**<u>Sustainability Commission Meeting, September 9th, 2024</u>**

**<u>Meeting Summary</u>**

SC Members in Attendance: Judy Nelson, Mary Starbuck, Julie Grant

Excused: Maryjayne Stone

Others in Attendance: Bill Wilen, Julie Morris

Judy Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:38pm and roll was taken.

Motion to excuse Maryjayne Stone was made by Mary Starbuck, Judy Nelson seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously (the formal vote was called later in the meeting after Julie G. arrived).

Julie Morris advised she has a new work cell phone and shared the number with the members. She reiterated that this number is not to be given out publicly (none of the City workers cell phone numbers are shared publicly) but they can use it to text or call Julie with attendance and/or logistics needs for meetings or events. Julie M. advised members should still send their ideas or suggestions for Commission business to her individually via email and requested those not be texted or shared via a phone call to the work cell.

Judy asked whether Julie M. could send out a meeting calendar invite to members in addition to the regular emailed meeting notice to help members confirm their attendance for meetings. Julie M. advised she can and will do so beginning with the October meeting.

Judy opened the Good of the Order/Open Comments section of the meeting. Judy shared an upcoming event being held by Kent's United Church of Christ Green Team. Judy noted she had recently participated in a book group with them, and now they will be holding a film series related to healthy soils and other environmentally/sustainability-focused topics. Judy advised she did not recall the names of the films, but she will send the film series information to Julie M. for distribution to Commission members.

It was asked whether we could share this event in the next edition of the newsletter and/or via our Sustainability list-serv since other events had been listed in our last newsletter. Julie M. clarified that those events listed in the last newsletter were affiliated with events already posted or linked to on the City's website. Julie M. advised she will check with Bridget as to whether or not we could share the event Judy mentioned, but she advised it most likely couldn't be as an outside organization event that isn't connected with the City.

Judy asked whether there were any further Good of the Order comments and hearing none, moved the meeting to Old Business. Before moving into discussion of the Working Session topic, Judy made a statement honoring the many people who gave up their time to create all the ordinances, goals and bylaws that have helped form and shape the Commission over the years. She acknowledged that this work takes a lot of time to do, that the goals are very expansive and appropriate, and she is appreciative of all the work that came before. She noted they were broader in their goals and purview than in current practice. Mary asked whether we needed to create a list of people to thank. Judy mentioned she doesn't know who they all are and that wouldn't be necessary, but she wanted to make record of thanks for the City residents who gave up their time to make all of this work happen. Members agreed.

Judy acknowledged much of what the documents lay out no longer apply in a lot of ways, making the revisiting and update work a necessity to align them with current needs and practices. Judy turned the discussion over to Julie M. to review the question framework and sample working session schedule Julie M. had created proposing how members might accomplish the review and alignment work of the Commission's ordinances, mission statement, goals, and bylaws documents, which haven't been updated since 2009.

Julie M. highlighted the context for why this work is important, the items noted in the review packets and reviewed the proposed schedule, in addition to covering how that could work with the existing formal meeting and working session structures. She then turned the discussion to members for their thoughts and feedback around same.

Judy felt this was a good opportunity to help educate Council about the Commission's updated purpose. Discussion was had on the order of the document review and there was some initial disagreement around whether to start with the most recent documents or the oldest. Members took a few minutes to look over the various documents and made some initial comments about same. Some felt there were items that should be removed that were clearly out of date, some felt there were things suggested in the documents that aren't being done but should be. Initial comparisons between the Goals document and the current CAP were made, and brief discussion between the differences between a CAP and a broader Sustainability Plan were had.

Mary felt that this review could get started during tonight's meeting and felt strongly that it should not take as long as the proposed schedule outlined. Judy mentioned that we do not have all members present, and their perspectives are important.

Mary felt the group should be making motions instead of just doing work. Judy noted that is the purpose of the Commission right now – to do the work. Mary suggested we something should be done this evening. Julie M. suggested the members read through the questions framework and provide their feedback on same and identify whether there are any other questions or things we should be considering while reviewing the sets of documents.

It was reiterated that this review work would not be the only thing the Commission is tasked with over the next year – they will still be helping with education and outreach events, newsletter communications, and providing input as CAP programs are developed, as well as input for any other items as requested by Council or Staff as they arise.

Judy asked whether we knew what Council has as current expectations of the Sustainability Commission and whether we can solicit any feedback from them ahead of the work to help shape the review. Julie M. advised she'd have to talk with Bridget about that, but she understands education and outreach and CAP implementation to be current priorities.

More discussion was had around why this work would be important to not only clarify purpose to Council, but how it will be helpful for folks looking to apply to the Commission in the future so that there can be clear purpose and expectations for what Commission roles and responsibilities will entail.

Mary expressed she did not feel that this was work and that it was redundant – she felt the group is just doing a lot of talking and repeating the same activity over and over again.

Julie G. arrived at the meeting and a basic recap of the discussion so far was provided to catch her up. Members read through the questions framework and discussed a few of them for clarification. It was also noted that new questions might come up once reading through the documents, and that would be fine.

Mary reiterated how she felt this was all very extensive and unnecessarily lengthy. Julie M. mentioned that everyone might have a different pace for reading and answering the framework questions for all the documents, given other obligations and work outside of the Commission. Julie M. also noted Maryjayne had suggested in our previous meeting discussion around this work that the review be broken up into sections and/or focused activities. Julie M. advised allowing for one set of documents review each month for the 3 sets of documents, and then one working session each month to do the subsequent answer synthesis, prioritization of items generated, generation of the identified items and the various reviews of same by all needed parties takes it through December 2025 in the proposed schedule. Julie M. noted that the work may go faster, and it could end up taking less time, but allowing for one meeting for each stage of the process made sure to allow for varying capacities of members.

