

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 22nd, 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: Jim Gregoire, Dale Kupczyk, Axel Peterman, Lissa Radke

Bob Blaskowski, Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director), Chianne Schweitzer
(Administrative Clerk)

Absent: Kelly Westlund (Excused), Amy Amman (Excused)

Agenda

1) Approval of Agenda

Peterman called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Peterman moved and Kupczyk seconded to approve the agenda. Motion carried 4-0.

2) Approval of minutes from the January 25th, 2023 meeting

Kupczyk moved and Gregoire seconded to approve the minutes. Motion carried 4-0.

3) Citizen Comments

Bob Blaskowski on Junction Road spoke. He had contacted the Extension service about looking into some of the agents in chemicals being sprayed on lawns by commercial applications. This is as far as he has gone. The Committee is looking at water quality control for Ashland. These agents go downhill. This is about all and he said he would come back to the committee. He thanked the committee.

4) Projects/Discussions

a) Climate Change

- i. EPA Community Change and PSC Rural Startup Grants-Update
Peterman asked for an update. Steven Wiley provided one stating that Council and Committee of the Whole approved the City's applications for those grants. Staff worked with pertinent parties to submit the EPA grant. The PSC Rural Energy Startup grant was also submitted by Steven Wiley with the help of Sara Hudson.

b) Water

- i. Develop Sourcewater Protection Plan Initial Recommendations
Peterman asked who the key person was for this. Wiley explained that Radke had taken the executive summary and key recommendations from the plan which is on the city website and put them into a condensed summary. Radke was on the workgroup and she and the group thought that the plan was pretty dense for the general public. She explained the summarized version with recommendations and ideas for outreach to the public. There is a nice flow the group can work on together or with Public Works. The Sustainability

Committee can decide what the recommendations are for the plan. Radke recommended next steps including determining who the partners are to work with and working with them. Then determine how we are going to talk to people about, for example consequences of spraying chemicals on lawns. The five steps consist of: Our input, recommendations to the City on education, talking to John Butler on what they are working on/find out from Public Works (PW), then promote those as good news stories, (example City is getting a new intake pipe), then work with PW to review outreach strategies to give us guidance on what they would like to see next. Are people interested in moving this forward? Radke is interested and would be happy to make a recommendation to the City Council. The original Sourcewater protection plan was done in 2021. Radke suggested it would be good to make a recommendation to the Council. She is happy to work with other people to engage and form partnerships with other community groups and determine what types of outreach can be done. Radke can work with John Butler. Wiley can too.

c) Green Tier Legacy Communities – Update

Wiley provided an update. The annual report was due 12/31/2023 but we were approved for an extension. The City has been a Green Tier member for several years. The group is administered by the WI DNR looking at sustainability driven initiatives. Wiley gathered all of the information with help from other City staff to enter into Green Tier's new scoresheet for the City. The report was submitted on time.

d) Seed Mix - Discussion

Wiley did not have much of an update. Radke had sent an email with sample ordinances. This is an important next step. We should have some action on this to see if we want to move forward. Radke is not sure what types of ordinances are on the books but this is probably a step one. What do we want for ordinances? There are some great BMPs from the DNR. Some are really to the point for example about not including invasive species. We can look at those to put together a sample ordinance and run them by Public Works to see if this is doable. We have the information we need so we can see if we want to move forward. Peterman asked about the process to move forward. Wiley explained this. It would go through the pertinent City departments, then committees, then COW and Council. Peterman asked if it would be helpful to take action to move forward. Wiley said yes but at the next meeting since the item was not listed as an action item on the agenda.

e) Potential Ordinance regarding Fruit and Nut Trees in City rights-of-way-Discussion

Peterman distributed the draft proposal. He read the draft ordinance. He had spoken with Wiley about this and had a short meeting the other day. There are two basic things required. The first is an ordinance that requires that the right-of-way (sidewalk, etc.) be kept clear from debris. The second is that a permit is required to plant a tree or shrub in the right-of-way. City has both these things in place. Two things are required to happen: one is to clarify that the sidewalk maintenance ordinance requiring the sidewalks be kept clear of debris also applies to fruit and nuts on entire right-of-way which includes the street and sidewalk. The owner/business owner is responsible for the right-of-way cleanliness. The second is to establish a formal

procedure for approval of existing right-of-way permit for planting of public trees. Given that the city has an existing permit application this strikes Peterman as an oversight. Peterman mentioned that thirdly, simplify permitting process to get people to use it. Kupczyk asked if Public Works has a system where they would come out and show people where to plant the trees? Peterman and Wiley explained. Public Works and Ms. Hudson review and tell people whether or not a certain location is suitable for planting a tree. Peterman's impression is that the permitting process is not very efficient. Wiley explained that usually existing trees and replacement shade trees are put in with street reconstructions but we don't see many private property owners planting trees/applying. Peterman would like to see workshops to teach people how to plant trees in the planting strips. He would like to see the application process simplified. Gregoire stated that if you want to get education instead of doing groups of meetings contact the realtors and perhaps they can include information in packets when homes are sold. What is the City's requirement for planting trees in right-of-way (cleaning up walnuts, etc.)? There should be education to homeowners on who is responsible. Peterman stated that this was unclear to him currently. Gregoire stated that the City is being active going up and down and trimming the trees. If he planted an apple tree, etc. he might be angry if this was trimmed so he can see a problem for someone who is nurturing a tree. He would not want the City to get a black eye doing what we are supposed to do.

Mr. Blaskowski left the meeting at 6:36 pm.

Peterman suggested that perhaps something gets put on the tree indicating that the owner has to maintain and City will not touch it. Radke stated more people are interested in growing food so can see challenges with doing this. What conversations have been had to allow planting on some City properties, parks, etc.? Wiley explained that there have been conversations about orchards on City properties, parks, etc. Peterman asked who would be responsible for maintaining these trees if they were planted on City properties. He brought up that for example the Beaser garden would have to maintain things when they proposed things in the past. Radke was in favor of the City being responsible for things that are planted on City properties. The general public would still have access. Locations that would be ideal include the elementary school, by the lakewalk trail, the tri-county corridor trail, dog park, etc. This way we minimize challenges that have been brought up. The possibility of a tree memorial program was suggested, similar to the existing memorial program for park benches. Can get the public engaged in many different ways. Peterman asked if it would be helpful for us to draft a statement in support of planting trees in public parks. Wiley answered that this would be helpful. Gregoire mentioned that if you allow trees in public areas you would draw the deer, other wildlife and/or pests in so be aware. Wiley explained that we could support in concept and then have to consider these issues. Peterman would also like to see a map of fruit trees created and available. Public outreach is important. A map is very common. Radke asked if it is worth finding out from other cities if they have concerns like we mentioned and management practices to deter issues. Peterman can do research to provide some answers to these concerns and inquiries for the next meeting. A lot of outreach involves people picking up fruit. Kupczyk asked what Public Works thinks. Apple tree pruning is different than others. Wiley stated that Public Works had concerns.

Gregoire stated that he is 100% supportive of fruit trees but just wants to be prepared for concerns that people will bring up and already have the answers. It will be easier to get it through then. Peterman and Radke thanked Gregoire. Peterman will do research on how cities are deterring pests and other issues for their fruit trees.

5) Future agenda items

Wiley mentioned the invasive species section of the UDO and that Sara Hudson asked the Committee to look at updating our invasive species ordinance.

6) Adjournment

Kupczyk moved and Gregoire seconded. Motion carried 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm

Recorded by:

Steven D. Wiley, AICP
Planning and Development Director

Chianne Schweitzer
Administrative Clerk