

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 22nd, 2023

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm HYBRID MEETING:

Meeting Link: <https://meet.goto.com/740241965> | Access Code:
740-241-965 - CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS (601 Main Street W)

Energy Action Plan, 25x25 Plan, Sourcewater Protection Plan linked here:
<https://sites.google.com/view/ashland-sustainability/themes>

Present: Axel Peterman, Lissa Radke, Laura Graf, Adam Zais, Amy Amman, Steven Wiley, Bill Bailey (Cheq Bay Renewables), Kelly Westlund

Absent: Kate Ullman (Excused)

Agenda

- 1) Approval of Agenda
6:01 Amman moved to approve the agenda and Zais seconded. Motion Carried.
- 2) Approval of minutes from the May 25, 2023 meeting
Zais moved to approve the minutes as written and Graf seconded. Motion Carried.
- 3) Citizen Comments
Kelly Westlund introduced herself and stated that she submitted an application to the Mayor to join the committee. She is a resident of Ashland and has worked on the 25x25 plan years ago. She now works for UW Extension in Bayfield.
- 4) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Waste and Recycling
 - i. June 3rd Ashland Spring Clean Up
No discussion occurred on this item.
 - ii. June 20th Cleansweeps Event – Update
No discussion occurred on this item.
 - b) Climate Change
 - i. 25x25 Plan further discussion
No discussion occurred on this item.
 - c) Water
 - i. Develop Sourcewater Protection Plan initial Recommendations
Peterman provided an update and stated that one item is partnerships in the community. We should start there and may want to get in contact with the Superior Rivers Watershed Association. Amman asked if it was worth it to run it by the Berg Center. Radke was on the committee that helped write the plan so would be happy to help. Some recommendations do not appear to have gotten in there. She recommended writing an executive summary that is public-friendly and that it would be good to highlight in bold the actions we are expected to take and include those in the executive summary. She asked if she should talk to Superior Rivers. Peterman answered affirmatively since he is not as familiar with the staff now.
 - d) Annual Report for City Council

Peterman had gone on Kate Ullman's website for the committee and hoped to find some material to turn into a bullet list for projects completed in the last couple years. He explained that he did not find any material on there. He will have to pull together the previous minutes and has not done that. Radke sent material (photos, outline, etc.) to Peterman so he did not have to do all of this. Peterman saw photos but not the outline. Peterman will look in the next week and send to Wiley. Wiley will then compile everything.

e) Solar Incentives Proposal

Mr. Bailey introduced himself and runs Cheq Bay Renewables. He works with both Tribes and Bayfield County and is responsible for much of the solar that has gone in lately. He has done some wastewater treatment plants (Bayfield, Bad River), etc. and tracks energy for Bayfield County. He is starting to get involved with Ashland and Ashland County. Many grants are available. He just wrote a \$3 million grant for 53 EV charging stations throughout Bayfield County and believes they have a strong chance to get funded. Ashland County is more disadvantaged so could get scored more highly on grant applications. The Wastewater Treatment Plant is our #1 location. We have a progressive utility and don't have to worry about net metering. The grants are after micro grids right now. They are trying to harden the grid. The way to do that is to put batteries with the solar. Payback periods he is seeing are as little as 3-4 years. We need to develop a project team and put a project together. He can help but we need an engineer. He works with MuGrid Analytics. He is working on an \$11 million grant to put in 22 micro grids in Bayfield County with the Governor's office. For Ashland we need to put a data logger in the WWTP for about \$2,000 (\$1,000 of equipment and \$1,000 of electrician time). This shows consumption by the minute and tells Voltage, Ampage, kW Hours, etc. All the stuff can be run remotely. It is getting funded because no one else is doing it. Zais mentioned the WWTP in the 25x25 plan. Bailey mentioned that the WWTP may or may not be on the best tariff. Bailey looked at the WWTP today and could not match Xcel's tariff with our bill which means there is a problem. We need to get Xcel involved and talk with them. We need to understand the bills. Bailey can talk to Jeff Clayburn at Xcel. He needs support from the City indicating we want to do this. If we are willing to do it, will we spend \$2,000 to put in a data logger? Need the data. Xcel's data is not enough. Need support, a bit of investment, etc. There is a grant due July 13 which is 0% cost share and pays up to \$5 million. It is the DOA Electrification of Rural and Remote Areas (DOA-ERA) program. If interested the full application is due October 12. We have an advantage because we are in a disadvantaged community. Zais asked how long of a period do you need data for. Mr. Bailey answered that a year is great and the point is come up with projects and he will help us with the grants. He recommended jumping on it now. Radke stated that we are working on a county-wide program for EV charging infrastructure. She asked if we should we do a similar county-wide project for solar. Bailey believes Ashland County should be the applicant for EV stations. For solar, solar alone will probably not get funded. We need micro-grids because we need to improve resilience of the grid as a whole. The fire station is an excellent place for a micro grid. For Bayfield County they are including electric trucks. Radke asked if the next step was for the committee to write a recommendation to the City Council. Bailey stated that we could

