**City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, January 25th, 2024**

**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, Kelly Westlund, Lissa Radke, Jim Gregoire, Amy Amman, Dale Kupczyk, Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director)

**Agenda**

1) Approval of Agenda
   Peterman called the meeting to order at 6:01 asked for approval of the agenda. Radke moved to approve and Kuczyk seconded. Motion carried 5-0.
2) Approval of minutes from the October 26th, 2023 meeting
   Amman moved to approve the minutes and Kupczyk seconded. Motion carried 5-0.
3) Citizen Comments
   Bob Blaskowski asked if the committee looked into the application of chemicals on lawns. He lost a small dog last summer. For some years his dog was coming down sick, he had his vet check this out, and found that some chemicals very toxic especially for small dogs. He did some looking into what the chemicals are, life expectancy, etc. We are a bird City, a Tree City, and some of this does not jive in his book. Maybe EPA St. Paul has some studies. He would appreciate if the committee would keep working on it. He would like some type of answer. If the chemicals are not good for animals, what good are they for the environment. Radke informed Blaskowski about the source water protection plan and how this issue will come up as the committee works with the City on the implementation of the source water protection plan. The Committee heard from the PW Director at last meeting. PW did not think the chemicals the City uses are toxic. Blaskowski has another pooch and would hate to lose another. The chemical he encountered is a powerful agent to make grass grow vibrantly. Kupczyk asked which company is it? Blaskowski answered that it is Green Oasis. Peterman and Radke stated we would keep looking at this through the Source Water Protection Plan. Blaskowski thanked the Committee. Radke asked if the Source Water Protection Plan was on the City's webpage. Wiley stated that he would check. The Committee thanked Mr. Blaskowski and he left at 6:11 pm.
4) Projects/Discussions
   a) Climate Change
      i. 25x25 Plan – Update – No discussion occurred on this item.
      ii. EPA Community Change and PSC Rural Startup Grants-Statement of Support – Action
      Wiley explained that the City was looking to partner with Ashland County on an EPA Community Change Grant application. Bill Bailey was helping coordinate this application and the County was the lead applicant. The

coalition partnering with the County consisted of Ashland Medical Center, and the cities, villages, and towns of Ashland County. The City was also looking to apply for a Rural Energy Startup grant and this grant was through the Public Service Commission's Office of Energy Innovation (PSC-OEI). Wiley explained that the committee could vote to approve a letter of support for both these projects to the City Administrator. Peterman moved and Amman seconded to approve the draft letter of support as written. The motion carried 5-0.

b) Water

i. Develop Sourcewater Protection Plan Initial Recommendations

Radke stated that this has much relevance to what we are doing. A good chunk of her extension work is dealing with hazardous materials. Reducing the hazardous materials that go into water is important. Back in 2019 before COVID the city pulled together a multi-stakeholder group to develop a plan to protect its source of water (mainly the bay). The stakeholder group met monthly with John Butler to develop a draft and worked with a non-profit that came up with these. After 9 meetings the group had a draft. They then came up with a large plan. The Sustainability Committee needed to come up with a public facing document that compiles what the plan has including recommendations that address vulnerabilities and water protections. We got a much shorter document that highlights actions (things groups can do, education, etc.) It is a community plan to protect our shared water. This group can go through the recommendations and say that the City can look at these top five items over the next few years for example. Radke suggested making a recommendation through the system (perhaps a resolution). Maybe Committee members each pick their top five items and come to the next meeting with recommendations. Amman asked if we can send out the summarized version? Wiley answered that he could do this.

c) Green Tier Legacy Communities – Update

Wiley provided an update on the annual reporting. Staff was compiling data to input into the revised Green Tier Scoresheet. Upon completing the scoresheet staff would submit to the DNR.

Radke asked if we could do a news story on this. Wiley answered that we could look at this.

d) Seed Mix - Discussion

Wiley updated the committee. Burdock and invasive plant seeds were in the soil and dormant not in the seed mix according to John Butler. Radke explained that reseeding was a mess. The City was working hard to correct infrastructure problems, roads, etc. Radke is thinking of replacing her grass with native and food plants. Peterman suggested putting in plants that can outcompete Burdock, etc. He was not sure if those existed. Radke suggested maybe having Deer Creek which is a contractor that is along Hwy 112 who contracts with DOT come in and present. Amman was suspicious that the invasive species are not caused by the seed mix. She has some sample language we can put together for contracts. Radke stated that Public Works was really trying to correct the issues by her property.

5) Future agenda items
Peterman wanted to add an item about people planting nut trees and fruit trees in their front yard in the planting strips in front of their homes. He explained that currently if people wanted to get a permit they had to get them from Sara Hudson and Public Works. This was not likely because the City was concerned about keeping sidewalks clear. We have an ordinance about people keeping sidewalks clear of snow so why not extend this to rotting fruit? It could be a simple application process with people stating what trees they want and we could then map these trees and put the map on the City website. Peterman has a good amount written up and would like to talk with Ms. Hudson and Mr. Wiley about it. Kupczyk said if the City makes people clean up the sidewalk we should make them clean up the street also. Also, if owners sell the house, what happens then? Peterman answered that the City could give new owners the option to remove the tree if they want that. Radke asked how fruit on trees in the planting strip would work. Is it available to the public? Peterman indicated that this is the case. The map of fruit trees is optional and you would not need to have your tree on there as a property owner. Wiley explained that Utilities underneath the terraces were a concern of City staff. Kupczyk suggested contacting the Water Department. Peterman asked about the process to get a permit for a tree now. Wiley explained that property owners had to obtain approval from the Public Works Department to plant in the right-of-way and also approval from Ms. Hudson as City Forester to ensure that the tree(s) as proposed and locations were suitable. Peterman stated we should streamline the process for a permit. The base change would be requiring people to keep the front of their properties clear of dead fruit and snow. Radke would love to have City employees come and tell us what the rules are about this. Wiley stated that he will put this on the agenda and can follow up with City staff on whether they can come to a future meeting and discuss regs, what is possible, etc. Radke suggested source water protection for the agenda. Kupczyk wanted the City to go around and address people who have junk in their yards. He wanted that cleaned up.
Radke welcomed Jim Gregoire as the Council representative for the committee. She asked if he has heard anything interesting or useful. He stated that the main thing is the water intake pipe. The council has been addressing many of these issues especially over the past 5 meetings. Radke stated that the City is moving along at a good speed and she is appreciative of Public Works and John Butler. Overflows were decreasing dramatically so this is a great example of what people can do moving things forward. She asked if there are plans for the pipe right. Gregoire and Wiley answered affirmatively.
Peterman stated that for fruit trees Municipal Code 530.1(c) prohibits allowing items unsafe for pedestrian movement on sidewalks. The code doesn't refer specifically to sidewalks but rather pedestrian movement. Debris could be interpreted as rotting fruit so the code already kind of addresses this.
6) Adjournment
Peterman moved to adjourn and Kupczyk seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Recorded by:

Steven D. Wiley, AICP
Planning and Development Director