

City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 23rd, 2025

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, Meghan Salmon-Tumas, Beth Gehred, Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director),

Agenda

- 1) Approval of Agenda
Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and asked for approval of the agenda. Gehred moved to approve the agenda and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 5-0.
- 2) Approval of minutes from the December 19th, 2024 meeting
Ortman asked for approval of the December 19th, 2024 meeting minutes. Amman moved to approve the minutes and Tumas seconded. Motion carried 5-0.
- 3) Citizen Comments
None
- 4) Projects/Discussions
 - a) Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant Certification – Update and Action if necessary
Amman stated she is still trying to set up a final meeting with a couple of restaurant owners and Bob from Duluth to make sure everyone is on board and finalize the paperwork to move forward. Ortman asked if it was still in the administrative phase. Amman stated that this was correct. She met with Honore and Katie and provided them the information. Westlund asked and stated that she is on the board for the BRICK and is going to go back and do outreach for restaurants all around the bay. This could be another opportunity to provide them information. The event is March 1st. She will go back and try to reconfirm everyone this week. If they get the information at the event this could help too. Amman can get Westlund literature to distribute to restaurants doing Taste of the Bay (fundraiser for the Brick).
 - b) Mission Statement – Discussion and Action if necessary
Ortman asked if anyone has a proposed mission statement different than what he put out. Gehred asked for a reread of this. Ortman explained. He thinks research, discover, evaluate, and assist implementation of sustainable practices for the City of Ashland. Westlund stated that we do not have power of budget so the implementation piece caught her. Gehred appreciates this and thinks it is good. Pointed out that in some ways the purpose has been spelled out in the ordinance. Section 49.01 Purpose. She read this for the committee. In a way this is what she has been seeking. What is the purpose of the committee? We can agree or disagree. Ortman will try to merge this and the ordinance purpose. Westlund likes it and thinks the recommendations piece is important. She asked when the last time we gave a presentation to Council or made a recommendation that Council acted upon. Wiley did not remember a

presentation since he has been here. Ortman will try to merge those in a way we find adequate. Gehred asked if we would adjust the ordinance to add this or would this just be a statement to guide us. Westlund stated that maybe it is a recommendation to Council to amend the ordinance. Ortman agreed that we could make a recommendation to Council to amend the ordinance. Gehred feels personally the purpose statement is adequate. Westlund stated that it does outline the goal. Ortman stated we can beat up the ordinance as much as we want or leave as is. Westlund asked about discussing the ordinance at a future meeting. Gehred suggested making an agenda item to go over the ordinance as a group. Westlund agreed. Ortman stated that we should put this on the agenda as the only item for the next meeting.

c) Committee Membership – Discussion and Action if necessary

Wiley explained this item to the committee. Gehred stated that she had been in touch with someone from Northland who was involved with their sustainability committee. She thought it might be beneficial to meet with the Northland committee and have a conversation. A co-meeting with a student organization could be beneficial. Tumas stated that due to changes in the student body a lot of sustainability activities have not been able to run this year. The student government has an environmental council and they make a lot of decisions about what are the important topics they want to focus on. Students have a student funded led and run grant program linked to sustainability initiatives on campus. Every student pays a fee in addition to tuition that goes to this. Another group is the food recovery network that diverts food from the waste stream. There was a time when they donated to the Brick. Many other efforts are paused for this year. Many leaders also serve on the College of Sustainability workgroup. Ortman asked if there is a definition of sustainability that they operate by. Tumas stated that they have done a lot of looking at themselves and reflecting because they have defined sustainability a few times. The last one was approved by the board Feb 2022. It is a paragraph that is about overall framing. It points to the fact that we are from the stars and interrelated so need to act as such. There are 10 goals or focal areas. Some are related to inclusion, some to energy. We have to define what are the aspects of it we can do something with at the College. She can send it to Wiley.

