

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 23rd, 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: Charlie Ortman, Amy Amman, Kelly Westlund, Brant Kucera (City Administrator), Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director), Terri Erickson (Assistant Planner)

Absent: None

Agenda

- 1) Approval of Agenda
Acting Chair Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and asked for approval of the agenda. Amman moved and Westlund seconded. The committee voted 3-0 to approve the agenda as proposed.
- 2) Election of Chairperson – Westlund made a motion to nominate Charlie Ortman as chairperson and Amman seconded. The committee voted 3-0 for Charlie Ortman as Chairperson.
- 3) Approval of minutes from the March 28th, 2024 meeting
Westlund moved approval and Amman seconded. The committee voted 3-0 to approve the minutes as written.
- 4) Citizen Comments – None
- 5) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Discussion on Future Direction of the Committee
Ortman asked the Committee if they have anywhere they would like to go. Amman stated that some of the things she originally was interested in coming onto the committee but that she had a hard time taking on on her own included the dark skies ordinance. The Great Lakes Friendly Initiative is another item she is interested in. This involved looking at what types of takeout containers you use and not using plastic straws, etc. These are the highlights of what Amman was interested in. Westlund is interested in the 25x25 plan and sourcewater protection plan and exploration of solar at the WWTP. She is not sure where this is at but Bill Bailey helped us and she is wondering what the status was. One other thing is the gradual implementation of planting perennials and native plants in the medians on Ellis and elsewhere. Years back we looked at the staff time that went into mowing the medians and other public places. Pushing native plantings forward is something to look at. She doesn't know what the current status is. There was a program awhile back for rain barrels. She is not sure what the status is of that. Otherwise public education and outreach. Ortman suggested grabbing one of these and working on it. City Administrator Kucera stated that he doesn't have anything to add. These are good things to work on. We have had members resigning and we discussed at the retreat how we want to use our committees in the future. He agreed to participate more in

Sustainability and interface better with council and ensure more of these things become integrated.

b) Potential Proposal regarding Fruit and Nut Trees on City properties - Discussion/Action

Wiley explained the original proposal. Kucera stated that can't think of anything off-limits other than boulevards and a park where there is contamination such as Kreher. The Mayor is supportive of an urban orchard. Amman mentioned the area by Pamida Beach where the open space and bridge are. Ortman suggested using a map of the public spaces and then doing an analysis on what places would work. Kucera has a map already. Westlund asked if Sara Hudson is still our City Forester. Kucera replied that she was. Ortman suggested that we can sit down and make a garden blueprint of the City's land. Westlund stated that she would go to the Ag folks at the Extension and they can provide input. Ortman can go to Ashland County Conservationist Mary Jo Gingras also.

c) No Mow May – Update

Wiley provided an update on No Mow May. Kucera mentioned rethinking what No/Low Mow May looks like. He stated that the City and committee should look at the science behind it and come up with an educational program on how people can help with pollinators, cooling, carbon, etc. Ortman had mentioned looking at lawns differently (not just grass but naturalization, native plantings, etc.) Kucera suggested looking at No Mow May differently. Amman agrees. Kucera suggested researching an educational program for our residents and determining how we can have an impact. If we could ban some of these fertilizers and pesticides for lawns that would help. Amman had looked into banning of lawn chemicals. Amman and Westlund stated that you cannot ban pesticides in WI. Kucera mentioned maybe then doing an educational program to minimize the use of pesticides as an alternative. Westlund mentioned that Ashland is maybe the 2nd eco-municipality in North America so maybe we are due for a refresher for Council on what this means. Maybe we also look at who our community partners are for some of these things.

d) Committee Recruitment – Discussion

Ortman asked that if anyone knows anyone who wants to serve to let us know.

6) Future agenda items

Ortman suggested picking one item and prioritizing it for the next meeting. We should come up with a plan on what can we do and if we can how will we do it. He likes solar at the WWTP but is open to others. Kucera mentioned that we were working on this. Westlund is happy to do the baseline assessment work. She looked at 3 years of data (utility records), etc. If she can be helpful narrowing down which would be best buildings to install the data loggers she is happy to do this. She looked at data 15 years ago. She also looked at non-metered streetlights. Xcel ended up owing something like \$70,000 back to the City. Ortman asked for updates on this project. Ortman asked about trying the City gardening map. Westlund suggested maybe bringing it back to the next meeting. Kucera likes the Great Lakes Friendly restaurant certification. Both he and the Mayor were looking at how to add a fee to takeout containers. Ortman asked if everyone was ok with this. Committee members answered that they were. Amman will pull info together. She has talked with a gentleman in Duluth on this. Westlund suggested maybe incentivizing the places that are doing it right. Ortman asked if Mary McPhetridge could

help out. Kucera stated that if we come up with the program yes. Amman prefers this approach rather than having multiple agenda items. Kucera will have planning staff research the rain barrel program. Megan McBride used to do this and he is not sure why the program stopped. Ortman stated that the committee will do Great Lakes Friendly Initiative at the next meeting and that's it. Amman asked if the parks clean up for Earth Day went well. Kucera has not received a report so is not sure. Westlund asked if the committee can get invitations to these things. Wiley stated that this was possible. Amman is aware of the Cleansweeps coming up June 4th.

7) Adjournment

Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Amman moved to adjourn and Westlund seconded. The Committee voted 3-0 to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:49 pm.

Recorded by:

Steven D. Wiley, AICP
Planning and Development Director