

CITY OF WAUSAU SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Time and Date: The Sustainability, Energy and Environment Committee met on Monday, February 22, 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, Paul Zouski

Members Absent: Paul Kage, Leah Van De Loo

Others Present: Brad Lenz, Jay Coldwell, Sid Sczygelski, Sam Wessel, virtual: Dan Barth, 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 4:02 p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes from previous meetings

Kluz made a motion to approve the minutes of January 27, 2021. Kilian seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment

Dan Barth commented that SEEC is vital for the City's future and wanted to offer encouragement, especially now in the face of "forever chemicals."

Jay Coldwell said interest is building for local sustainability projects like carbon reduction/sequestration and that a top-to-bottom, community driven approach should guide sustainability efforts.

4. Guest Speaker: Sid Sczygelski, Aspirus Hospital, presenting on Aspirus's sustainability efforts

Sid Sczygelski gave an overview of Aspirus' sustainability efforts, sustainability budget, and long-term cost savings. He mentioned that it is inevitable that companies are finding ways to become more sustainable and the time for the City to act is now. He encouraged the use of consultants to identify projects and that there will need to be baseline data followed by short- and long-term goals.

6. Educational topic: "From Homes to Cars, It's Now Time to Electrify Everything"

Kroll moved items 6 and 7 up the agenda since they lead into discussion on agenda item 5. Kroll asked about utilities and if there's ways to reduce natural gas in new buildings, but Lenz and Wessel agreed that WPS manages this. Wessel asked about impacts of electrifying everything in terms of longevity, mining, and recycling of battery-powered devices. Kluz asked about how to evaluate a sticker price of something vs. its long term costs and impacts. Kilian stated that when PFAS or other contaminants are a more pressing need in peoples' minds, it's harder to discuss sustainability because it seems less urgent, so a wholistic approach to sustainability that includes urgent issues is ideal. Kroll asked if PFAS could be on a future agenda, Lenz mentioned that a Committee of the Whole meeting on 2/23/2022 would provide more information.

7. Educational topic: "Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts 2021 Report"

The group discussed the 2021 WICCI report which is an update to the initial 2011 one. Kluz anticipates more climate refugees and asked how Wisconsin can prepare for migration long term. Kroll said the document's key takeaway is that Cities need a Climate Action Plan, which could be a "whereas" in the greenhouse gas resolution. Kroll cited Eau Claire's plan which mentioned sustainability as being a solution to long-term costs and affordable housing concerns. Kilian cited a 2018 or 2019 study from Plan Commission about the former Wausau Chemical site's contamination and exposure to flooding and that the City should communicate this issue in ways the community can understand.

5. Discussion to draft a possible resolution recommending the reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Kroll mentioned adding measurements of temperature and precipitation increases since residents don't necessarily follow them. Kluz would like to add that taking action is fiscally responsible. Lenz mentioned that the group is working on a greenhouse gas resolution, but other climate-change related topics seem to be brought up while writing it, so SEEC should clarify what ideas should go into the resolution. Kilian mentioned that a holistic approach to sustainability can improve lives and save money, rather than looking like a hobby or something outdoor recreation-focused. Kroll mentioned that Bayfield has sustainability recommendations in its Comprehensive Plan. Kluz asked how SEEC builds its case since it is operating in a different environment than Aspirus, with champions for the environment of different kinds. It's important to work with Council and explore funding sources for a Climate Action Plan. Lenz mentioned Council is changing soon so it would be one option to wait until after elections to approach them. Kroll said that SEEC can continue working on the GHG resolution with that bigger picture in mind for now. Kilian mentioned the Environmental Justice resolution went above what the DNR states in its E.J. recommendations, so the resolution is more detailed. Kluz and Kroll agreed that referencing the Environmental Justice resolution and the WICCI Climate Change Impacts are ideal in the resolution before the aspirational "whereas" statements along with the recommendation that the City adopts a plan. The group agreed to also reference the City mission statement. Then this can be brought to Council, with Council providing direction on where measurements and goals should go. Kluz asked where sources/documentation could go, and Lenz said it could be in a staff report. Kroll said for the next meeting, the group can clean up "whereas" statements and sources to get the draft farther along.

8. Future agenda items

- No mow May discussion is on hold until the professor from Appleton responds to SEEC members. Lenz said there are 150 signs leftover from last year but they say "Appleton" on them.
- How should SEEC promote sustainability awards?
- Kroll and Kilian would like a committee discussion on PFAS. Lange and Kluz would like to see clarity on PFAS facts so it is easier to communicate with the public. Lenz cautioned that having a PFAS discussion against Council's wishes could hinder a working relationship with Council on other projects.
- Kluz asked for Greenhouse Gas resolution discussion to be continued on the next agenda
- Lange mentioned that a potential guest speaker's microremediation results are ready and they are willing to present them to SEEC.

9. Adjourn

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