

## Sustainability Commission Meeting, June 2, 2025

### Meeting Summary

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

Excused: Tracy Wallach

Others in Attendance: Bill Wilen, Julie Morris

Judy Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:40pm and roll was taken.

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

Bill Wilen shared about the SUN Day solar advocacy event currently being explored by Kent Environmental Council. Members reviewed the associated <https://www.sunday.earth/> website during the meeting for information about the larger organization. Members reviewed and made suggestions for possible speakers for the event KEC might organize who could talk about area solarization and other sustainable efforts. It was suggested the City possibly share about its solarization efforts depending on the current RFQ/solar project progress. Bill advised the KEC board will be discussing this at their next board meeting, and he will send more information as it becomes available to Julie M., who will then share with the rest of the members as received.

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:

- Judy asked for more information about the City's solar project Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
  - Julie M. advised it is still being drafted. Julie M. noted that there have been staff vacations and the City's Community Development Department has been training for a new department-wide software program that is scheduled to go live the week of June 9<sup>th</sup> which has taken a lot of staff time to prepare for same. Julie M. advised she expects more progress on the RFQ will be made soon.
- Julie G. asked why another consultant was being hired when we had already received detailed solar information for the City's Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and the downtown Fire Station - she noted it seemed like a long time was spent getting that information only to have to start over again, and she expressed concern that the City keeps spending money on people to give advice instead of spending to get solar up and running
  - Julie M. noted the consulting services thus far have been free (provided in-kind) and will be covered by a grant – both provided via different NOPEC programs
  - Julie M. provided a recap for why the previously selected City buildings ended up not working out and reviewed the NOPEC/World Kinect consultant process for receiving the information (provided in-kind by NOPEC's Resiliency and Sustainability Support Program), advising that was what the City had been instructed to do by Council: gather the needed information to both determine which sites to select for solar and then determine whether the suggested facilities would end up being feasible given all considerations
  - Julie M. noted that given the unfeasibility of the previously selected sites, the City has opted to hire a consultant to work with the Community Development Department on the various aspects of locating, financing and administering a solar array in the community, and she recapped NOPEC's Energized Community Grant information that will be used to hire the new consultant
- Judy mentioned the practice of Agrivoltaics being considered and noted same as creative and exciting land use option blending farming and grazing under and around ground arrays for larger solar projects in Ohio
- Bill asked whether Council had established a fund specifically for solar projects
  - Julie M. noted no, and reiterated why obtaining all the detailed information around possible solar projects is important, as those reports will also provide specific project costs and suggested funding mechanisms (of which there are many possible available and Julie M. described a few) which Council needs to consider any funding decisions, which must be weighed against other

## capital budget needs

Judy noted she is planning to write an article for the Summer 2025 Sustainable Kent News e-Newsletter about her recent trip to the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) operated by Waste Management in Cleveland. She is intending to then write an article about current impacts of climate change on farmers who sell at the Haymaker Farmer's Market for the Fall 2025 newsletter.

Judy moved the discussion to New Business. Members continued discussion regarding Dark Skies initiatives and migratory bird travel, looking for ways the City could provide education and awareness to the community to help reduce light pollution and support bird migration. Maryjayne advised the Spring migration technically ended June 1<sup>st</sup>, noting 200k birds flew over Portage County just last night. Members reviewed the Bird Cast website where Maryjayne was able to find the migration data.

Members discussed different ideas for an education and awareness campaign in the City during peak migration times – the next peak migration will be in the Fall. Suggestions to include information about the upcoming migration on the City sign downtown and in the Sustainable Kent e-Newsletter were made. Julie G. and Maryjayne will continue to gather research around what Dark Skies ratings and Lights Out events entail, and how other cities have gone about same.

Julie M. will reach out to Todd Cartner (President of Kent Environmental Council) who is an expert on Bats and Leah Graham (Sustainability Coordinator at Kent State University), both of whom may have relevant information, resources, and/or knowledge about area research on these topics to share. Members agreed to make this a recurring item under Old Business for future meetings.

Brief discussion was had about what City channels are available to report light pollution issues.

Judy moved the meeting to Old Business.

Julie M., Justine and Judy provided an update from the Events Committee. Julie M. advised she was informed there is a need to cap/reduce overtime hours at the City and this will impact her capacity to table at after-hours or weekend events. As such, she will not be tabling at Heritage Fest. Julie advised Bridget confirmed Commission members as volunteers could table at events that occur after regular business hours on their own moving forward, should the group be invited and decide to participate.

Julie M. provided stats of materials taken, made, and/or handed out during the Cuyahoga River Days tabling event she attended on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. She noted that the no-sew bag activity and instructions were popular, while the other CAP information provided had less items taken, which made sense given the family and craft oriented nature of the Parks and Rec tables she was working from. Members provided suggestions for how to utilize the No-Sew T-Shirt bag popularity and expand it into other kinds of events, contests, or activities.

Justine and Judy noted ideas being explored by the Committee are related to Zero Waste events, and items for a possible October Sustainability Month. Justine noted October is already a busy month with Rainbow Weekend and Halloween falling during same. Members continued some discussion around holding quarterly or monthly events as part of a possible year-long campaign of dark skies activities (i.e. meteor showers in August, or planetarium events etc.). Justine noted she will not be able to meet in June, but the Committee will work to coordinate a meeting in July.

Maryjayne recapped her experience attending the 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party for the Depot building downtown that was organized by the Kent Historical Society. She advised it was interesting and appeared to be well attended.

Judy advised there were no updates from the Ordinance and By-laws review Committee at this time.

Judy asked whether there were any updates regarding member research related to composting. Justine advised she had a conversation with one of the owners of Laziza restaurant downtown regarding composting. Justine noted that the owner shared composting as an individual business is too expensive but could be possible if it was a program run by the City. The owner noted that even with utilizing compostable disposables, people still end up

getting the trash components of same wrong. Members noted Kent Natural Foods coop gives their compost to area chicken farmers. It was felt maybe there could be some kind of collaboration between and with the co-op and downtown businesses to help make composting efforts easier and/or more affordable.

Judy asked whether there was any update regarding 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 April's meeting about having a smaller presentation and discussion at a future Commission meeting instead of tour of the Water Treatment Plant. She advised she has continued to follow up, and noted she is still pending their response.

Judy asked whether there were any further comments and hearing none, called for a motion to adjourn. Maryjayne motioned, Julie G. seconded, and the motion passed with unanimous approval. The meeting adjourned at 7:06pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, July 7, 2025, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Overholt building.