

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

JULY 17TH, 2024, MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair, Sharon Dever; David Benac, Vice-Chair; Rachel Jondle, David DeBack, Stephen Romenelli, Tressa Greshak, Robb Liekis, Damaris Potter

ABSENT: Thomas DeWhirst, Bobby Glasser

STAFF: Carrie Soule (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Jean Talanda, *Wellhead Protection Program Committee*, Justin Gish, *Community Sustainability Plan*, Alexa Hemp

ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm.

ASSURANCE OF LIVE STREAMING (Facebook/YouTube)

Recording/Streaming of the meeting was confirmed, with community members joining via a link posted on the City's Facebook page.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA (07/17/2024)

Chair Dever asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the July 17, 2024, meeting.

Committee Member made a motion to approve the Agenda and was supported. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for 05/15/2024

Chair Dever asked the Committee Members if there were any changes to the May 15, 2024 and meeting minutes. There were no changes to the meeting minutes.

Committee Member made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes and was supported. With a voice vote the motion was approved unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Individual/Announcements: Tried several times to connect with Egle on the phone and looks like we had technical difficulties, they will come to our next meeting on August 21st.

News/Educational Items:

COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Phone number is 1-888-382-9556

Valarie, Kalamazoo resident since 2008 and has concerns over “No Mow May” there is little data showing that this is having any positive effect on early pollinators. Provided to City email and Mr. Gish the articles that back her findings. It promotes weeds and unwanted critters for neighbors of those who take advantage of this movement. Natural Gardens which are nice but not to have the whole yard or curb sections that obstruct views on the roads and sidewalks. We do have guidelines that need to be followed and we should monitor a little more. Committee will be looking into ways to improve.

Rita, resident of Kalamazoo Northside and was awoken from a sound sleep to horrible smell, like burning plastic. Possibly Graphic Packaging and is looking for feedback from committee; we are doing a lot of research and checking on air quality from 7pm to 7am. We are looking into the answers and will bring next meeting. Also, questions on the 4th of July fireworks for the smoke and clean-up is between 10pm-11pm they are permitted. Check www.kalamazoo.org for ordinance for the City of Kalamazoo.

We have an open vacancy on the Environmental Concerns Committee board.

Chair Dever asked if there were any comments on the phones. There were no callers.

Chair Dever opened the discussion for comments by others.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS (AS NEEDED)

Sub Committee Suggestions – Native Landscape, Urban Deer, etc. – a lot of interested parties on the committees.

ONGOING BUSINESS

Wellhead Protection Program – Jean Talanda - programs that are ongoing; Properties with our water well fields, storm water, educational outreach and liability sites that are sites the City of Kalamazoo has some responsibility for the cleanup. Wellhead Protection is our number one program to protect our well fields, drinking water supply, etc. A position for the Environmental Support Specialist was filled by Ashley Richardson and it was vacant for 3 months, so they are in the process of catching up. We have hundreds of acres in our well fields that we are working to protect, restricting land and chemical use. We are starting with Forest Management plan which 2 have been completed and starting a third one which is 700 Acres, the Al Sabo Preserve, waiting on requisition to be approved, which includes invasive species, deer management and selective tree harvesting because of the poor quality of the forest. Working with Egle Forest for the Michigan Faucet Program and the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council in Educational awareness of Land Management. Reached out to Texas Township to set up an Informational Education night sometime soon. Two projects going with the boy scouts, one is in Comstock our well fields at McLindon Trails on July 20th with 25 Boy Scouts, few partners from Comstock Park and our water operation division who are all volunteering to put trail signs out, cut branches and make it more of a trailway system. Al Sabo to put up more signage since the number one complaint is people getting lost. Small funding from the DNR to put up and Educational Deer enclosure display, put up a 10-foot fence, 12 x 12 area, put a nice big apple tree in the middle and next to fence another apple tree without the fencing and put a plaque next to it talking about Land Management, Forest Management and the effect of the deer population. DNR visited our fields and said they are way overpopulated, looking for volunteers to put in 14 stakes in the ground. One of the bigger things in the Wellhead Protections Program is they completed a five-year plan which includes all the drinking water supply components and how we plan to protect them and how we manage them. Also includes the contaminant source inventory that is the potential risk associated with chemical and land use within our capture zones which extend around our well fields, it was approved as of May. Putting together spill containment plans which is basically preparing to reduce risks of any type of contaminant getting into the ground from our own use of chemicals on site just to treat the water, etc. We have 13 active well fields, and we are close to the end of finishing. New exciting thing, we are cooperating with the Michigan Geological Survey and taking all the information from the drilling over the past 100 years or so and establishing a better understanding of potentially finding a new location for Source water. We are renewing our Southwest Michigan Mountain Biking Association agreement for biking at Al Sabo and it help with slowly rebuilding some of the trails and putting together and aggressive plan to really redo some of those trails to make them sustainable and wider for both hiking and biking and reduce erosion. Storm water we did get our MS4 and PDS Permits on May 31st, 2024, which was submitted April 2022, there were 2 issues, Catch Basin cleanout program and equalized sampling for select creeks in Kalamazoo County. We asked for reconsideration because of the inability to fund some of these activities and they did not take in any of the considerations, so we have a new permit where they have rewritten those sections for us. The permit is normally a 5 year and they going to terminate after 3 years so we will be reapplying for this permit in 8 months, some of the other MS4 Communities have the same issued and some of them are still waiting for their permit. Another requirement is a public survey to see if the public education that we conduct is effective and what people have gotten out of it, working on the best avenue for this to be conducted and

