and discussion was offered. Hearing none, and with unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

Julie Morris began the working session with updates.

Julie Morris noted that Council had interviewed Julie Grant for the open position on the Sustainability Commission at their January 3rd meeting. Maryjayne and former commission member Rick Hawksley had previously suggested that we reach out to Julie Grant for CAP press needs as she has a background in news reporting and editing. Members agreed it could be a good fit to have someone with a professional background in the press to assist with the Commission's communication and outreach efforts. Julie Morris advised if Council decides to appoint Julie Grant, they will do so formally at their next meeting on January 17th and Julie Grant would attend the February meeting as the newest member on the commission.

Julie advised the GHG Inventory update is almost completed. We are pending some minor revisions and confirmations for a couple of pieces of data, but it should hopefully be completed by the end of this week or next. Andy asked whether we knew what the frequency of future updates would be. Julie advised at this point, we don't know, but ideally, we'll get to annual updates. Julie noted completion of the MEMP should help determine same and help give us the infrastructure and decisions on what formats, databases etc. we're going to make a standard for doing the GHG Inventories in the future, in addition to whether we continue to hire consultants for same or eventually bring the process in-house.

Julie advised the City will be getting a new website in May of this year. Julie advised that her training on the existing system has stopped (she advised she can make some changes, but Patti will still assist with same) and she will be included in the new system training so that she can update the City's Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Overview webpages as needed.

The topic of a press release regarding the NOPEC/World Kinect services was discussed. Mary asked whether KERAMIDA will be our designated contractor for CAP work, as the language in the NOPEC letter shared with Council named KERAMIDA as Kent's contractor. Julie clarified that we do not have one designated contractor or consultant for the CAP. She advised that the NOPEC's letter is referring to the existing contract the City has with KERAMIDA to complete the GHG Inventory Update, with the purpose of explaining that NOPEC/World Kinect will build off and compliment this existing work, rather than repeat it, and focus entirely on City-owned properties, whereas our GHG Inventory addresses emissions across other sectors of the community.

Members reviewed the NOPEC letter for what they felt was the most pertinent content to include in a press release about the services they are providing. It was suggested that the in-kind amount of the services be mentioned (\$40k). Members felt it would be important to focus on the on-site solar assessment services, as well as the carbon audit for City buildings. Members agreed that highlighting or briefly summarizing how the prioritization and contextualization work listed on the services letter would be incorporated into our CAP work would also be good (in particular, development of our MEMP and that their services are supposed to help provide funding pathways for recommendations they will be providing). Members were ambivalent about including the cohort information but felt it may be worth asking NOPEC/World Kinect and these other communities whether they had put out any press releases or other kinds of messaging yet that we could model from. Julie will reach out to her contacts at NOPEC and World Kinect to discuss the drafting and approval processes needed for a press release with the hope of getting one out soon.

The letter of services from NOPEC also includes a list of their board members on the letterhead. Mary suggested we add the board member from Portage County, Mickey Marozzi, to our Sustainability/CAP community listserv. Julie advised any outreach to him would need to be discussed with Bridget Susel and falls under the same principle as the City's Climate Business Alliance development – we would want to have a clear purpose for reaching out. Julie also noted that adding folks to the list-serv is only done when someone requests to be added.

Members reviewed the Newsletter mock-up. Members felt the column content ideas were good. Mary felt the newsletter needs a different title than Resiliency Roundup – she felt the language should remain consistent with Sustainability instead of resiliency. Some suggestions she had were The Sustainer, Sustainability Station, Sustainability Stop, or Sustainability News. Members will continue to brainstorm titles for the newsletter.

Discussion was had around incorporating Maryjayne's K-CAP idea (Kent Cares About People, Kent Cares About Planet, Kent Climate Action Plan that also features a globe/earth illustration) into the newsletter and other communications we make about the CAP. Mary felt the newsletter already has the City's and Commission's logos and we should use those existing logos. Julie advised of what she understood to be a difference between the logos for the City and Commission, and Maryjayne's K-CAP slogan/image which is intended to be more of a

marketing type tool for the City's climate action plan work. It was noted that getting assistance from a professional marketing or graphic design entity, and/or interns at KSU for same would be very helpful. Julie advised she will continue to talk with Melanie at KSU about steps for connecting to possible internships for this.