Westlund stated that the City has an Eco-Municipality Ordinance that focuses on the three-legged stool and addresses this. She stated that the ordinance focuses on the Natural step. One focuses on not releasing chemicals into the environment. Another on earth-moving, one on human and social interaction, and restorative agriculture. Ortman asked her to bring this. He welcomed inviting Northland students. Gehred thinks maybe bringing them when we are more clear about who we are would be a better time to partner. Ortman stated that he would like have the students see how the sausage gets made. He would like to see anyone that is interested. Westlund thinks anything that builds a relationship between campus and the broader community is beneficial. Ortman asked how many young people Tumas is talking about. Tumas stated that in a typical year she could list off three or so students heavily involved and maybe a few more involved in the environmental council. Kelby has been involved but will be stepping down. Ortman stated that he wanted to make sure we do not have too many sticks in the fire. For example, focus on energy independence. No reason why the community cannot become energy independent. He is open and will take

direction from the committee. Tumas stated that the student government had a break so is selecting new leadership. Maybe we can go to the Environmental Council in a month. Looking at the ordinance it states we are supposed to do annual reviews for this body so maybe that is a good opportunity to meet with another body. Ortman asked if we would have an annual review meeting. Wiley stated that the committee could do that. Ortman stated that if we are documenting we can list our successes and our roadblocks. Gehred asked how we want to handle the annual review. Is it just looking at the big ones like the solar assessment and parks plan or would we invite every department? The Committee asked Wiley for his input. Wiley explained the Green Tier Legacy Communities annual report and how this worked. The committee could collate its report and the Green Tier one all together.

Gehred stated that the Sustainability Committee could be a 5-9 person committee. Should we let people with capacity know about the committee and would whomever appoints people be open to appointing more people? Wiley explained the process and that the Mayor appoints and Council confirms or not. Tumas stated that it would be nice to have representation from the College, hospital, and Bretting Manufacturing. If we could have one representative from each of these three pillars maybe this would bring one big circle. Gehred suggested the school district too. Ortman stated it has been hard to get membership sometimes. He supported having a heads up and discussion on any potential new members. Gehred stated that a quick letter to the big organizations stating we are looking for members could help. Westlund stated that perhaps 4H kids might have a different lens. Maybe younger ones would be beneficial. WEDC is hiring a rural sustainability specialist for the region. Bayfield County is hiring a renewable energy person. Maybe bring in Jolma Electric. Bayfield County is doing 22 micro-grids and energy efficiency upgrades. Ortman asked how involved Bill Bailey was in this. Westlund stated that Mr. Bailey is very involved. Ortman asked if he would be willing to speak with the committee. Westlund and Wiley stated that he has been to committee meetings. She mentioned the Eco-Municipality resolution passed in 2005 and she shared this with Wiley. 4H kids have to come up with projects to share. Ortman asked Wiley and Westlund to get Bayfield County's information. Gehred suggested bringing BART to the table. Gehred stated that energy upgrades sound great but it is hard bringing them to market, scale, etc. She cautioned against jumping on hydrogen for example because she has been down this road with many technologies. Tumas stated that at the college they have had success with geothermal. There is a lot to be said for piloting something, trying it out but also a lot to be said for knowledge sharing. Westlund asked if Tumas heard how the geothermal fared during the super cold snap. Tumas stated that she did not hear any concerns. Westlund stated that they are looking at heat pumps for the new housing development but several have gone out at others so idea is to have a backup heat option.

d) Potential Grant Opportunities – Beth Gehred

Gehred stated that March 3rd is the date for the Duluth Superior Community Foundation. Any grant would have to run through the City. We should talk about a project. \$2,000-\$5,000 might work for a planning group facilitation. We should have conversations. Westlund stated that if capacity becomes an issue note that Ashland

County has a paid grant writer, Erica Hannikel. Her role is to chase dollars for every community in the county. Bill Bailey is a good person to ask.

5) Staff Updates

Wiley provided updates on the solar assessment and Bay City Creek estuary project.

6) Future agenda items

Next meeting we will focus on the ordinance. Ortman would like to have a sheet of macro and micro goals for us to refer to going forward. Westlund asked Wiley to include the Natural Step resolution in with the ordinance along with the Northland College Sustainability definition with the packet for the upcoming meeting.

7) Adjournment

Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Tumas moved and Westlund seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:04 pm.