Judy advised Mary that Mary's objection to the schedule is noted, but it was also felt we could get started and adjust the schedule as needed. Discussion returned to which documents to start the review with. Members decided to start with the original Commission legislation (Ordinances 1195-103, 1999-64 and 2009-38) and the undated Statement of Purpose/Mission document. Members agreed to review this set of documents and answer the questions outlined in the proposed review framework ahead of October's meeting. October's meeting working session will then consist of members sharing their answers to the questions and discussing same together.

Discussion moved to the other old business item regarding the discussion of carbon storage and fracking injection wastewater wells. Julie M. provided a brief update on the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) tour that is being planned. Julie M. advised she had shared the questions generated by Commission discussion with Jim Bowling and John Ellison. They are preparing an informational presentation that will address some of the questions and are thinking through aspects of the WTP itself that can also help answer questions. Once they have that material generated, they will share it with Julie M. and then a date for the Tour can be set. Julie M. is also double checking with Bridget to ensure no sunshine laws will be violated if all Commission members are present for the tour – it should be fine if members are not discussing Commission business during the event.

Julie G. suggested brainstorming questions to send to Jim and John. Julie M. reiterated that she had created a list of questions based on the last couple of meeting discussions and had shared that list with Commission members after last month's meeting, as well as with Jim and John. Julie G. advised she had not had a chance to read them. Judy advised she felt the questions were comprehensive and reflected the areas of concern and questions members had previously expressed.

Julie M. advised Julie G. to look them over and if she had any additional questions, she'd like answered to send them to Julie M. within the next week if possible and she will share those with Jim and John for consideration in their presentation/tour materials. It was also noted it would be fine for members to ask any questions that arise for them spontaneously during the tour as well.

Julie M. noted that neither she nor John or Jim are fracking experts and if after the WTP tour questions about fracking itself remained, Julie M. can reach out to the Ohio EPA and ODNR to get more information since they are the entities with purview over fracking processes and associated monitoring.

It was asked if other Commission meeting business questions could be asked and discussion returned to this evening's meeting agenda. It was asked whether other business would still be able to be discussed during meetings given the focus on the Bylaws review work. It was noted that the meeting structure would remain the same as it's been – to call the formal meeting to order and leave room for the Good of the Order where new items could be brought up. Any items that remain on the Old Business or are added to New Business can still be discussed and once the formal meeting is adjourned, the working session for the review work can immediately be started. If most items on the formal agenda are short, then there should be ample time during the working session for the review work.

It was asked what would be needed of Commission members for the October CAP Open House focused on energy efficiency. Julie M. advised help with set-up and clean-up would be great and she provided a basic overview of the evening events. Mary expressed she thinks the Library community room that has been reserved is too small and there wouldn't be room to have enough chairs for the presentation and tables for program materials if the crowd was as big as what was had for the CAP Open House in February. Julie M. advised a lot of the materials displayed for the February open house were large and wouldn't be at the October open house, leaving a lot of space at the back of the room for the various program materials. It was suggested that the program materials be displayed on a table outside of the community room to allow more space for chairs inside. Julie M. advised she can ask the Librarian whether setting up a table in that hallway is allowed.

Mary felt the library reservation should be cancelled and Julie M. should explore using either a Church, the Police Department Community room, or the Hobbs Hall venue. It was noted Hobbs Hall has a fee for use. It was noted that some concerns about using the PD Community room expressed in the past have been that some members of the community are not comfortable coming to the police station to hold a meeting, and parking is challenging for that space. It was noted that similarly, some folks may not be comfortable going to a church for a meeting. It was noted the Library is a neutral space with ample parking and easy access. Mary reiterated the library community room is too long and narrow and not conducive for holding a large crowd. Mary noted she had previously asked the librarian (for a different event) whether they could change the orientation of the room and projection system but was told it cannot be changed as it is built into the room.

Julie M. noted that she will not be cancelling the current reservation of the Library room (scheduled for October 30th) but if there is standing-room only for the October Open House, other venues can be considered for future CAP Open House events.

It was noted the schools could be another good venue and Judy advised she felt more should be done to coordinate our events with existing events at the schools – like pairing a CAP Open House with a Back-to-School Night event as an example. Julie M. advised she'd have to run that through Bridget as it would be inviting ourselves into an existing event which she wasn't sure we are allowed to do. Judy reiterated that the CAP instructs us to collaborate with community partners and she expressed disappointment if the City isn't going to go in that direction. It was felt the school audience and families would be interested in energy efficiency programs and it was unknown how much the schools know about these programs and/or already share about them with their families. Mary advised she would call David Shae at Portage Community Action Council to ask whether he already gives information to the schools. Julie M. advised he has been invited to the October Open House to speak about the energy efficiency and weatherization programs they provide but he has not responded that he will attend. Bridget is able to present about them as the City works with Portage CAC on some of the programs and she is familiar with them if David cannot attend.

Members noted it would be important to clarify on the event marketing materials that there would be a blend of an informational presentation and open-house style program materials to browse during the evening as Open House implies only a drop-in format.

Members briefly discussed whether to have refreshments or not and it was decided to add the October Open House to the October Commission meeting agenda under New Business where final event details and logistics could be discussed. Julie M. will do same.

Julie G. motioned to adjourn the meeting, Mary seconded, discussion was offered and hearing none, the vote was held. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:04pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, October 7th, 2024, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Overholt building.