

CITY OF WAUSAU SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Time and Date: The Sustainability, Energy and Environment Committee met on Wednesday, March 24, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Wausau City Hall and virtually via WebEx

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

Members Absent: Paul Kage, Leah Van De Loo

Others Present: Mayor Katie Rosenberg, Israel Del Toro, 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 Kroll called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes from previous meetings

Motion by Lange, second by Zouski to approve the minutes of January 22, 2021. Killian noted changing Evansville to Evanston, Illinois. Motion approved unanimously. Kluz motioned to approve the minutes of February 24, 2021, but suggested striking the words “understands more and” from her comments (in the environmental justice section). Seconded by Kilian, and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on resolution for No Mow May initiative

(This item was taken out of order on the agenda)

Kroll noted that Dr. Del Toro is on the line from Appleton. Lenz shared a sample resolution that would be tailored for Wausau – essentially the lawn control ordinance would need to be put on hold for a month.

Del Toro explained the citizen scientist concept. He said No Mow May was tried in Appleton last year and nothing bad happened. He said that approximately 500 people participated in the voluntary program. Pollinator abundances increased five times and the diversity of pollinator species increased three times. He said No Mow May is also a community education effort.

Kluz asked if the Attorney’s office has seen the Resolution. Lenz said that it was forwarded to them – they will be involved in drafting one specific to Wausau. Del Toro said that it can be flexible depending on the community.

Kluz asked about the educational resources and how they’re funded. Del Toro said funding has been secured from an outside source to fund signs and other things.

Lange asked about the data collection and who does it. Del Toro said a group of citizen scientists helped collect the data in Appleton. He would be looking for volunteers in other communities to send him some samples.

Kroll asked if there were concerns from businesses about decreased business activity. Del Toro said that the program is voluntary and is only for a few weeks.

Lange asked if there was pushback from other communities. Del Toro said the education and outreach was good in Appleton and neighbors were talking to each other about it. He said there was not a significant uptick in complaints about delinquent lawns.

Kluz asked the committee how this aligns with the goals of the committee and/or the Green Tier scorecard. Lenz said that it looks to fall within the Natural Resources category of the scorecard.

Kilian said it is positive and dovetails with the Green Tier program. He said the voluntary aspect should be comforting to people, and he would support it.

Mayor Rosenberg said she is fully supportive – it includes science and community education. Lange agreed and said the support of the organization and the education will help the program. Zouski said he is in agreement with everyone that it is a good message and education for the public, without a lot of effort from the city.

Kroll said he likes it because it allows anyone to participate and help the community.

Kluz recommended that the city embrace No Mow May and that a resolution be drafted and forwarded to the appropriate committee. Lange seconded, and the motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Discussion Green Tier Scorecard

Lenz showed the scorecard that has over 100 different elements which fall into 12 categories. He showed a summary of the point system. He said that this is the baseline year and we'll continue to fill in the table in future years. He said the sheet will be finalized and turned into the DNR by the end of the month – the final scorecard will be shared with the committee. Discussion followed on the scoresheet.

Lenz showed some excerpts from the city's comprehensive plan – particularly the natural resources chapter. He said there are some parallels between the plan and the scoresheet.

Kluz said there are things to address outside the scorecard, such as environmental justice and the people aspect of sustainability. She said guaranteed income is another example. She thought greenhouse gases and climate change are somewhat addressed in the energy section, but more could be done. Kroll agreed.

Kroll said that members could review the final scorecard and bring ideas for improvement and ways to tie into the Mayor's strategic plan.

Discussion on 1300 Cleveland Avenue

Kilian said that environmental justice has been brought up and this ties into the land use element of the scorecard. He said the SWOT analysis done by the committee included inappropriate land uses next to residential areas, in particular industrial. He said this body could advise the Council on these issues. He said for the next agenda the committee could discuss environmental justice and land use with possible action on an advisory opinion to a standing committee or Council. The committee discussed the zoning of the property and the future agenda item on this topic. Kroll suggested the committee could make a recommendation for potential land use of the property, based on environmental justice and/or the green tier scorecard.

Discussion on Green House Gas Emission Reduction Resolution

Kroll and Lenz discussed possible options for such a resolution and what type of information may be needed. Kilian noted a data set from the DNR that shows emissions by facility.

Discussion and Possible Action on the Sustainability Award Program

Lenz said that an article can go in the city newsletter and we can advertise it further from there. He said Pat Peckham was working on a possible nomination. Kluz asked if it would be tied to Earth Day, or if there were other

activities in which the City could participate. She recommended that the Mayor encourage people to participate in Earth Day and let people know that the awards exist. Kroll noted that the committee should regularly contribute to the city newsletter.

Future Items for consideration

Kroll suggested discussion on the Green Tier scorecard as well as possible action on 1300 Cleveland Avenue land use. The green house gas resolution was discussed earlier.

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