

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM COMMITTEE (CSPC) MEETING MINUTES

MAY 21, 2020

2:30 PM

VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

Committee Members Present: Chair Sara Pesek, Rajesh Kapileshwari, Dane Kuppinger, Keyra Williams, Lee Stackhouse

Committee Members Absent: Angela Young, Denise Terry, Leah Lavin, Stephanie Friede, Amber Baker

Attendance of City Staff: Helen Peplowski, Director of Operations Johnnie Taylor

Meeting called to order at 2:34 by Chair Sara Pesek.

Roll Call.

Rajesh Kapileshwari moves to adopt May meeting minutes, seconded by Dane Kuppinger. Adopted.

Helen Peplowski, staff support to the committee, provided Bee City USA updates. Reminder to the committee that pollinator week is the third week of June when pollinator videos will be shared.

Helen continues with Office of Sustainability updates. The Office is working on updating this year's CDP report and has begun the LEED for Cities data collection process. She is also working on creating a short questionnaire to clarify recycling guidelines to put on the website.

Sara asks about differences between LEED for Cities and the STAR Communities data collection processes. Helen clarifies that the difference is more in the amount of data needed, since LEED for Cities is asking for generally much less data than STAR. She also mentions that she already knows who to contact in the city based on the STAR process and that she was able to get everyone on the same page thanks to a web training that LEED for Cities provided.

Rajesh asks about the possibility of using interns to assist in this process. Helen responds that since a lot of the data collection comes from internal city operations that it is easier to talk directly to the people monitoring and collecting that data already. She also knows who those people are at this point and it is overall easier to not have to involve interns in this process.

Rajesh asks about if there are any recommendations from the city for safe alternatives to mosquito treatments in residents' yards that are maybe not as harmful to bees and other pollinators, such as certain companies or techniques. Helen responds that this is a good suggestion for Jennifer as the Bee City USA liaison and to look at the city ordinance about what city operations use in their treatment of vegetation.

Sara asks for clarification around whether the local recycling facility does or doesn't accept glass. Helen responds that it is only true in the case of Greensboro who has eliminated glass from their curbside collection. Our curbside program still accepts glass so that is not true here in Winston-Salem.

Helen reminds everyone that each member of the committee is meant to serve for two years, but since the committee has only finished up the first year of meetings, some members will be serving a third year to get members on an alternating schedule for future rotations of members. The initial rotations were assigned randomly.

Dane comments that he thinks it is useful to have rotations to get more variety in the voices being heard.

Sara requests that we bring other members up to speed as far as bringing the proposed [Clean Energy] resolution to go in front of the General Government Council Committee. She reminds everyone that the hope is to present it to the General Government Council Committee with a slideshow and due to the submission deadlines for materials for these meetings and needing to complete the presentation, they need to plan to submit items for the August meeting. If there is any work that needs to be done in the meantime, we also need to figure out what other work they want to do as well.

Related to this, Helen reminds the committee that they are required to complete an annual report for the Council based on a work plan. She suggests the committee think about the reports and plans they need to have when thinking about the work they want to be doing in the next year.

Sara asks when the report for this year would be due to the council. Helen responds that this year is a little different, and asks Johnnie Taylor, the Director of Operations, for any insights on what a timeline would possibly be. He says when he finds out any information on it, he will pass it on to Helen to share with the committee. He adds that it may be good to aim to have something ready for the August meeting but that he doesn't want too many things to come into competition with what is being presented to Council now.

Sara asks if Helen has any samples from other committees so they know what to include in the report. Helen says she has some examples from environmental boards from Cary and Raleigh that she had sent out before, but she doesn't have examples from boards in Winston-Salem. Rajesh suggests to start a Google Doc based on the Raleigh and Cary

reports layout, and when creating a work plan to do a short term and long term plan for the next year. Examples of topics could be completing and improving on LEED for Cities, sharing information about trees and general environmental improvements, and the resolution could lead to some ideas as well.

Sara asks if committees work in the summer. Helen says that this committee is still set up to meet every other month, so July will be off for the committee which also lines up with Council meetings that take July off.

Rajesh comments that it seems like members should do some work offline to get the presentation related to resolution complete, and do the annual report and work plan before the next meeting in August.

Sara says that since Rajesh already did so much work on the resolution, that it may make sense to do work on the presentation for Council. Rajesh says he has reached out to the Sierra Club, who proposed the original resolution, to see if they had any formal presentation. He also said they are talking to a couple of other professionals related to the resolution for material as well that is simple and short. If he gets that information he will propose it to the committee for reactions.

Sara mentions a comment she remembers a comment from Council Member Adams from a previous event that encouraged the committee to be active in submitting items to Council and Council Committees to give Council Members the opportunity to support the CSPC. Sara asks if the best way to be effective is to contact Council Members as private citizens individually about possible work being done by the CSPC to get feedback ahead of time.

Helen cautions members to be careful around that since our meetings are already open and Council Members can already attend meetings and be aware of the committee work that way. As committee members are Council appointees and therefore extensions of Council Members, this is a thin line.

Rajesh says that representatives from the Sierra Club and Climate Coalition are already reaching out to Council Members about the resolution ahead of time anyways, so those conversations are already happening. They want to make the proposal as palatable as possible so having as much information up front is important to do this.

Sara asks if people who come to our meetings are invited or if they come out of their own interest to see what is going on. Helen confirms it is the second option Sara mentioned.

Dane reviews that the three things that have been talked about in this meeting that need to be done are the resolution, work plan, and annual report. It seems like Rajesh has done a lot of the work already on the resolution and the presentation materials that go with that for City Council,

and Dane volunteers to do some work on the annual report but would like someone to help him do that to make sure the document remains concise. Rajesh reminds the committee that previously Stephanie Friede had mentioned her willingness to help edit documents.

