

Sustainability Commission Meeting, May 5, 2025

Meeting Summary

SC Members in Attendance: Judy Nelson, Maryjayne Stone, Julie Grant, Tracy Wallach, Justine Gallo

Others in Attendance: Bill Wilen, Julie Morris

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.

Judy opened a discussion related to Julie M.'s staff update and Julie M. provided information in response to items and questions that arose out of same:

- Julie M. advised City Hall is open and the next City Council meeting on 5/7/25 will be held there.
- Julie M. provided a demonstration of where to find the Sustainability Overview webpages on the City's website. She also advised the permanent information pages for the new City Hall EV Charging Stations are under review and will be posted there once approved.
- Julie M. advised she is aware there are some duplicate sign-ups happening on the Sustainability Listserv and she is working to do periodic audits of same to clean up duplications.

The Good of the Order/Open Comments discussions continued and Judy advised she had seen a presentation at the Wilderness Center's Planetarium in Wilmont, Ohio that was addressing the issue of light pollution and the need for "dark skies". Judy suggested this issue crossed over into human, bird, and other wildlife health, and acknowledged Maryjayne has been raising this issue for many years. Members had a discussion regarding obtaining more information about the Dark Skies issue and asked Maryjayne whether she would be willing to share a presentation to the Commission about same at a future meeting. The discussion also included the issue of upcoming migratory bird travel, with a request that the City provide some education and awareness to the community to help reduce light pollution and support bird migration. Members agreed to add these topics to New Business for the June Commission meeting where they can be discussed further.

Members requested Julie M. look into tabling opportunities for the Commission at the Heritage Festival to be held on July 5, 2025, where they could potentially provide information about bird migration, in addition to the CAP and other tabling materials usually used. Justine noted the Events Committee is working to develop new tabling materials and provided some idea examples. A brief recap of the Earth Month tabling events held in April was had. It was also noted that the seed paper and recycling-themed bookmarks were still popular giveaways, and folks really enjoyed the No-sew T-shirt bag activity at the Commission's table at KSU's Earth Fest. An overview of what is involved in making a No-sew T-shirt bag was provided, clarifying it is upcycling used/end-of-life T-shirts into a reusable cloth bag.

Members held a discussion on whether to create an ad-hoc committee that would focus on completing the in-depth review and update work of the Commission's Ordinances and Bylaws. Judy explained this committee would bring ideas and suggestions generated during the committee work back to the Commission as a whole, reporting on same during the Commission's regular meetings for all to discuss. A recap of the purpose of this review work was provided. Members discussed possible logistics of committee meeting times and frequency with associated member availability. Members noted there needs to be capacity for members to alternate or select committee meetings to attend when the content of the committee meeting would be addressing parts of the ordinances or bylaws that a member may have particular interest in. Tracy and Judy indicated they would like to be on the committee. Maryjayne motioned to have Judy and Tracy form the ad-hoc committee and continue review of the Sustainability Commission's original ordinances and bylaws and have them report back to the full Commission with their findings for discussion. Justine seconded and with no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Judy moved the discussion to New Business. Members reviewed and discussed the email Bill had sent providing more information about the Walls School Garden that was collecting compost via Rubber City Reuse. It was noted that this particular drop off box wasn't open to the public but was meant to collect compost from the school/students only. This led to a discussion of Rubber City Reuse's compost drop off bin that is available to the public for free, anytime, at Portage County Recycling's CHaRM center, with Judy providing an informational flyer about same. Members reviewed and discussed the other services Rubber City Reuse offers to residents and businesses, noting this is a business that has associated fees for same. Members discussed ways they as individuals (not representing the City or Commission) could share about Rubber City Reuse's services. Tracy requested Julie M. look in to whether the City could host a compost drop-off box on City property that the Kent community could use. As there would be legal and health code considerations, Julie M. advised she would discuss this with Bridget Susel and report to the Commission at the June meeting about same.

Discussion about items that can be composted continued and evolved into a larger discussion about recycling options, practices, and some past education/outreach efforts around recycling. Judy also described her recent tour of the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) owned and operated by the Waste Management company that is in Oakwood, Ohio. It was noted the Compost topic would be moved to Old Business at future meetings for further discussion.

Judy moved the meeting to Old Business.

Justine and Judy provided an update from the Events Committee, advising they are working to develop trivia questions and/or other game type activities that provide more engaging experiences around the Commission sustainability outreach efforts. Justine advised new event ideas, possibly for Earth Month and that could be held annually, are being considered. One idea is related to creating a Zero Waste event that might involve partnership or collaboration with other area entities. Justine noted the committee is looking at ways to engage area businesses around sustainable practices and is considering the development of a City Sustainability Award program to encourage the adoption of sustainability practices. Members discussed these ideas and provided feedback, as well as additional suggestions, for the committee to consider.

Judy asked whether there were any updates for the second Old Business agenda item involving the discussion around carbon storage and fracking injection wastewater wells. Julie M. advised she had reached out to Jim Bowling and John Ellison to provide the Commission's feedback from the last meeting about having a smaller presentation and discussion at a future Commission meeting instead of tour of the Water Treatment Plant, and noted she is pending their response.

Judy asked whether there were any further comments and hearing none, called for a motion to adjourn. Justine motioned, Julie G. seconded, and the motion passed with unanimous approval. The meeting adjourned at 7:07pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, June 2, 2025, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Overholt building.