

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 26th, 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: Dale Kupczyk, Adam Zais, Lissa Radke, Axel Peterman, John Butler, Steven Wiley

Absent:

Agenda

- 1) Approval of Agenda
Peterman called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm. Kupczyk moved to approve the agenda and Zais seconded. Motion carried.
- 2) Approval of minutes from the September 28th, 2023 meeting
Peterman moved to approve the minutes from the September 28th, 2023 meeting as written and Zais seconded. Motion carried.
- 3) Citizen Comments
None
- 4) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Lawn Care Product Use and Toxicity (Discussion)
Wiley recapped discussions from the last meeting. Mr. Butler stated that he was not familiar with the exact product we use but the crew uses a herbicide around the chain link fencing and ball diamonds where it is hard to weed whip. He stated that he will look into it with the maintenance staff and get Wiley a report. Radke mentioned seeing flags at Bay View Park and Kreher Park. Butler was not aware of what product was used so will have to look and follow up. Radke wanted to hear from the City regarding what we are doing and then determine whether we wanted to reduce toxicity. Then do we look at banning some things in the City like with coal tar products? Radke mentioned that Westlund brought up the point of whether or not municipalities can ban things at the last meeting. She was trying to tease out whether City can actually ban herbicides. Radke wanted to develop some sort of outreach campaign to address this. She stated that it would be hard to enact a ban but having an outreach campaign regarding the dangers would be something that could be adopted by us. The City was already promoting No Mow May so this is something we can tie in. Butler said that staff can operate off of some discussion. The City does not have to ban it but the Committee can trust staff. Kupczyk said that we want to know what the City is using so the Committee does not recommend against using something that the City is continuing to use.
 - b) Waste and Recycling
Peterman stated that getting recycling bins in parks is a desire of the committee. Wiley provided an explanation of what is going on and discussions with Sara Hudson

about putting bins in. Butler explained that the Bay View Park bins fill up like you would not believe. Crews empty them Monday and Friday and sometimes it is hard to make it to Friday. Kupczyk stated that if homeowners have to do this then the City should. Butler asked for location suggestions and where to start. Peterman suggested Pamida Beach. Butler replied that this makes sense to him. Zais asked what it would cost. The sheer quantity of garbage/recycling at that park is a problem. He asked what it would be to get another day of pickup like Wednesday. Butler answered that it just would take away from other things the staff would be doing.

Butler explained that we also have a caretaker in the summer months for the garbage cans so staff has a means to address it for when it gets bad.

c) Climate Change

i. 25x25 Plan further discussion

Wiley explained the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) proposal and early discussions. Butler explained that staff was coming up with a plan to do critical upgrades at the WWTP. This would include replacement of the drinking water intake and will be a huge energy draw. The removing and replacing process will create many energy savings. Leaks exist in some of the lines where you can hear the air escaping. We are definitely interested in looking at solar there as part of this. Zais explained that Bill Bailey mentioned grants for the work. Butler asked if you just use transformers to step up to 240/480. Zais answered that it would be designed to operate at that level. He just finished Bayfield County's jail micro grid. It was just finished and turned on today. It was a pretty huge project that Bill Bailey was involved with. It has a micro-grid which can physically sever from the grid on days when there is huge demand. Xcel can say use your battery power. Butler explained that the City has been using the WI Clean Water Loan program. Butler brought up with our consultant to inform them that we are interested in looking at solar integration and they were going to look at this. Zais explained that the first step was to get a data logger. This would capture data (peak demand), etc. The City would have to pony up \$1,000 to \$2,000 for it. Zais asked how we would get the ball rolling and whether it was appropriate to pass a resolution. Butler suggested that the Committee talk with Wiley and he can get the ball rolling. Butler asked how you spec the data logger. Zais answered that the Committee could talk with Bill Bailey to do so. Mr. Bailey can help with this. Butler explained that one thing staff is looking at is expanding administrative space because utility staff does not have enough office space. Zais explained that Bailey is very bullish on this. Butler explained that Washburn has a solar array on their plant. Zais stated that the WWTP uses so much energy and Xcel has a special rate. Butler explained that Aeration and UV disinfection take a lot of juice.

ii. City Vehicle Fleet discussion

Wiley mentioned Mr. Kucera having someone look at the City's fleet vehicles. Butler supports EVs but currently the City can get a new vehicle, use it, sell it, and turn around and make a profit. Currently the focus has been large trucks which is counterintuitive to what the Sustainability Committee is

doing. It's hard to buy one so it is easy to make money when selling them. The City has two in town vehicles limping along so maybe look at those. Radke stated that on December 5th she is bringing in a Department of Administration Executive Director who is looking at this issue. If anyone was interested she can send the invite. Butler said this would be interesting.