Sara asks if other people at the meeting are interested in any particular work items or topics that they would like to help with. Keyra Williams mentions her concerns around the building going on in the Northeast ward and the vegetation problems that are coming from highway construction and wants this problem on the radar of the committee. The two broad areas this relates to is transportation and commercial issues with the beltway project that has been cutting out homes and roads and wildlife displacement.

Sara asks Johnnie where that falls under government responsibility and who can help address this? Johnnie informs the committee that this is the Northern Beltway Expansion and he is familiar with the issues Keyra has mentioned. Johnnie says the responsibility of this project falls mainly under NC DOT. City/County Planning may have some authority. Johnnie confirms that what he heard is concerns around wildlife and construction but wants a little more clarification around the specific issue.

Keyra says that the clearing of land and deforestation for the construction is one part of it, but also adds the particular problems are near Dollar General and at Liberty-Akron intersection area. A lot of these areas have been cleared out but nothing (vegetation) has been replaced which leads to environmental concerns when rain and other weather events take place. She doesn't know if this is part of a longer term plan. Johnnie replies that the specific mud/vegetation concerns relate to stormwater issues, which he does have control over. He says the locations Keyra mentioned were likely to have gone through the City/County Planning Board and permitting requirements, but some of the construction at Liberty-Akron is also likely to be a state project. There are some things the City looks at in the inspection process like controlling water on sites, dust, water systems not getting pollution. He offers to do more research and share it with Keyra once he finds out more.

Sara adds that with lack of vegetation in that area, it likely makes sidewalks and other outdoor areas even hotter. Helen suggests participating in the Winston-Salem Pedestrian Plan process to comment on areas that may need more tree canopy, which Keyra says she has already participated in.

Johnnie adds that the tree canopy issue is something the city is looking at. It is an important issue to consider things like which trees will be the best street trees, which need less maintenance and repairs and which will last long.

Rajesh asks if there is anything around tree canopy studies that the committee can do to provide more information, tools, or whatever it is that can help the city? Helen goes back to the

Pedestrian Plan as a way currently that committee members and residents can add comments, and there are other plans as well currently taking public comment. Helen then mentions a new idea called Tree Funds that could be another way to look at the tree canopy work the committee wants to do. The biggest barrier right now to producing any work like Rajesh mentions is that the city right now does not have a tree canopy assessment that we can use to see if there has been changes from the current Tree Save Area policy. We have used the iTree program in the past to estimate our tree canopy cover, which gives us an estimate of close to 50% tree canopy across the city jurisdiction.

Rajesh asks if the iTree program is available to the public. Helen says she thinks so, but it would still be less accurate than digitizing in GIS technology. Until we can complete a true tree canopy assessment, we are left with this estimate as the best way to measure tree canopy. Rajesh asks if there is a way to utilize students or the public to somehow contribute information for a tree canopy assessment project. Sara asks if any of the professors on the committee would have any mapping experience? Keyra mentions that she knows Dane has some experience.

Dane steps back to briefly review three things that sound like the committee should have in its work plan for next year. The first being the tree canopy assessment, research on how other communities have dealt with shrinking tree canopies and maintaining tree cover, and the third thing being a proposal as to what we as Winston-Salem might do moving forward. As for experience with tree canopy cover, Dane says he teaches a GIS class at Salem College and has marked this idea as a potential class project. He also thinks that other local universities likely have similar classes that could all link up to 'student-source' the process of creating a tree canopy study. He knows it would be fairly easy to look at total vegetation, but distinguishing trees from other vegetation like grass and shrubs would require a little more effort, but thinks it would still be doable. Dane will report back to the committee with what he comes up with.

Sara asks if there are any concerns or other areas of interest that committee members might have. Rajesh suggests revisiting the broader buckets the committee identified last October or fall sometime to have those help inform the work plan. Sara knows there is still a document with some of their work and ideas around topics like building efficiency that could be helpful to look at, even though her recycling ideas were not successful.

Helen adds that she is hoping her recycling questionnaire for the website will be useful once it is ready. Rajesh asks if that is ready to share yet. Helen says it is still in progress and is working with the web editor for the city website to finish it up. She explains it will hopefully be more clear what the recycling rules are and included as many items to make it as extensive as possible based on previous questions that have come up from the public. For items that aren't accepted in

the curbside collection program, she has added information on where they are recyclable if applicable.

Lee Stackhouse asks about compost piles that have been moved and brush that is still out in neighborhoods. Johnnie answers that the city is still working on collecting brush and that there are two facilities currently that the city takes brush and other yard waste to for composting. He also says that Utilities gives away the compost to citizens for free. He confirms that the site that used to be collected was moved from Reynolds Park Road to Clemmonsville Road.

Rajesh comments on the usefulness of the free compost for use in his own garden, however he looked into having it used at schools but realized there are sometimes small pieces of metal and other trash that makes it unsafe to put at schools. Johnnie mentions that it is important to communicate the importance of not contaminating yard waste.

Dane asks to confirm if compost is free to pick up. He has used the leaf mulch and knows the city lets citizens use that for free, but wasn't sure if there was another facility providing free compost. Johnnie clarifies that what they had been talking about as compost from the city is actually the leaf mulch.

Sara calls for any last business before closing the meeting. Dane mentions he will start on the annual report through a Google Document. Rajesh adds that it would be helpful to comment and question the resolution to help prepare the presentation for City Council.

Rajesh moves to adjourn the meeting and Lee seconds to adjourn.

Meeting concludes at 3:34