

Sustainability Commission Meeting September 13, 2021

Meeting called to order at 5:33 pm by Renee Ruchotzke

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

Absent: Wilder Hritz

Staff: Patti Long, Assistant to the City Manager

Approval of the agenda:

Mr. Hawksley made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Stone.

Meeting Summary Minutes:

Mr. Hawksley moved to approve, Mr. Scholl seconded, no discussion. Passed 4-0

Public Comment

None

Old Business

Review of Ad Hoc committee/pending GHG report

QUESTION ROUND:

Ms. Ruchotzke asked each member and staff to ask questions about the ad hoc processes.

Mr. Scholl stated he has no questions since Ad Hoc is not meeting much while we wait for the report from Mr. Boateng. He stated he has done this for a university in the past.

Ms. Stone asked what the Ad Hoc is doing.

Mr. Hawksley had emailed an ad hoc member and expressed his concern for how long basic data is taking to put together. He would like to know how to engage the help from Kent State to combine efforts.

Ms. Long stated she is still trying understand the jobs/tasks of the Commission vs the ad hoc and she is waiting for the data so that we can determine what the tasks will be to develop and implement the plan.

Ms. Ruchotzke's concerns are in the area of how things are happening and that two people have been involved and not the commission that has been charged with this project. She also expressed concern over the plan not being enough to make a difference unless it is "owned" by the people. It cannot be an esoteric words and regulations that don't have any meaning to people. Governments are intentionally obtuse because organizations resist change. The commission needs to have community members with staff support that helps open doors rather than close them. Based on her experiences she has great concerns about the fast turnaround from the time the report is shared with the group and when it will be going to council. She would like to ask the ad hoc committee to meet with us and share details, work on the plan with the Commission and present it to Council together so that it feels like the Commission has ownership of this. Ms. Ruchotzke has a huge problem with the ad hoc being left out of it after all the work they've done. She would rather have more time with the data so it doesn't feel like it is being rushed through.

RESPONSE ROUND:

Mr. Scholl stated he has been on the Commission since near the beginning. What he saw with the Sustainability Commission (and Heart & Soul) is a lack of leadership with direction, which can be a good thing in that everyone gets to have a voice until there is no one facilitating forward progress. It left the group wandering. When ICLEI was brought on to help it offered guidance. There was some flailing going on because members were assigned tasks that interested them but they also had to learn how to accomplish those tasks. The ad hoc committee was started to draw people who had the skill sets that were needed to complete the tasks (KSU, KEC, etc). Again forward movement was stalled and Ms. Susel stepped in to facilitate progress. She asked Mr. Boateng to step in and collect the baseline data as a community member since he has the skillset and software necessary. Now the Commission and Ad Hoc can have input on the action plan based on the facts. Mr. Scholl added that it was good to have Mr. Boateng's assistance to speed the process up, however more frequent updates would have been nice. He suggested that could be part of the group's frustration with feeling left out of the loop, wanting to know how far along the collection was, and any hangups in the process. Mr. Scholl did add that more often these projects are handled by a City staff member or a community member who is contracted for the purpose of managing the project rather than managed by strictly volunteers. He feels like the City of Kent should have a staffer for Sustainability, like the university does. He feels like no one was in charge of the ad hoc so perhaps volunteers collected data that was less important in the grand scheme of things. Seeing the report would be helpful since the Commission is putting their name on it.

Ms. Stone stated her approach and experience is more of a grass roots one. She asked if she missed data showing that the residential sector is the largest area of concern. Mr. Hawksley clarified that the presentation last month shared that with the group. She also stated that Bridget stated a number for the reduction goal and she wondered what the Commission's goal is. Ms. Ruckotzke clarified that it is up to the Commission to come up with that. Mr. Scholl said that Council may determine what the target reduction is. Mr. Hawksley stated that there is no sustainability line in the City's budget anymore. The City needs to put more money into saving the planet, such as hiring staff for sustainability and the Commission should be proposing policy change that helps the environment. The budget should include more items like electric police cars so that the government and the residents are making changes to improve the climate. There used to be a \$75,000 budget in the 1990's, we need to get back to that.

Ms. Long asked if we need to push out to the December Council meeting. Ms.

Ruckotzke stated the group can discuss it later.

Ms. Ruckotzke expressed appreciation for Mr. Scholl's history and recap of the process so far. She feels that the Ad Hoc Committee is the Commission's group and therefore the Commission is the group that makes recommendations to Council. She would like to have a "re-start" of the Ad Hoc group, clarifying who is on it, have them work on the report and have clear leadership in their process, to make sure the right things are getting done. Mr. Scholl stated that this phase is what needed to be done and that Ms. Susel is the one who got things moving again. Ms. Ruckotzke would be ok with a progress report going to Council but is not ready to "rubber stamp" the report without reviewing it. She added that maybe there should be more people recruited for the Ad

Hoc depending on what skills are needed. We would need to look at job descriptions so that if a person is hired, it should be someone who engages in the community rather than a technocrat. A combination of soft skills and technical skills would be necessary for a project coordinator for the Ad Hoc. Ms. Stone asked how the ad hoc was formed. Ms. Ruckotzke gave a brief synopsis that Council charged the Commission with an action plan and the ad hoc was formed and people volunteered to be part of it. Ms. Ruckotzke invited a motion to meet with the Ad Hoc and after all have had 1-2 weeks to review the report. Mr. Hawksley sponsored the motion, Mr. Scholl seconded. Discussion: Mr. Scholl stated we would show the report and ask Council to approve the top items what need to be addressed. Motion passed 4-0. Ms. Ruckotzke stated we need to tell Ms. Susel that we would like time with the report and with ad hoc. Mr. Hawksley suggested a work session, no more than two hours.

Ms. Ruckotzke asked if anyone needed to discuss anything from the agenda. Mr. Hawksley asked Ms. Long to try to find the ad hoc committee notes. Ms. Ruckotzke said they might be in the Google drive. Ms. Ruckotzke asked Ms. Long to find the documents from the Paris Accord Council meeting and asked Mr. Scholl to send the Google link to the group. Discussion continued about possibly rearranging folders into phases. Will hold off on that until we know Mr. Boateng is no longer using the drive folders.

Pending Business

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hawksley made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Scholl seconded it. All in favor 4-0. Meeting ended at 7:40.

Next Meeting

November 1, 2021 in person at the Kent Police Department Chief's Conference Room.