

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

JANUARY 15, 2025 - MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Benac, Chair, Tressa Greshak, David DeBack, Rachel Jondle, Stephen Romenelli, Damaris Potter, Thomas Dewhirst and Justin Sanders Vice-Chair

ABSENT:

STAFF: Carrie Soule (recording secretary)

OTHERS: Justin Gish

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 (01/15/2025)

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 12/18/2024

David Benac, Chair asked the Committee Members if there were any changes to the December 18th, 2025 meeting minutes. Justin Sanders, Vice-Chair motioned to approve with 2nd by Stephen Romenelli, all approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Brought to our attention that the public phone number is not listed on the live stream and can we add it.

COMMENTS BY OTHERS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS/COMMUNICATIONS:

David Benac asked if there were any comments on the phones. There were no callers.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – Need brief description of each subcommittee for new members to decide which one they might be interested in.

Natural Features Protection (NFP) Review Board– Open

Air and Water Quality – Open

Wildlife and Natural Resource Protection – Ms. Greshak – We received an email from a concerned citizen asking about groundhogs eating gardens. We will check into any Community funding for fencing, raised gardens, repellents, traps, etc. Also, check the library for information on resources and the Michigan Garden and Neighborhood Association and DNR websites.

City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission – Ms. Jondle – No Meeting

Tree Committee – Mr. DeWhirst – Working on Annual report for 2024, in 2023 the City received a USDA grant for 1 Million dollars to plant 500 trees in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Delays in funding so that year only 125 trees were planted all in the Edison and East side neighborhoods. The plan for 2025 is to plant 375 trees and does include some removing of hazard falling trees. 64 trees were removed this past year that were in the right of way for projects and being replaced at a 3 to 1 ratio. We will want to look into a contract with Urban Ashes to recycle the old trees. Nature Center is building a new exhibit in their main building and it's all about forestry, health and the impact on your lives and have 2 curators that want to be involved in Arbor Day and the Tree Committee on planting trees.

Asylum Lake Policy & Management Council – Open

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board – Open

Kalamazoo River Watershed Council – Mr. Benac – No Update

Odor Task Force – Not meeting

Waste Working Group – Stephen Romenelli – EPS recycling in December that filled a trailer with foam and cardboard and had 4 totes of electronics. Next one is January 25th at Mayor's River Park from 10am-1pm and will take foam, electronics but will include paper shredding and oral care products also, please check website for lists of what is accepted. In 2024 recycling total is 2153 tons and an increase of 5.94%, covers single family and multi-family units. Curbside brush collection occurs April through October and collected 164 tons in 2024 and an increase of 1.84%. Leaf collection was 13.652 cubic yards which was down from 2023 by 5,000 cubic yards, reasoning is snow and same people working snow and leaf collection. The next event will be in April, please see the newsletter "View From The Curb" for the event schedule.

Native Species & Urban Landscape – Ms. Potter – Working with Destiny to help pin point a meeting schedule, will meet on marketing No Mow May differently and use the Community input and brainstorm more ideas.

Wellhead Protection Program Committee – Quarterly - Jean Talanda

Kalamazoo Earth Day Committee has volunteer and community events with opportunities throughout April, let David Benac know.

Justin Gish – Sustainability:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Environmental Concerns Committee Applicant Interview

Mike Thompson – General Manager of Republic Services for Southwest Michigan, lives in downtown Kalamazoo and in free time usually advocating, coaching, mentoring and training to bring light to the industry overall.

2. Response to citizen email with questions about improvements at Stations 5 and 14.

Director Baker stated that Station 5, water station is the oldest continuously operational station in the city at 110 years old with little PFAS that the withdrawals help with. Station 14 does not meet future 2029 EPA regulations. They will be consolidated, most cost-effective way to go forward.

3. Results of Environmental Concerns Committee's vote by ballot for officers.

Ballot Results: David Benac is voted in as new Chair of Environmental Concerns Committee - ECC, Justin Sanders is voted in as Co-Chair.

Stephen Romenelli motioned to vote in all 3 candidates to be members on the ECC Board, Justin Sanders, Vice Chair seconded, approved unanimously. City Commission met January 27th with an approved vote to start the New Members: Reeta Chandler, Mike Thompson and John Eric Kreuzer

NEW BUSINESS:

Green Burials – Allows the body to decompose regularly, Mr. Benac will bring more information to next meeting.

Street and home cats: Is there way to catch and release to fix stray cats. Check Animal Service Board?

CHECK PHONE LINES: No phone calls

COMMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