d) Water

i. Develop Sourcewater Protection Plan Initial Recommendations

Radke was on workgroup when it started until she became sick. The Committee had talked about wanting to have a list of recommendations compiled all together so it would be easy to implement by staff and have this public facing as well so the public is aware of it. She has prepared a composite list of all recommendations with an executive summary so it is easier to implement and put out to the public. She sent it to Wiley and it can also go to Mr. Butler. Butler stated he was happy to look at it. He mentioned that this was an example of making the plan, putting it on the shelf thing with it so he was happy to look at it again. He went to a conference on road salt usage so optimizing this would be a low hanging fruit way to get salt use down, etc. Radke mentioned interdepartmental awareness-getting other City Departments aware of the plan so they can see how they can make contributions. Butler mentioned water intake project. This project will essentially double the length of the intake into the Bay. The City has essentially eliminated our overflow problem. We had issues this spring but due to a massive snowmelt. Radke stated that this was all huge. The fact that Butler has done so much in so few years is huge and might be nice for the Daily Press to do another article. Zais asked if the reason we haven't had sewer overflows is primarily because we had the recoating of the pipes. Butler answered yes. There were some cases where the pipe was in rough shape so they do open cut excavations each year. Also have to keep up on cleaning out pipes. The DNR pointed us in this direction because the City of Superior had observed the same thing. If people do not do their inflow & infiltration the water infiltrates into the system and we are all paying to treat it. We can do some stuff there. Radke sees some streets that have had infrastructure replaced and trees replanted. She asked how this works. Butler explained that Sara Hudson manages this program and has been working on grants to restore the trees which generally follows the street project by a year or two. Butler supported doing this but we already don't have enough money to restore the roads and stormwater pipes so we have to look at funding options.

e) Complete Streets – Update

Wiley mentioned that Ellis Avenue will be reconstructed in 2025. Butler explained that the City does not really have a Complete Streets policy but has gotten a lot of grants and our City Engineer is applying for grants for this tomorrow.

f) Green Tier Legacy Communities – Update

Wiley mentioned the annual meeting coming up and that there was a virtual meeting on October 30th and new Green Tier scoresheet. Wiley explained how the scoresheet works and that it was intended for communities to be able to establish a baseline of

where they were at on various sustainability initiatives. From there the communities could determine what goals to establish and work towards for the coming year.

g) Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant Certification - Discussion

Peterman tabled this item since Amman was unable to attend.

h) Seed Mix - Discussion

Wiley brought up that this started with Laura Graf. Radke had looked at sample ordinances from other communities which had examples of permitted plants. Butler mentioned that Alex, the City's intern this summer had also done some research and so would be interesting to compare what he came up with what Radke found and see how the plants compare. Butler mentioned that usually we have worked with our consultant and gone with whatever they have chosen. Radke mentioned that there were a lot of weed seeds in the mix she dealt with. Butler explained that the issue with Radke's product was likely workmanship. Butler stated that we tend to leave our window open for contractors throughout the year to get affordable pricing. He has had issues with some contractors. He asked if it got better at Radke's place when Public Works staff reseeded it last year. Radke stated that she was going to look at doing some things on her own. She would address some of the weeds without toxic chemicals and put some seed in on her own. She was not fretting too much but wanted to have us look at how to address things for other properties because we will have to dig up others. Butler was interested in seeing what Radke came up with. Radke stated that she could send to Wiley and he can send out to others.

i) Community Garden Update

Peterman spent the last few weeks preparing for winter. His group instructed gardeners to clean out their plots by the end of this month. Gardeners were asked to remove anything unsightly by the end of this month. The work event postponed due to bad weather. Peterman will try to get everything done by the end of the month. The trash bin placed next to the garden for their use has been removed. Peterman would like it back because for clean-up they will have a lot of stuff to toss. Peterman is planning for next year. He is planning to up the plot fee a bit. Now it is \$20.00 for the season for 200 sq. ft. for access to water and compost. This was unreasonably inexpensive. No one knows how long it has been that. In doing research a number of gardens are charging 3 or 4 times as much for a similar area. Peterman is looking to up the fee for next year to 35 or 40 bucks. He is also looking at things to add for next year. For example, some gardens do not allow people to place wood chips in their plots. They don't want people tilling up wood chips which rob the soil of nitrogen. This is a change to make for next year. Peterman stated that he has been in touch with Northlakes Clinic about creating an off-site manager position. He reached out but has not heard back. He will follow up. Kupczyk thanked the City for having the disposal area by the Public Works building for grass, leaves, etc. Peterman had put out a flyer a few weeks back asking people to donate leaves that have fallen. He has not heard much back. He may reach out to Dan at Public Works. Butler stated that he can probably send leaves Peterman's way. Peterman stated that he needed a source of carbon and brown material for composting. Butler asked when Peterman wanted the leaves by. Peterman wanted the leaves within the next week or week and a half ideally.

5) Future agenda items

Peterman asked if there was anything to add to the agenda. Kupczyk mentioned the walking trail. It is a wonderful thing but there are some areas when you go down to Bay View for example where you cannot see the lake. On the far east side too where there are so many trees you can't see the water. Butler has been working with Sara Hudson and suggested that Kupczyk reach out to her. She makes a determination and sends work orders to the crew. Peterman asked about talking to her about the beaver issue also. Butler we can talk to Dan Homola in PW. He explained that we have had beaver activity damming up culverts and Dan has been involved. He recommended talking to Dan. Radke stated that it was a great thing to look at all kinds of options. Butler asked if garden fees should be covering the water use for the community garden. Peterman answered yes. Butler asked if Peterman knows what the water use is. Peterman stated that he would have to look at it with building changing hands. CESA 12 used to track this. With the change in hands he was not sure how this was going to work. This is something he needs to talk to Ms. Hudson about and have her reach out to the new owner. Peterman stated that raising the plot fee will not be enough to pay a new manager but could help buy tools, hold gardening classes, potlucks, etc. Butler can follow up on water use. Peterman mentioned that water for the garden was turned off earlier this summer. He talked to Ms. Hudson and she and Mr. Kucera got water back on but the flow was and is still low. He believes that figuring out what is going on with that and maybe digging up the hose and replacing it is something we can do next year.

6) Adjournment

Zais moved to adjourn and Kupczyk seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 pm.

Recorded by:

Steven Wiley