

Sustainability Commission Meeting, September 8, 2025

Meeting Summary

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

Excused: Justine Gallo

Others in Attendance: Bill Wilen, Julie Morris

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

Judy motioned to excuse Justine from the meeting. Tracy seconded and hearing no further discussion, the motion passed with unanimous approval.

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 G. complimented the Events Committee on the October Sustainability Month flyer and webpage materials – she felt they were inviting, informative, and official-looking
- Judy thanked Julie M. for all the work being done as reported on the staff work report and noted she felt the networking components of same were very important
 - Julie M. thanked the Commission for the work they do sharing about the City's sustainability work with their own networks
 - On the topic of networking, Judy asked whether the schools had provided information about what they may be doing for Sustainability Month
 - Julie advised not yet – but she had sent the invitations to the Superintendent and her other district contact
 - Julie provided an update related to sustainability activity at Walls Elementary School noting she had just attended a meeting regarding needs for their school garden, some of which may come up during October and may be able to be sent out on the Listserv if not an actual event listing
 - Continuing the topic of networking, Judy had asked whether upcoming community sustainability events happening in September could be listed on the October Sustainability Month webpage
 - Julie advised not at this time, but noted the possibility of a Community Sustainability Events calendar that could be housed on the City's Sustainability Overview page so that groups can submit their sustainability-related events year-round and have them all listed in one place
 - Julie M. noted she would be exploring this as part of the CAP-directed City-Business/Org Climate Alliance initiative
 - Members discussed possible event submission criteria, formats and functionality of the calendar, and potential legal issues – Julie M. noted staff would take their suggestions under consideration as the calendar is explored further
 - Julie also reviewed the current Sustainability Overview webpage structure in relation to where a calendar could be placed, with Judy noting the site as an important educational tool in addition to being a source for other cities to look to when seeking best practice information for their own climate action work
 - some context and history for how the Sustainability Overview site came about and its ongoing page development was also provided in response to member questions about same
- Tracy provided information about a program being offered at the American Outfitters store at the Summit Mall where folks can bring in their used cotton jeans to be recycled

- Maryjayne noted she has submitted to create a sustainability book display at the Kent Free Library for the month of October and described the possible initiative – members provided input on same

Judy asked whether there were any other items for Good of the Order and hearing none, moved the discussion to New Business. No items were on the agenda for New Business, and no one had anything to add, so Judy moved the discussion to Old Business.

An update from the Events Committee was provided.

- Members discussed the events for October Sustainability Month that are confirmed and can be listed on the events section of the webpage for same
 - Julie M. advised on the structure for how these events could be listed on the page, and discussed how Maryjayne’s library book list might be able to be incorporated
 - Julie M. reiterated individual actions can also be listed, and members discussed sustainability actions they partake in for possible submission
- Members discussed the Mayor’s proclamation and whether it could be posted – Julie M. noted it would have to wait to be officially signed, but most likely yes, and the events list will note that the proclamation is happening
- Members discussed the Lights Out event being planned
 - Julie M. noted the first meeting is scheduled for 9/15/25 and will involve staff from Kent City Parks and Recreation Department, as well as from Kent Environmental Council, Discover Bats Ohio, LLC and Portage Park District
 - Members discussed the feedback Kent Parks and Recreation provided regarding possible park locations for the event, reviewing logistics and thinking about attendee needs in relation to the event’s purpose
 - Members suggested Plum Creek Park, River Edge Park, or the Kramer Ball Fields be considered as possible locations
 - Members discussed already scheduled area events in relation to setting a date for the Lights Out event, including their own availability
 - Members discussed channels and contacts for sharing about the Lights Out event
- Members discussed feedback from Andrew Rome regarding available Saturdays to table at the Haymaker Farmers’ Market
 - Members discussed their availability and requested Saturday, October 11th
 - Members will finalize logistics and content for the tabling at the October 6th Commission meeting
- In response to member questions, Julie M. clarified the three events the Commission Members had decided to pursue as their own events for October Sustainability Month were: tabling at the Haymaker Farmers’ Market, holding an educational Lights Out event, and possibly inviting Save Ohio Parks to speak about state parks and fracking
 - Julie M. noted the City cannot invite Save Ohio Parks to speak, but members were welcome to share information about them individually with other community groups should other groups want to engage with Save Ohio Parks
 - Julie M. clarified if another community group hosts Save Ohio Parks as a speaker for their October Sustainability Month activity and alerts Julie M. to same, then the event can be listed among all the other community events that have been submitted for October Sustainability Month

Judy asked whether there were any other items for the Events Committee and hearing none, moved the discussion to the Ordinance and Bylaws Review Committee.

- Judy and Tracy noted the committee had met and are still working on their review and suggestions
- Over the course of their review, it had been asked whether an active City Council Member could also sit on the Sustainability Commission as a voting member
 - The City’s Law Director confirmed this was allowed and this possible change to future commission membership is being reviewed by the committee

- Members briefly discussed the benefits of this possible change

Judy asked whether there were any other items for the Ordinance and Bylaws Review Committee and hearing none, moved the discussion to the Dark Skies and Bird Migration Initiatives agenda item.

- Clarification was provided between Dark Skies as a larger rating program for cities to work towards, versus single events like Lights Out that can help educate about light pollution
- Members did not have any updates but noted much of the Lights Out event work aligns with educational and other goals of this agenda item
- Members briefly discussed migrations happening in the Fall and made suggestions for coordination with other entities doing this kind of educational work in the area

Judy asked whether there were any other items for the Dark Skies and Bird Migration Initiatives agenda item and hearing none, moved the discussion to the Carbon Storage and Fracking agenda item.

- Julie G. noted this item in its original iteration is currently less of a concern given political shifts, and the continual lack of staff response to the member request for a presentation to the Commission to answer their questions related to the City's aquifers, water supply and impacts of injection wells and carbon storage on same, isn't moving forward - it was suggested to remove this item from the agenda
 - Members discussed possible ways to keep the larger topic on the agenda, but agreed it would be a discussion for the October Commission meeting
 - Julie G. motioned to table the discussion until the October meeting, Tracy seconded, and hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously

Judy asked whether there were any other items for the Carbon Storage and Fracking agenda item and hearing none, moved the discussion to the Member Research on Compost Initiatives agenda item.

- Judy noted that compost scraps can be brought to the Portage County Recycling Center's Brimfield facility – there is a new drop off in front of the facility that isn't part of the CHaRM center – it is in front of the warehouse next to where one can also decommission a flag
 - Members discussed costs and other services offered by the provider of this (and other) compost station which is run via Rubber City Reuse
 - It was noted Rubber City Reuse was a guest speaker at the last Kent Environmental Council 3rd Thursday monthly public program

Julie G. motioned to adjourn. Maryjayne seconded and hearing no further comments, members passed the motion with unanimous approval. The meeting adjourned at 7:04pm.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be held Monday, October 6, 2025, starting at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Community Room.