

CITY OF WAUSAU SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Time and Dates: The Sustainability, Energy and Environment Committee met on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. in the Boardroom of Wausau City Hall and virtually via WebEx

Members Present: Mary Kluz, Paul Zouski, John Kroll (C), Tom Kilian

Members Absent: Paul Kage, Leah Van De Loo

Others Present: Mayor Katie Rosenberg, Tara Alfonso, Patrick Peckham, Brad Lenz

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and transmitted to the Wausau Daily Herald in the proper manner.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair John Kroll called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes from previous meeting(s)

No minutes were available to approve.

Discussion and possible action on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Resolution Policy

Last week this committee met jointly with the Liberation and Freedom Committee to join forces with them to lend support for this policy moving forward.

Kilian indicated the original language of the resolution was drafted from Evansville, IL and then edited by him. The intent is to serve as the foundation for future policies and procedures associated with EJ. There is also one tactical deliverable that would set in motion a GIS mapping inventory system in Wausau. This is intended to be in alignment with the EPA and its data. This would address inequality within the low-income neighborhoods and with people of color who have potentially shouldered a disproportionate burden of hazards or negative consequences related to environmental justice. An element of public engagement is also included in this resolution.

Attorney Alfonso indicated she's reviewed the resolution and is looking at this resolution from a legal standpoint. In its current form it sets forth statements that lend themselves to an interpretation or an expressed viewpoint that the city has allegedly made classifications among citizens based on impermissible constitutional considerations. From a legal perspective, these statements are untested and they may be accurate or inaccurate; they may be truthful or untruthful at this point. They haven't been established. It also perceives, based upon these untested factual allegations to cautiously set forth conclusory statements that could lead to legal consequences. As a result, she would not be comfortable presenting this to the full body without them knowing the potential legal consequences. She would suggest that edits could potentially be made. She indicated there are a few internal inconsistencies within this resolution regarding whether or not this was the only document that the body would be seeing or a potential policy down the road that would be developed. It also could use a definition of the words "environmental assets" and "environmental justice". What are the specific goals and what outcomes are expected from this resolution? There could be another approach to this. There's a real desire for public engagement and it might be advantageous to bring forth key focus ideas and propose an ordinance based

on that. For example, perhaps the city would like to see a procedure where anytime there's a new development project in a proposed neighborhood that's over a certain dollar amount, you would like to see a public hearing for that. That's a specific thing to put forth for community engagement. The way the resolution is written it states that these engagements would come forward and are designed to ensure that all decisions with the potential to affect quality of life for residents in the entire neighborhood get community engagement. So, therefore if the city wants to raise dog licensing fees, for example, is that what is intended here? To have a public engagement session? We already have committee meetings, website information, packets of minutes and discussion, and oftentimes offer community input. There's nothing wrong with having a resolution with some goals in it to tackle one at a time.

Kilian thanked Attorney Alfonso for these suggestions.

Kluz believes it's important to see what language is problematic, and asked if there could be more specifics.

Alfonso provided examples and more discussion took place.

Chairman John Kroll asked if this discussion will now be communicated to the Liberation and Freedom Committee. Kilian would suggest that the Attorney's office mark this resolution up (edit it) for another review by the Liberation and Freedom Committee and this committee. More documentation is better and this provides an opportunity for more education.

Patrick Peckham would like to see the resolution state more about the environmental injustices that we have all seen around the country and this resolution details what Wausau is going to do about them.

Member Kluz understands more and isn't comfortable passing this on until it's re-written (edited by the Attorney).

It was brought to the Mayor and the Attorney's attention that the Chairperson of the Public Health and Safety Committee did not want to entertain this version. Mayor Rosenberg pointed out to both the Chairperson and Alder Kilian that we can work on identifying the goals of this and work out what the rest of the language would look like. Another option would be to say – Okay, we understand the goals, we understand we're working on the city's strategic plan, are these goals suited for the strategic plan or an ordinance? We could do both. That wouldn't be a problem. An option we don't want to see if discussion on this come to a halt. How do we continue to move those goals forward? If it takes massaging, then let's do that.

Chairman Kroll would like to provide feedback to the Liberation and Freedom Committee that these are our thoughts and we aren't going to support this version. We do, however, support the intent of it. Alfonso expressed the fact that the Liberation and Freedom didn't have the opportunity to hear these comments. Chairman Kroll would support a re-write of this resolution.

Kilian would like to make a motion to have a highlighting of what language is problematic from a legal standpoint. He said Marathon County is dragging their name through the mud with equality and diversity issues and it would be advantageous to show them how policy can work when you recognize injustice.

Alfonso said this committee doesn't need to make a motion for that. You may want to make a motion to send this resolution back to the Liberation and Freedom Committee for editing.

Chairman Kroll made a motion to send this resolution back to the Liberation and Freedom Committee for editing. Kluz seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on the Sustainability Award program

An award was presented to Aspirus Hospital at a recent council meeting. Do we wish to continue to approve award recipients in October and April to coincide with Earth Day? Have we had any more applicants? There are none recently received. Lenz said maybe there could be more promotion, such as in the city newsletter. We could recognize Aspirus in that publication and then promote it again.

Alder Peckham stated earlier on he was asked to seek out the Chamber of Commerce to potentially promote this to their full membership, however the pandemic hit and that wasn't possible for the Chamber to take on. He could reach out again and perhaps offer them a prepared message to send to their members. Kluz would like to see a press release go out on this. Kilian agrees that a press release is a great idea. With Earth Day and April approaching, it would be good to advertise and promote now. It was decided to push forward with publicizing this and look to award a recipient once a year. Lenz will report back with ideas to advertise and publish this more along with providing a date that the next city newsletter is going out. (At the typing of these minutes, the newsletter will go to residents on April 21st, and the deadline for articles to be submitted to the Mayor's Office is April 5, 2021).

Discussion on sustainability strategy

A SWOT diagram was prepared at the last meeting. Chairman Kroll opened it up for remarks on this. Lenz asked if the purpose of this was to implement it into the city's strategic plan. He asked if this a duplication of the Green Tier strategic framework already done. Further discussion took place. Lenz will complete the Green Tier scorecard and provide that at the March meeting.

Future Items for consideration and future meeting date

Bring forth the Green Tier Scorecard to finalize. Discuss how we can bring forth actionable items to be implemented into the city's strategic plan. Alder Kilian would like to discuss the 1300 Cleveland Avenue property as it relates to environmental justice and land use. Kroll also asked to discuss a standalone resolution on greenhouse gas emissions. Next meeting will be Wed, March 24, 2021 at 4:30pm. Lenz recommended moving this to the Council Chambers if the room is available.

A motion was made by Kroll to adjourn. Seconded by Kilian. Motion passed unanimously.