probably not put together something by July 13th. He suggested taking our time and ensuring the committee and City are supportive and that we can get public input. We can look at several buildings but essential buildings are important for micro-grids. He suggested looking at the WWTP, police, and fire. Next spring there will be another round of these grants. Radke stated that it would not be too early to start talking about this now. Bailey agreed. We can do preliminary feasibility studies. The WI Office of Energy Innovation does an Energy Innovation Grant every year. Mr. Bailey said they will do at least one more and to keep our eye on that. They will announce whatever is available in the fall so we need to look at stuff now and have a project ready to go. Two days ago the WI Office of Energy Innovation (under the PSC) just received \$10 million from the US Dept. of Energy. There may be some money here for micro grid development. Amman thanked Bailey for coming. She stated that Mark Abeles Allison has been a key player in Bayfield. She asked if we need a point person. Bailey answered yes. He explained that the project team will need someone like MuGrid Analytics. They offered to write the concept paper for Madeline Island for July 13th. The state is the applicant there. Many players are writing the grant and they each write sections and meet weekly. An engineering study for the WWTP might be \$100k but it could be a \$2 million project. Detailed engineering they subcontract out but they do the project management. We will have to make decisions on whether to invest money without a guarantee of being funded. Next steps are creating a point of contact with the City, starting a project team, and if doing WWTP we need to involve the person who runs it. We need to know if location for solar will be acceptable. He recommended getting MuGrid to write the project paper and ask ourselves if are we willing to cough up \$8,000 to write a complete application. Do we just do the WWTP or do all three locations and throw in trucks also? Radke thinks it could be an Ashland County project as well and throw in other municipalities. Westlund stated that if we can start with the data loggers say \$10,000 for all three we may be able to get all the data we need for all three places. Graf asked if we can take a proposal and put it into different grants. Bailey answered that yes and that he is doing that. We need to get projects that are shovel ready and engage Council, the WWTP, and get public input. Westlund stated that she had gone through each electric meter for three years for the original 25x25 plan. She explained that Xcel does not true up when you upgrade fixtures so City was overcharged by around \$70,000. The City was able to keep a staff person that they were going to lay off once they found the money. We could find more money when we true-up. She stated that we should do an energy audit if we haven't done one in last 4 years. Radke asked if anyone teaches customers how to read their bills. Bailey stated that he can teach us and this is public engagement. We can set up times and invite Xcel people to be involved. Graf asked what an average monthly bill is for the City. Westlund said that an average bill was about \$20k per month five years ago. Bailey stated that the WWTP was between \$5,000-\$7,000 per month. Zais thanked Bailey and said the data logger is important. We need to bump this to Council. Graf suggested starting at COW on perhaps July 11th. Wiley stated that we can look at this. Westlund asked if this will be a heavier lift to look at all three locations. Wiley stated that it would be due to more money involved. Bailey mentioned the Police Department solar. The inverter is fixed and he is tracking the police station. He suggested starting with the data logger for the WWTP and if there

is room for one more starting also with Fire. Westlund mentioned the airport. Bailey agreed it would be beneficial to look at the airport and stated that he can help. We should aim to have something together by Thanksgiving or Christmas. Graf asked if Bailey can send a couple of 10-page proposals. Bailey answered affirmatively. Westlund asked about a contact for MuGrid Analytics. Bailey can send this. He explained that we can use Bayfield County's application as a template for next spring. He just did a presentation last week on grant funding for the EV group.

The Sustainability Committee thanked Mr. Bailey. Mr. Bailey left at 7 pm.

- f) Complete Streets
 - i. Discussion – No discussion occurred on this item.
 - g) Green Tier Legacy Communities
 - i. Update and Annual Report Discussion – No discussion occurred on this item.
 - h) Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant Certification
 - i. Discussion – Amman said this can wait but wants to keep it on for the next meeting.
 - i) Seed Mix
 - i. Discussion – Graf has no update for now. She has not gotten an update yet.
 - j) Community Garden Update – Peterman stated that the community garden finished their 12 new individual allotment plots. The plots are all filled up so they expect to build more next year probably in Spring. In addition they have a community plot. They will have a garden foraging class taught by Peterman soon. There is a new seed library that people have been using. They have had two successful volunteer workdays. The next one is June 29th. They are looking forward to doing one every two weeks for the rest of the season. They also had their first garden potluck and met with a representative from Northlakes Clinic. Peterman wants to sponsor them and maybe fund a paid manager position for the garden. He has been meeting with other community garden managers to learn about the management structure of their gardens. AgriView magazine will run a story on the Beaser Ave garden next month. Zais asked how close Peterman is to filling up the rest of the space he has acquired. Peterman has filled up the chunk they have access to now. He is hoping to take over another quarter of Beaser Park next year.
- 5) Future agenda items – Graf asked how we put together a committee to go after solar. Amman suggested having an update on the COW request. Graf stated that we should push. Zais stated that this is a good opportunity. Westlund mentioned that it was a unique time for grants right now and will not last forever. Graf asked if you can build in Admin to grants. Westlund answered that for most of them yes this is possible.
- 6) Adjournment – Graf moved to adjourn and Zais seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:09 pm.