

Sustainability and Energy Commission

Commission Minutes

February 9, 2023

A regular meeting of the Sustainability and Energy Commission was called to order by Brittany Goode at 6:03 p.m. Thursday, February 9, 2023, in the Council Chambers at Grand Haven City Hall.

Present: Pamela Blough, Ryan Cotton, Brittany Goode, John Kinch, David Mann, James Mathews, Bob Monetza, Nancy O'Neill, and Dan Small

Absent: Patti Nelsen, Christian Miller, Addy Knoth-Miller

Also Present: Eric Law and Brian Urquhart

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1. The Call to the audience.
 2. Members of the audience introduction with an impromptu presentation on sustainable building materials using hemp wood.
 3. Agenda Item 1: The Water Task Force; a presentation by Kelly Parker (GVSU).
 - Parker's group of students put together a presentation that highlighted two areas the SEC could focus efforts. The first is the Tree City world designation, and the second is an increase in water conservation. Parker's group sees the city as being close to attaining world designation. The steps to complete are designating a tree manager, defining policy, and having an updated tree inventory. Professor Locher (GVSU) is currently organizing efforts to update the inventory. The second focal point, water conservation was identified by the group as a more complex challenge. The group identified the water filtration capacity challenge specific to peak hourly flow and identified raising public awareness as an important step to meeting this challenge. Using "smart meter" technology along with on-bill messaging as effective awareness tools. Parker pointed to the cost implications of "smart meter" installations and suggested grant money could be available. Parker also discussed the importance of the use and promotion of native planting and the conservation benefits of using native species to curtail irrigation needs.
 - Monetza asked Law about current efforts within the Nows system. Law discussed specifics of peak hourly demand on the system and the current efforts to manage the "demand side". Law discussed the financial commitment of \$15K in the Nows budget to address updates needed to the city website and the development of a social platform to help facilitate on-bill messaging. In addition, Law described a plan to host local irrigation and landscaping companies for a "Landscape Luncheon" event. The goal for this event is two-fold. First, to drive awareness, and second, to petition these professionals to influence the programming of irrigation systems onto the shoulder hours of peak-hourly demand. Law also discussed Parker's group suggestion of "smart meter" usage and explained how the city DPW had already invested in this technology and the current administration's effort to maximize its capabilities. Bringing more awareness to the group, Law went on to discuss the complexity around the intergovernmental arrangement of the wholesale supply. Of the six municipal entities that Nows serves only the City of Grand Haven bills monthly and is currently using advanced meter infrastructure (AMI) and no one is

using on-bill messaging. In addition, Law briefly described the development footprint of these communities and the efficiency the City of Grand Haven has in density compared to the expansive growth potential in the communities served north and south. Kinch asked Law what the SEC could do to help. Law expressed an understanding of how a broad approach seems logical but encouraged an initially intentionally narrowed focus on outdoor irrigation. Law suggested that focusing on the largest rate users first is the right approach and described efforts already in progress on how to curb the irrigation of the city's expansive public space footprint. The state of Beacon Blvd. was discussed as to how an opportunity exists for the SEC to partner with the Planning Commission on the vision for the center median and how this is a chance to improve forward-facing public space as well as reduce this space's need for irrigation. Urquhart agreed that as the communities master plan moves forward, the initiatives of both groups can coexist and supports the involvement with the SEC. The group came to a consensus that a focus on outdoor water usage while partnering with the Planning Commission on public space improvements would be a logical path forward.

4. A motion from Blough, seconded by Small to approve minutes from the 1/12/23 meeting with edits was approved unanimously.
5. Agenda Item 2: Task Force Updates, Earth, Water, Wind.
 - Kinch, Nelsen, and Mike Dora discussed the SEC's involvement with the Planning Commission and Dora was enthusiastic about the expertise the SEC could provide. Dora suggested getting on the Planning Commission Docket and speaking about how the SEC can complement the PC's efforts. Kinch volunteered to be that representative from the SEC. Planning Commission meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Monetza pointed out how the master plan is going to the public comments period soon and suggested that it is important the SEC participates in the public comments period. The public comment period will be 63 days. The group agreed that public comments originating within the group should all be discussed as a group, agreed upon, and brought to the public comment format from the SEC and not individual members. A copy of the proposed update to the master plan is currently on the city website. Urquhart will deliver a pdf to Goode for distribution to the group. Kinch, Blough, and Monetza volunteered to review the documents.
 - O'Neill brought forward multiple articles from Bridge Michigan; one from 1/25 discussed water priorities in the State legislature and another discussed stormwater management and the impacts of sodium chloride overuse. O'Neill also announced the BLP workshop for ratepayers to learn how to use the online platform and suggested this for the water sector. Ottawa conservation districts conservation on tap event will be next week.
 - Goode raised concerns about missing grant opportunities. Wanted to understand who may be willing to be the experts on the Commission to watch for and support the grant writing process. Discussion tabled.
 - Goode asked for thoughts on a general group email to handle communication through and into the group. Blough suggested using a platform called basecamp. Mathews suggested a separate email be set up. Discussion tabled.
 - Mann updated BLP's efforts to recycle appliances with BLP's rebate of \$50.00 with a large pot of money available. Mann met with Ottawa Parks Foundation and Planning and development coordinator and is working to establish a water fill station at Ottawa Sands Rec. Area. Activities around Earth Day are progressing with Velocity Cycles of Holland partnering with the DPW on bike routes and group rides with local students' participation. There is a \$15 entry fee for a booth. Micro Plastics documentary side shows coming. EV car show is a go and the date is

April 29th. Goode expressed urgency in efforts to drive foot traffic and T-shirts and hats are still possible.

6. Agenda Item 4: The Fire Task Force; an update from Cotton.

- A current grant of \$25K is determined within the next two weeks. A second \$25K grant is waiting for submission and requires retroactive Commission approval after City Manager Latch requested expedition and Cotton have it prepared for the most recent Council meeting. Council has approved. A motion by Small to approve a resolution to submit for council approval an EGLE \$25K grant to support the community energy plan was seconded by Mann and passed with unanimous approval. Cotton went on to describe municipal outreach efforts. The City of Ferrysburg is planning for a March presentation. Spring Lake Township is receptive but still waiting for approval to land on a future agenda. GHT is resistant. Law said he would try to talk with leadership. The BLP is on board and ready to support. Consumers Power is committed to on-bill financing for those customers within the community that are on CP. Michigan Gas is supportive but within the framework of its existing program. It was pointed out and supported by the group that early success with these grants will clear an easier path forward for future grants.

7. Agenda Item 3: Michigan Green Communities; an update from Urquhart.

Urquhart stated that progress is being made in the resubmittal of the MGC process. Sessions centered around zoning and ordinances are coming up for the accelerator program and Urquhart will take full advantage of this training. The CLC fellowship is in the review process with the first mentorship session in May. Goode noted the emphasis being placed on stormwater management. Urquhart appreciated Kinch's presence at the plan review team session and commented on how the communities with green initiatives are being moved up in the grant approval process. Kinch wanted to understand where the tree planting plan is located. It is within the written ordinances. Discussion ensued about the current state of the city's tree opportunities. Goode reiterated the importance of driving foot traffic to the Earth Day event so these important topics get community engagement.

Other:

Goode will send a list of bullet point "in the can" questions and would like feedback from the members on the best "in the can" responses. This would be helpful for preparing for the interviews she is being requested to do. Goode will also send out topics within the assessment that are going unanswered and is requesting help getting them answered.

Adjournment: 8:00 p.m. – Submitted by Dan Small

Notes Submitted by Eric Law