City of Ashland – Sustainability Committee Meeting

Thursday, August 28th, 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, Beth Gehred, Kelly Westlund, Steven Wiley (Planning and Development Director)

Absent: Meghan Salmon-Tumas (Excused), Amy Amman (Excused)

Agenda

1) Approval of Agenda
   Ortman called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm and asked for approval of the agenda. Gehred moved and Westlund seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
2) Approval of minutes from the July 23rd, 2025 meeting
   Ortman asked for approval of the July 23rd, 2025 meeting minutes. Westlund moved and Gehred seconded. Motion carried 3-0.
3) Citizen Participation
   None
4) Projects/Discussions
   a) Eco-Municipality Resolution – Discussion
      Westlund thanked Wiley for including the original Eco resolution in the packet materials. This was adopted by the City and we may have been the 2nd municipality in North America to adopt one. We are supposed to be making decisions according to this. Westlund is not sure if any current Council members are aware of this or the Natural Step. There are four tenets. There is the three-legged stool of sustainability. Ortman mentioned the City's Committee of the Whole and Council agenda bills. They include a section on conformance with the Strategic or Comprehensive Plans. We should also include a field in the agenda bill regarding conformance with the Eco-municipality resolution. Let's include this on the COW agenda coming up and we can discuss that we need to operate according to this. Ortman and Westlund recommended to consider laminating the resolution and including this at Councilors' seats. Irene Blakely or Steve Sandstrom who were involved could be good to give a presentation at Council. Gehred or Westlund can reach out to see if they are interested. Gehred was working on this where she came from and became familiar. Ortman asked Wiley to put this on the COW agenda and include the resolution in the materials. Westlund stated that Sandstrom might still have the slides from the original presentation. Westlund will send Wiley the quick reference. There is a book also. The Vaughn Library has a collection of these. It is a textbook for how to do it. Ortman mentioned we need to look at this to see if any of the four tenets triggers anything.
   b) Communications – Discussion

Ortman was not sure where we were at. Wiley and Wesltund stated that it consisted of really gauging where we were at and what we had accomplished in relation to the 25x25 and Energy Action Plans. Westlund stated that the 25x25 Plan we have is not the original. It is a good plan but does not have everything that the original had. Westlund has not yet found the original. Wiley explained the solar assessment that the City was currently working on. Ortman asked Wiley to do a primer/executive summary of our accomplishments including the Solar Assessment, the Green Tier scoresheet, etc. This would be for COW. Westlund stated that the things Wiley mentioned are in part consistent with the original 25x25 plan. Gehred asked if Wiley had heard of the Natural Step or if anyone told him about it when he was hired. Wiley stated that he had heard of it but that no one sat him down and talked to him about it. Ortman asked Wiley if at the last meeting someone agreed to track down the overall County energy consumption. Wiley remembered the discussion and that Tumas and he had talked about ways to get this information. Ortman mentioned that his mother's land the City bought and now owns would absorb a lot of solar. Ortman asked Wiley about who to talk to in order to look at this. Would it be Council? Wiley could talk to Jolma to get a quote on how much Jolma might charge prior to going to Council. Westlund stated we also had talked about the methods of communication such as a newsletter, Facebook page, or letter to the editor, etc. and that this should not fall on Wiley. The League has a standing monthly column in Bottom Line. She is thinking about something educational that is similar. Maybe it is a three-minute update during public comment at Council or on the Facebook page. Ortman stated we could have a meeting on it and generate it and he could send to the press.

c) Ashland County Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Discussion/Action if necessary
Ortman stated that Tumas agreed to write it. Ortman tried to reach out but has not yet connected with her. Wiley will keep this on the next agenda.

d) Potential Grant/Funding Opportunities – Beth Gehred
Gehred was off this entire month. She keeps an eye open when at work. There is a changing landscape about grants. When you go to the resource page there is no link to an actual grant. It does not mean there are none but it is drying up. Foundation grants are the way to go but they are smaller. If we wanted to hire someone for $5,000 per year to do communications we could grant write for this. We could do a grant to do more solar assessment. Westlund mentioned the rain barrel program which was a door-to-door thing around the bay where Walmart and Xcel Energy provided funding for fluorescent bulbs. They were able to stretch these. Ortman is excited about asking the Co-op about leasing the land and owning the EV stations.

e) Energy Star Portfolio Manager for City Buildings – Update
Wiley mentioned he and Tumas were working on this and Tumas had sent him an Excel spreadsheet with fields to populate with relevant information. He and Tumas would keep working on this.

5) Staff Updates

6) Future agenda items
Gehred mentioned the EV charging stations and putting them on the agenda. Wiley mentioned Peter Levi and his presentation on the solar siting tool the Nature Conservancy created. Mr. Levi was planning to come to a Sustainability meeting to present when this

would work for the committee. Alternatives for the EV charging stations include getting Jolma to lease them. Gehred asked if the City could get a variance from the law. Or to work on changing the law. Bill Bailey gave some language and has done some research. The cut-off date was March 22, 2024 according to Westlund. Would the Co-op or Honore or Chamber be possible owners of the chargers and lease the land? Gehred asked Wiley if he could include Gehred's information. Wiley answered yes. Committee members discussed talking to the Baking Company and Co-op. The Ashland County Comp Plan chapter will stay on. Gehred mentioned that the tribe just got an all-electric pickup truck and they are delighted with it. She asked if this would be of interest to Public Works. Maybe City staff could ride with Public Works staff. Westlund stated that Bayfield County has an electric pickup truck also. Ortman stated we could do a cost analysis if Public Works is not buying gas. Wiley to talk to Kucera about Public Works' fleet. Westlund will send news article pdfs from when things were adopted. Westlund also informed everyone that she is stepping down from the committee. Tonight will be her last meeting as a member. She may try to recruit a replacement. Westlund stated that she found her copy of the Natural Step and the Transition Handbook.

7) Adjournment

Ortman asked for a motion to adjourn. Gehred moved and Westlund seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.

Recorded by:
Steven D. Wiley
Planning and Development Director