City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Wednesday, July 23rd, 2025

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm HYBRID MEETING:

Meeting Link: https://meet.goto.com/740241965 | Access Code: 740-241-965 – 2nd Floor Conference Room (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, Meghan Salmon-Tumas, Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director), Brant Kucera (City Administrator)

Absent: Kelly Westlund, Beth Gehred

Agenda

1) Approval of Agenda
   Chair Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Chair Ortman asked for approval of the agenda. Tumas moved, Amman seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
2) Approval of minutes from the June 26th, 2025 meeting
   Chair Ortman asked for approval of the minutes from the June 26th, 2025 meeting. Amman moved, Tumas seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
3) Citizen Comments
   None
4) Projects/Discussions
   a) Sustainability Committee Mission Statement and Committee Membership – Discussion and Action if necessary
      Ortman recalled that we had reached consensus at the last meeting. He asked if anyone had any changes. No one had anything to add. Ortman stated that this could come off the agenda. Wiley can draft changes to the membership based on committee input and bring back to the Committee for review and later Council.
   b) Eco-Municipality Resolution – Discussion
      Ortman wants to focus on becoming an energy independent County, not just City. Tumas reviewed the 25x25 Plan prior to the meeting. Amman wants to know whether we have met our 25x25 goal and who has been doing what. What progress has occurred? Kucera asked if we are asking where we are at with the 25x25 Plan or how much renewable energy we are purchasing or both? Amman did not realize that the Energy Action Plan included the entire community. Is anyone championing the Energy Action Plan other than this group? Or are we the only ones? Ortman believes that we are the only ones that can focus on this at this point. Ortman asked Wiley if Xcel could provide a total figure for energy consumption and then a percentage/figure for the amount of renewable energy consumed. Amman stated that it would be useful to go through the 25x25 Plan and confirm on what we have already done. Tumas stated that there is a federal database that she used once and it might have this information. Tumas stated that the 25x25 Plan talks about challenges to getting solar on rooftops for City buildings. The state regulations on net metering are also a

challenge. We are not as knowledgeable on obstacles or the landscape at the state level so it may be helpful to get someone more knowledgeable like Bill Bailey to come in and talk. Tumas recommends examining whether or not there are parking lots next to City buildings that are due to be replaced because that would be the time to dig wells for geothermal. There are also heat pumps. Amman stated that EVs are also getting better. The strategy for near term (2022-2025) is also noteworthy. Using community connections to increase engagement. Is anyone (including the Chamber) doing this? No. Ortman stated that we would need to take it and run with this. Tumas mentioned Cheq Bay Renewables. Is anyone going to Bretting and asking them about what they are doing? The hospital is another entity. Tumas stated that no one knows what they are doing. There are people working on improvements but the word doesn't get out. Amman suggested having someone out promoting things. Ortman wants to figure out our 25x25 Plan progress and what was the biggest portion of that. Can the City provide incentives? Amman stated that there was a list of communications channels provided in the Energy Action Plan. Ortman wants to look at what we can do to move the needle the most. Amman suggested that the first step is to look at what has been done, what are the benefits, and what is left. Tumas recommends drawing a boundary around our specific goal. Is our focus on community of Ashland energy or broader? Ortman stated that we will need energy usage information and we can then determine what percentage our use is from there. Amman asked if we can pull together what we have done and where we are at? Kucera and Wiley answered yes. It may take time and pulling things together. Amman just wants to put out to the community an update of where we are at rather than have the plan fade into darkness and get forgotten. Ortman agreed we can do a 25x25 assessment and report. Tumas stated that a challenge is that when people install solar panels on their roof, Xcel cannot track or identify how much the panels produced. The solar installer if they are still in business often has a dashboard but Xcel themselves will not. Xcel can tell the City how much energy the City used but not directly how much energy was produced by solar on the PD for example. Amman asked how much the City bought into Xcel's solar connect. Ortman asked if Bill Bailey might know how we can get these numbers or if he has them. Wiley stated that he could follow up with Mr. Bailey. Tumas asked if anyone looked into SolSmart lately since the City was a member. Wiley can do so.

c) Communications – Discussion
   Discussion occurred as part of the above item.
d) Ashland County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Discussion/Action if necessary
   Ortman stated that Ashland County does not have a sustainability chapter in their Comprehensive Plan. He asked if Amman and Tumas would be interested in taking a stab at writing a chapter. He started an outline from 50,000 feet. Tumas asked if the approval to write a Sustainability Chapter has to come from the County Board. Ortman stated that he already got this approval. He is putting this out there. He can give Amman and Tumas what he started. They are also struggling with the Community Health Element. PFAS and other things are challenges also. He suggested that Amman and Tumas read Ashland County Community Health Improvement Plan. It is more of an identification list of struggles rather than a plan. Tumas is interested, Amman possibly is. Ortman can help as an assistant. He will

send off what he has. He thinks we can use this vehicle of the sustainability chapter to list all of our deepest desires and hopes. Angela Stroud is on board.

e) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred
Gehred was not able to attend the meeting so no discussion occurred.

f) Native Plantings on Vacant Lots – Discussion
Kucera stated that we have come up with a way of enforcing property maintenance on some of the worst properties in the City. We have acquired the 114 2nd Ave E property and are trying to encourage the owners to deed their properties to the City in exchange for waiving the fines. The City will raze the structure and what we will have now is a vacant lot. There are plenty of vacant lots no one is buying and no one will buy this lot from us. Kucera has come up with an idea. Over there is mostly paved. He wants to tear down the homes and in the home's place put in a demonstration rain garden. Show what it used to be, that we tore it down, and do the rain garden. Maybe for another property show what native meadow looks like. Show people how we can take something very blighted and turn it into an asset to the community. After 2 years you would not need to maintain much. Ortman asked if you could put solar on there. Kucera mentioned maybe on some of them. The last thing we need and the only thing anyone has approached us on is more parking. We can reduce our parking by 50 percent and be fine or use one of our parking lots for solar. Ortman asked for the City to plant some milkweed. Kucera stated that we always do. Tumas believes a rain garden makes sense over there with the pavement. In general she is hesitant to invest in the properties because ideally you want to offload them so have them ready to sell. Kucera stated that we have so many far superior lots that no one wants so maybe one day it would be made available but in the meantime beautify it. Sprawl development is what so many people want but is horrible for the economy. The new apartment complex is a great example of infill development. Tumas asked if the City has levers we can pull to encourage infill and discourage sprawl? Kucera stated that we do.

5) Staff Updates
Wiley updated on the NREL funding opportunity and the Energy Star Portfolio Manager for City properties. Tumas and Wiley met on Monday and some of the City properties might be in there. Tumas will try to reach out to the authors of the 25x25 Plan who might have access to the database if it is there. Kucera mentioned that Chianne at the City mentioned compostable mutt mits (the bags that you put dog waste in). We find many of these when we do City cleanups. Tumas wondered if there is a pet grooming business that might want to sponsor these bags? We can reach out.

6) Future agenda items
Ortman mentioned the assessment and report on the 25x25 Plan. We should get data and narrow down optimal direction. Amman asked if Wiley made any progress on list of lights. Wiley needs to follow up.

7) Adjournment
Tumas moved, Amman seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:57 pm.

Recorded by:
Steven D. Wiley
Planning and Development Director