

Sustainability Commission Meeting September 13, 2021

Meeting called to order at 5:32 pm by Renee Ruchotzke

Roll Call: Renee Ruchotzke, Rick Hawksley, Wilder Hritz, MaryJane Stone, Andrew Scholl

Also Present: Andrews Boateng, Judy Nelson

Staff: Bridget Susel, Community Development Director, Patti Long, Assistant to the City Manager

Approval of the agenda:

MaryJane moved to approve the minutes, Rick Hawksley seconded, no discussion, Passed 4-0.

Meeting Summary Minutes:

Wilder moved to approve, MaryJane seconded, no discussion. Passed 3-0

Public Comment

None. Ms. Nelson is in attendance as an Ad Hoc member to learn the update on the GHG inventory and progress made in the process.

Old Business

a) Ad hoc Committee update –

Ms. Long shared the ICLEI template on the screen that was previously shared with the group via email and encouraged members to read it if they have not already done so. The template is helpful to organize the specifics of what has been completed and what is still pending.

Ms. Ruchotzke asked about the project management piece needed now that Mr. Boateng's portion is nearly complete, and her understanding is that it was the Ad Hoc committee's work to fit the Climate Action Plan into a document that City Government, residents and Kent State can implement and understand.

Ms. Nelson stated there may be some communication disconnect and asked Mr. Boateng to explain.

Mr. Boateng explained that there has been much progress to create a document for what the plan should achieve. There is a piece that applies to everyone but not everyone is involved in every piece.

Ms. Nelson added that the Ad Hoc assisted by doing a lot of research as well.

Ms. Susel, added that when Council authorized the resolutions for the Paris Accord, there was a period where it was a struggle with how to operationalize the beginning. The City of Kent was then authorized to pay for an ICLEI membership to be trained and supported in the development of the CAP. The Sustainability Commission can then recruit Stakeholders, university staff/students, and residents to help drive the GHG numbers down in the highest areas that need decreased. Once Council approves the report and recommendations for reduction then phases three and four can be determined by the Commission and Ad Hoc together. Council only needs to approve the portions of the plan that require expense or legislation.

Ms. Nelson asked if the plan the Mr. Boateng is working on is only Phase one and two.

Mr. Boateng confirmed. Phase one and two are the quantitative data that drive phase three and four planning. He went on to explain the two types of phases, mitigation and adaptation and how they are used moving forward and when it is time to recruit people to help implement the plan. He went on to explain that reduction targets from phase two drive the mitigation plan.

Ms. Ruchotzke stated we need to be able to explain this process to a sixth grader and it is concerning that people will not understand this.

Ms. Susel stated that there needs to be a person who understands the details and that should be a full time (or at least part time) position. This is a good time to ask council for that so that the plan can get traction. That person could coordinate the project, assign tasks, and get into the schools.

Mr. Boateng explained the need to take the plan one step at a time. We also cannot take the National strategies and lay them over local areas. Kent's data does not support the same strategies are needed as the National plan.

Ms. Ruchotzke clarified that the Commission's expertise lies in the fact that they know the community.

Ms. Stone asked what information are we waiting for from Mr. Boateng?

Mr. Boateng stated that his report on GHG data and a report on what areas need to be addressed for mitigation. He will include a summary of the 75 page document as well. The report will include the characteristics of Kent and the resources here.

Ms. Ruchotzke expressed that while she understands that there is certain timing required for each step, she is concerned that people are involved yet so they can understand the process of what has happened and what will be coming. She feels the Ad Hoc Committee will have a lot to catch up on. She asked Mr. Boateng if he is adding his results into the template? He stated he would. She then asked who might be the person to help the Commission know what to do to move into the next phases.

Ms. Susel stated that each of the members have to read the study to gain understanding. Mr. Boateng agreed and added that it will all make sense after everyone reads the template document.

Ms. Stone explained that she is more "grass roots" oriented and feels like we need to have a product that people can identify with and suggested we use social media to begin to introduce to residents to what other cities are doing.

Ms. Nelson explained that we can't get residents on board until we have the data showing what our problems are.

Ms. Susel cautioned that we have to wait for the data to show our problem areas so that a false narrative comes out. The draft report will be complete by the end of October. She also suggested we request funding for staff to carry this out and track the progress to see if the Action Plan actually addresses the problem.

Ms. Ruchotzke would like the Commission to see the document prior to council.

Ms. Susel suggested the Commission and the Ad Hoc will want to meet together, especially at the beginning of creating the Action Plan.

Ms. Ruchotzke expressed concern over the coordination of the planning and also whether the different types of learners will be able to understand the documents. Reading it might not work for all.

Ms. Susel stated that a newly hired staff person would be the one driving the project.

Mr. Boateng reminded the group that it was a project that all were to be involved in it, ICLEI training happened as well. Most of those people are not part of the project now.

Ms. Nelson stated that she has been part of the process since the beginning and that her expectation was that we would not go to council until the whole action plan was completed. She requested to not call the inventory and recommendations “the plan” but call it something else.

Ms. Susel clarified that council needs to approve this step first, to recognize where the problem areas lie. Each step is part of the action plan.

Mr. Boateng suggested labeling it in phases. He also added that the March presentation is still on the City’s YouTube that can answer questions anyone might have. He reminded the group that we are all on the same team, working together, while each person plays his/her part.

The report and goals will be reviewed at the November meeting. The summary memo will be available one week prior to the November 3. Ms. Susel will send that memo to the Sustainability Commission. During the November 1st Commission meeting we will discuss the recommendation to add a paid consultant to the City staff. Ms. Ruchotzke expressed her gratitude to Mr. Boateng and the Ad Hoc committee.

Ms. Ruchotzke made a motion to pass over all remaining agenda items except for the Farmer’s Market table (recycling game) due to time constraints (at 6:50 pm). Seconded by Mr. Hritz. All still in attendance were in favor, no discussion. Passed 4-0 (Mr. Hawksley left at 6:45)

Pending Business

Farmer’s Market – Ms. Stone stated the recycling game table will take place on September 18th. Need recyclables, table, canopy, bins, easel, etc. Ms. Long can get the banner, table, canopy and items to trash or recycle.

Ms. Stone to try to get Brad Bolton to be a barker to draw people to the table. The group discussed what types of trash/recycling to have available.

Ms. Ruchotzke offered to come set up. The table will be staffed by two the first half and two the second half. Ms. Long to bring everything to set up at 8:30 and tear down at 1:00.

Mr. Hritz will find websites about reducing use of plastics and send to Ms. Long for making printouts to place on the easel for people to take pictures of the links.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hritz made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Scholl seconded it. All in favor, 4-0, Mr. Hawksley left early at 6:45. Meeting ended at 7:20.

Next Meeting

October 4, 2021 in person at the Kent Police Department training room.