

CITY OF WAUSAU SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Time and Date: The Sustainability, Energy and Environment Committee met on Monday, January 17, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. in the Board Room of Wausau City Hall and virtually via WebEx

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

Members Absent: Paul Kage, Leah Van De Loo, Paul Zouski

Others Present: Mayor Katie Rosenberg, Brad Lenz, Dan Barth, Jay Coldwell, Joel Lewis

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Kroll called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes from previous meetings

Kluz made a motion to approve the minutes of September 22, 2021. Lange seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. Lange made a motion to approve the minutes of October 28, 2021. Kluz seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment

Kroll noted that there were three members of the public who had signed up to speak. They were all attending via Webex.

Dan Barth stated that cities are becoming fossil energy free, five are in Wisconsin. He said Wausau should be the next, and there is local support. He said that a representative from Aspirus' sustainability committee would like to present to the city's commission on ways to move forward.

Jay Coldwell, resident of the city, said he offers support for the urgency of a climate action plan. He also suggested hearing from Aspirus, a leading employer in the area, on their efforts.

Joel Lewis agreed that the city, led by this commission, should develop a climate action plan for the city, to provide positive change for the future.

4. Betterbin App Update by Michelle Goetsch: 2021 Citywide recycling data and app usage report

Michelle Goetsch said that the app has been in use in the city for one year. She said the app is important because haulers can change, and along with it, recycling guidelines. She said previous recycling audits in the city, prior to the app, showed that 84% of carts showed some contamination, which is consistent with other cities. In Wausau, 10 users of the Betterbin app chose to participate in a new recycling audit. Four out of the ten carts had zero contamination. In the other six carts, there was very little contamination, which is also very good. She said this shows that users of the app are learning how to recycle properly. She said there have been comments from users about the app that they will use to improve it. Data shows there have been 5,000 products that users have searched. She said that proper recycling has a definite impact on the environment.

Kluz asked about the report prepared by Goetsch. Lenz said that it will be sent to the committee members.

Kroll asked if any demographic data is collected. Goetsch said they do not ask for it, but from comments and conversations that many of the users are 50-plus.

Kroll asked about next steps. Goetsch said there will be more promotion of the app, including those already signed up for the app, since the technology has improved.

Kroll asked about other cities using the app. Goetsch said they are currently in 12 cities. They are partnering with another company, particularly on composting.

5. Discuss future agenda items

Kroll noted the previous discussion about inviting the Aspirus sustainability chairperson to present. He also wondered about promoting the Betterbin app in the city newsletter. Lenz mentioned an “electrify everything” article that Kluz brought up before. Kluz suggested a discussion about a climate action plan and its relation to the greenhouse gas resolution. Kilian suggested getting the Cleveland Ave item back on the agenda once the results are official. Lange said the micro-remediation folks should be ready to present some information soon, but not yet. Lenz said that we should discuss No Mow May soon. Lange said the County can supply compost bins for May. Kluz mentioned the awards and how to get nominations before April.

6. Work session: Discussion to draft a possible resolution recommending the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

Kroll noted previous discussion and samples from other communities, and how it may fit with a climate action plan. Lenz noted that in the Green Tier Legacy scorecard, that there are items pertaining to greenhouse gas, the first being to commit to achieving a science-based community-wide GHG reduction goal.

Kroll noted the previous eco-municipality resolution that was passed. Lenz said that previous discussion was that the committee was going to start with Why the City should do this, rather than specific targets. The committee discussed various “whereas” statements for the resolution, including the city’s previous adoption of energy independence, eco-municipality, and Green Tier Legacy resolutions. They also discussed environmental justice and other levels of government, including the national chamber of commerce, EPA, and the state DNR.

The committee discussed potential targets for the resolution or what the specific recommendation should be. The committee suggested that staff bring back a draft resolution, mainly with the “whereas” statements; more discussion would follow on potential targets or other recommendations of the resolution.

7. Adjourn

Kluz motioned to adjourn. Kilian seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.