

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, August 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)

Present: Charlie Ortman, Beth Gehred, Meghan Salmon-Tumas, Amy Amman, Kelly Westlund Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director), Terri Erickson (Assistant Planner), Dr. Ana Dyreson (Attended virtually, Michigan Tech University)

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

Agenda

1) Approval of Agenda

Chair Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm and asked for approval of the agenda. Westlund moved to approve and Amman seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

2) Approval of minutes from the May 23rd, 2024 meeting

Chair Ortman asked for approval of the minutes. Westlund moved approval and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

3) Citizen Comments

The Committee did introductions. Salmon-Tumas provided her background in climate and energy work. Gehred stated that she is Interim Planner and the Grant Writer for the Bad River tribe. She was an environmentalist as a young person. How we use our built environments has a lot to do with how we treat our natural environments. She went to Sweden and learned the eco-municipality movement. She lived in Ft. Atkinson. And founded 2 sustainability groups there. The focus was on citizen engagement and similar projects and bringing people into local government awareness. The nonprofit has celebrated its 22nd anniversary and keeps going. She formed a second nonprofit (Sustain Jefferson) which focused on how to move the community forward with enthusiasm. Erickson provided her background. Ortman has done sustainability on the ground and is very interested. He has been on the land and water conservation committee for 12 years now. Ortman asked for members to ask for items to prioritize. Amman is on the Ottawa National Forest in Wisconsin and Michigan. She cares about a lot of things that many people are not aware of. She is excited to join forces with people who care about these things.

4) Presentation - Research on Electrification of Heating and Cooling – Dr. Ana Dyreson, Michigan Tech University

Wiley introduced Dr. Ana Dyreson who provided some of her background. The project is about identifying equitable pathways to heating electrification in rural northern communities. She highlighted the cold climates and tribal reservations. She explained why her group is doing this. Space heating accounts for 60% of home energy consumption. Disadvantaged communities typically spend more of their income on heating. They framed the grant around the question of the technical and social barriers and opportunities for resilient and equitable electrification in the rural north. The group

compared two data sources: residential energy consumption data and data from a low income weatherization program. They collected home characteristics to determine how heat pumps might perform. Getting data on the home is key. In our part of the state the best data came from contacting individual assessors. The group likes to get a lot more info on the home and they do this through community engagement. They have a community advisory board to help with this. She made a connection through Cheq Bay Renewables. Bill Bailey is on their board along with others from the study area who are well connected or have expertise in renewable energy. She wants to do the energy modeling but also allow people to take data and prioritize which energy upgrades or homes would be good candidates. Age, size insulation, etc. factor in. There are two surveys that she would like to share with us. She is curious about thoughts we have to make the work more useful. She asked who else could be asked to participate through surveys or through datasets. Westlund stated that the UW Extension completed one regional housing survey that she can share with Dr. Dyreson. Ortman asked Westlund who does weatherization. Westlund stated that the Ashland Housing Authority does this and NWRPC hosts revolving loan funds. Housing Authorities maintain records of consumption. Westlund suggested local housing authorities as sources of data. Dyreson is interested in seeing what the UW Extension did for survey and getting her own survey out. She is interested in finding out about the average home in Ashland and Iron Counties. Gehred explained that Bad River has its own housing authority. She suggested that Dyreson could give it a shot. They have an energy coordinator and are doing weatherization. Dyreson would like to connect. Gehred believes there is a staff capacity issue so Dyreson may not get far. Ortman suggested reaching out to the Extension Rep at Bad River. Tumas stated that she has an older home built in 1892 and had heat pumps put in. Her home lacks a central heating system which is the limiting factor. Does Dyreson need information on this or can it be inferred based on date of the build? Ortman stated that we would be in touch and revisit. Discussion with Dr. Dyreson concluded. *She thanked the committee and left at 6:46 pm.* Amman asked how they would disseminate surveys? Ortman stated that this question needed to be worked out.

5) Projects/Discussions

a) Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant Certification – Discussion/Action

Amman wanted to reach out to the Duluth people. She has not yet made the call to Bob but will do that. Tumas asked if the idea was to set up a local chapter of citizens who are interested in supporting the program and talking to restaurant owners or should owners be involved from the beginning? Amman stated that a chapter is forming in Duluth. They offered for us to be part of the chapter and are working directly with restaurant owners so there wouldn't necessarily be a citizen step except for us trying to talk to restaurant owners and the committee advertising and promoting the program. Westlund doesn't believe it is reinventing the wheel. 15 years ago the green teams action plans included some things that would be included and some restaurants would be aware of the practices. The big things involve eliminating takeout containers. Ortman stated that we have a checklist and asked then what happens. Do we verify this or how does the chapter in Duluth do it? Amman was not sure if they have it fleshed out but she did reach out to the Surfrider contacts. There are chapters in Chicago, Traverse City MI, Duluth, and Ohio. Two are currently in Duluth and she talked with them. They were not at that point yet. We need to figure

this out. Ortman stated that the Duluth chapter could develop it and we could implement it on their behalf. We can work through it. Amman stated that we can capitalize on this. It was a question for Bob. Tumas suggested having a link on the City Sustainability page of local Great Lakes Friendly Restaurants. Wiley stated that the City could look at hosting it. Ortman suggested that the City or the chapter could. Amman mentioned getting the Chamber involved and maybe the potential for partnership there. Westlund explained that the Travel Green program might run through the State Department of Tourism so if that exists maybe work with it.

6) Future agenda items

Ortman mentioned the Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant Initiative and Dr. Dyreson's presentation/project. Gehred mentioned a "Potential Grant Opportunities" item that she had informed Wiley about prior to the meeting. Tumas mentioned strengthening relationships between Northland and the City so maybe there was potential for student involvement with grant projects. Gehred mentioned that there are often many ideas in sustainability so maybe develop a process for evaluating and prioritizing ideas that come forward. She asked if this has been done. Wiley answered that other than the Municipal Code no. Westlund suggested sharing the Municipal Code section with the committee. Gehred suggested that maybe we can discuss this on a future agenda. Westlund stated that she would like to have an update on the City's solar work.

7) Adjournment

Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Westlund moved and Amman seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Recorded by:

Steven D. Wiley, AICP
Planning and Development Director