It was expressed that while it is good to highlight internal sustainability efforts from City departments (one of the newsletter columns) members would also like to highlight what sustainability initiatives and efforts businesses and the Kent community are working on. Julie reiterated she will reach out to Eric Helmstedter at the City to see about approaching Main Street Kent and the Chamber regarding how they might highlight this activity within their own communities, and what role Julie may have in helping facilitate this.

Andy suggested creating an anonymous collection of sustainability activity submitted by residents and/or organizations and businesses that highlight projects they are planning on, working on and/or have completed. At the end of the year, we could share some basic totals for what has been happening collectively across various sectors in the City – for example, “3 businesses started a compost program; 5 residences installed solar, 2 rain gardens were installed” etc.. Members suggested we could put a question like “Have you done something? Let us know!” out on the website, community listserv email, newsletter, social media blasts etc. to collect the community data. Some discussion was had about eventually turning this into an annual, City-sponsored recognition award via the Mayor or Council. It was suggested that perhaps Council members could reach out to their constituents for this information as another way to encourage and engage around Sustainability efforts in the community.

Mary suggested she could reach out to Kent Environmental Council (KEC) to find data on their “wild your yard initiative” that might be able to be included. Julie advised she could look internally across the City departments to add the City's work to the end of year tallies. Members will try to pull some of this data from their own communities before the next commission meeting to have a sense of what we might already be able to include if we move this forward.

Mary suggested that future newsletters introduce the various commission members. She also suggested that the date, time, and location of where the Sustainability Commission meetings are held be featured prominently in the newsletter to encourage more community engagement.

Discussion was had around the CAP Open House event. Julie reviewed Bridget Susel's feedback and answers to questions regarding the components of the event that were generated and discussed by members at last month's commission meeting. Julie confirmed that the upstairs conference room has been reserved at the Kent Free Library on February 27th from 5:30-7:30pm. The event will be advertised as being held from 6pm-7pm to allow time for set-up and clean-up around the actual event time.

Bridget advised we will not be inviting entities to table in the traditional sense, but we can provide one or two tables where entities who contributed to the development of the CAP can display materials and/or posters about their services and sustainability initiatives (i.e. if PARTA had materials they wanted to display etc.). Mary suggested the library put related/topical books out around the room, or perhaps provide a curated list of books related to sustainability to add to the materials table.

Additionally, Bridget advised we will not be inviting contributing entities to the CAP to formally speak at this event. That said, after the informational presentation Julie will be giving at the start of the event, we will be able to open time up for any community and/or audience members to share about what the CAP means to them, and we can open this time up for a Q&A session as well. Bridget will be in attendance and can speak if needed during this sharing/Q&A time, and any Commission members who would like to speak about their experience etc. are welcome to commit to speaking during this time as well. The invitation to the contributing

members of the CAP will alert them to this section of the event and invite them to participate in same should they wish, but it will not be a formal request to speak. This explains what is meant by the “hear more from community members” phrasing in the event media blurb that will be sent out. Mary suggested we create questions ahead of time to ask the audience to engage them further if needed.

Members reviewed the media blurbs Julie had drafted (one short and one a bit longer), that had also been approved by Bridget, for any further input. Members suggested we add the day of the week to the date reference and “2nd Floor Conference Room” to the location reference in the blurbs, but were otherwise good with how they read. They will be posted on the downtown sign, the City’s Spotlight and Sustainability Overview website pages, and will be added to the City’s social media blasts. It will be sent out via the City’s Sustainability Community Listserv and can be given to KEC, Kent State’s Office of Sustainability, and possibly Main Street Kent and the Portager for advertising. Mary asked whether we could create flyers to post around downtown and other places, and Julie advised she’d double check with Bridget, but it should be ok.

Julie will provide a formal invitation via email that Dave Ruller will distribute to Council members, and Julie will also include an invitation slide at the end of her “CAP Year In Review” presentation that will be given during the February 7th council meeting. Julie will send specific emailed invitations to the folks listed as contributors to the CAP as well.

Mary asked whether the Commission members could have name badges made, and suggested we provide name tags for attendees. Julie advised she’d talk with Bridget about same and have more information for the next meeting.

Members ended the working session at 7:35pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, February 5th, 2023, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Overholt building.