within conjunction with KVCC because they nest under our storm water permit. A new thing Egle has undertaken is equalized sampling of the local creeks and the Kalamazoo River started on June 13th, and we were not aware of this under they started sending data to the health department, so we are trying to collect that data. We get the data, but we do not know how it was collected, if it's collected when it's raining versus when it's dry which makes a huge difference. Egle is also doing a Chloride study, and we are monitoring those results, and this year is different because we did not use a lot of salt this past winter. Working with Egle on Storm Water on streamlining the City's process for the soil erosion/soil control program (SESC) and working with Director Baker and departments on maybe changing the status of our Authority and streamline our process. Education on Storm and drinking water through the State, working on AI marketing tools now through our Vendor Town Square media, ads on radio and social media, etc, trying to help people navigate through the construction and as we see problematic areas and business owners in need, we are interviewing them as well as on foot and getting their information out as much as possible. We have done 2 Farmer Market booths and a third was canceled because it was full, and they wouldn't give us a free booth. We are showing off our Wellhead Protection and Storm Water models to teach people about contaminants and how to do things better. With a small mini-Grant from the State we have been able to put together a lead service removal campaign, it's education and talks about the city removing lead and what to do if they have lead services in their home. Want to do a marketing booth setup that we can go around to venues and promote educational materials, also some social media ads that will appear for a few months through the Spring and Summer. We had a public services week where 3 facilities let us set up our booth for all 3 days. The downtown media center joined our contest for videos on educational ads for example, save water, conserve water doesn't pour this down the drain type things and we have two winners, and one will end up in the movie theaters. Lastly, the Liability site for the consolidated landfill project is BIG, it's massive, it's 50% or more finished and there are some issues occur here and there and International Paper is still talking with EPA to see what it's going to be at the end. There will be a neighborhood meeting concerning Allied Paper and that has taken place to keep community involved and them apprised of what's going on and EPA is running that meeting. No Target date for finished project, depending on issues and storm water that put things on hold and lot of testing taking place.

Kalamazoo River – Litter – No update

Community Sustainability Plan – Justin Gish/Alexa Hemp – 431 Households participated in “No Mow May” within the city. Reusable take out containers will be launched by Artisan Sandwich and Sarcozy Bakery within the next couple weeks and still having funding available for 13 more businesses if they are interested. There is a Home Energy Survey that is live to help in understanding the housing stock and it's resiliency as well as folks knowledge and perspective on home energy efficiency projects, we have 150 responses so far. They are to help form a Home Energy Efficiency Summit which will be in the fall. They held a bike audit with the League of Michigan bicyclists, we biked from WMU's office for sustainability into the Knollwood Neighborhood as well as from the Northside to the Kick Pool, had 11 people on the first audit and 8 people on the second audit which was nice for the group to have productive conversations on how to improve, the report will be out in a couple weeks. Justin has been working with a Climate student at the University of Michigan doing research on Integrated Pest Management in the City and one of the things that has been emerging from that is helping bats in our area.

Events: August 13th from 6pm to 10pm for bat building boxes to go up around the city and information on bats in general and research they are doing.

NEW BUSINESS

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

- ***Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board***– Mr. Glasser
- ***Air and Water Quality*** – Mr. Glasser
- ***Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection*** – Ms. Greshak – No Update
- ***City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission*** – Ms. Jondle - Friendship Village; updating, redoing and adding parking adding a storm water basin (Woodland Area). Some within NFP but not all.
- ***Tree Committee*** – Mr. DeWhirst – 10 new trees on Water St, Westnedge to Park had to remove trees and will be replanting 3 to 1 after Arena is finished. Trees were not well that were removed.
- ***Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council*** – Ms. Dever – No Update
- ***Parks & Recreation Advisory Board*** – Mr. Liekis – No Update
- ***Kalamazoo River Watershed Council*** – Mr. Benac – Falcons, 2 or 3 and one died from hitting building, other one had flight school and is doing well. There is a website for resources “Keeping tabs on the Kalamazoo” that you can look to track trash, fishing where and what kind and is it safe? Useful tools for soil contamination.
- ***Wellhead Protection Program Committee – Quarterly*** - Jean Talanda (July) – See Above
- ***Odor Task Force – Quarterly*** – Mr. Benac (August)

CHECK PHONE LINES AND STREAMING FOR COMMENTS:

No comments.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.