

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE**

**CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

December 8, 2015

MEETING CONVENED: 7:00 p.m. Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Irvine, Chair, Kismet Hazelwood, John Hornor, Bob McDowell, John Wessells

ABSENT: Ajay Prasad, Kass Sheedy

STAFF: Tom Coleman, Director of Public Works & Water Resources

GUEST: Dee Durham, Chair, Sierra Club, Delaware Chapter
Stephanie Herron, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator, Sierra Club, Delaware Chapter

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 10, 2015

MOTION THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 10, 2015 MEETING BE APPROVED AS RECEIVED

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one from the public that wished to speak

3. PRESENTATION OF STEPHANIE HERRON, VOLUNTEER & OUTREACH COORDINATOR, SIERRA CLUB, DELAWARE CHAPTER

Ms. Herron said her presentation was based on the premise it is very necessary to reduce the consumption of plastic bags. They are as follows:

- Plastic bags blight our visual environment
- They easily escape traditional waste streams
- Difficult to recycle and easily end up as litter
- Increase tax payer costs by creating havoc on infrastructure (stormwater management issues, etc.)
- Cannot be put into single stream recycling (only 4-5% get properly recycled)
- Animals endangered (especially marine animals and birds)
- Do not biodegrade but photodegrade (break down in sun causing additional harmful ingestion by sea life which is then transferred to our food via seafood)
- Approximately 25-28% fish sampled contain in Indonesian & Californian fish markets contained manmade debris including plastic

She also stated the Sierra Club is a member of the Delaware Plastic Pollution Action Coalition. The Sierra Club has worked to promote House Bill 202 which has been introduced in the Delaware Legislature and the House of Representatives. This would expand the existing Delaware law that requires large retailers to collect and recycle plastic bags and other film plastic. House Bill 202 would place a mandatory 5 cent fee on single use bags; both paper and plastic. This would be beneficial not only as well to the environment but also create behavior modification to make people realize how many plastic bags that are actually using. This bill would also have recording requirements to help track the spending of the revenue generated by the fee. The Bill currently as written would take effect in December 2016.

She further stated that biodegradable bags would not be exempt from the fee and not a solution to the plastic bag problem. One of which is the single use "throw away culture" needs to be addressed. Additionally, biodegradable bags also have the same negative environmental impacts.

Ms. Herron stated Delaware Plastic Pollution Action Coalition supports a Resolution that would encourage efforts to reduce plastic bags in Delaware. Ms. Herron provided a Resolution as an example should the CAC decide to promote in the future.

There has also been an effort by the Delaware Plastic Pollution Action Coalition to encourage City of Newark downtown businesses to voluntarily move away from single use plastic bags. They can do this either by stopping distributing them completely and requiring people to bring their own bags or by charging a small fee voluntarily on the plastic bags. The coalition would promote a partnership and some of the member organizations (environmental and health organizations throughout Delaware) and perhaps the DNP, City of Newark, etc. to be part of this solution to the plastic bag problem.

Mr. McDowell reported he knew of issues in the past with a large grocery store chain (locally) taking the 5 cent fee and then not recycling them. Therefore, he stated it was a concern of his that the vendors do actually recycle them.

There was some further discussion about House Bill 202 (copy entered into the record). Ms. Herron stated the current statute in Delaware requires large retailers to collect the plastic bags. She further stated the square feet of the store or a number of entities (i.e. chain store) dictates the regulations as well.

Ms. Durham stated they have been encouraging student groups from UDEL to assist the Sierra Club with this endeavor. Ms. Durham and Ms. Herron reported there is solid evidence that incorporating a 5 cent fee is very successful with some locations (Washington D.C., parts of the U.K.) claiming they have reduced usage by about 50-90% and a closely corresponding reduction in litter.

Ms. Durham stated they hope to have enough votes to get the bill passed. They are taking it one step at a time and the bill has been assigned to the House Natural Resources Committee which is chaired by Deborah Heffernan. She further reported the Sierra Club has been trying to meet with representatives on that committee.

Ms. Herron stated she has interacted on a large scale with the UDEL students. She reported they had a great deal of energy and a wide array of ideas. She will work with them on an ongoing basis to channel the ideas into effective strategies to combat the wide spread plastic bag use in the City of Newark.

Mr. Irvine stated it was his opinion this could be a tricky topic/endeavor. He said he believed some people do not view plastic bag usage as a big issue and look at it as a convenience. Mr. Irvine asked Mr. Coleman if there are screens in place in the pumps and do they clogged.

Mr. Coleman stated there is not an issue with the sanitary sewer water system; it is mostly the storm sewer side. Plastic bags get caught in drains and get caught in grates during storms. He further stated that any item that floats presents a problem.

Mr. Wessells reiterated his suggestion to offer businesses in town the opportunity to advertise on bags. He also suggested presenting this topic at the proposed Green Energy Day (early June).

Ms. Durham stated her experience with retailers suggests the retailers are concerned about upsetting their customers as they are used to the convenience of having the plastic bags. Ms. Durham stated the support of the CAC can be important because the larger retailers are not local. It was suggested to start at the municipal level first. However, that can be confusing when it comes to enforcement and regulations.

After further discussion, the CAC decided to it would be prudent to talk to the Downtown Newark Partnership prior to any further action.

4. LED LIGHT REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Mr. Coleman reported the Electric Department ordered the first 500 LED lights.

5. GREEN ENERGY

Mr. Irvine stated he will follow up with Ms. Houck who had attended the DENREC Energy Efficiency Advisory Commission Meeting on November 17, 2015.

6. FUTURE GOALS

There was nothing new to discuss.

7. A BETTER NEWARK AWARD

Mr. Hornor stated he contacted Dow Chemical and was able to get some pictures from them and some detail to complete the application. Mr. Hornor will forward the pictures and the application to Ms. Schiano. Mr. Hornor reported Dow Chemical had taken an area that was strictly grass with a neighboring gully that fills with water and filled both areas with native plants that thrive in both grassy and marshy/wet areas.

MOTION MADE BY MR. IRVINE, SECONDED BY MR. HORNOR TO AWARD THE A BETTER NEWARK AWARD TO DOW CHEMICAL.

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5-0
ABSENT: PRASAD, SHEEDY**

8. REVIEW OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENTS REPORTS

There was nothing to report. Mr. Irvine reminded the group to review the reports when they are received; particularly information regarding the Planning Commission as they discuss and potentially decide important projects in the City of Newark.

9. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. McDowell reported there had been a very successful planting at Curtis Mill Park with 100 trees and shrubs planted. There are more plantings planned for spring, 2016. He also reported that any invasive plant species will be removed at this time as well. He stated once completed, it will be even nicer.

Mr. Coleman the park was a Brownfield Development Project so they had to excavate soil from contaminated areas and placed in under the cul-de-sac and capped the contaminated soils. Floodplain storage also had to be created. Mr. McDowell reported the Friends of the White Clay are very interested because the project is adding to the riparian buffer along the White Clay Creek. Mr. Coleman reported the total cost for the project was \$1,000 for all the plant material. Mr. McDowell said about an acre was covered with approximately 100 trees and shrubs were plants.

Mr. Coleman stated it would be beneficial to speak with someone from the White Clay Wild and Scenic to be included in the discussion regarding any future plantings if they are contained within the White Clay Water Shed.

Mr. Irvine will reach out to the White Clay Wild and Scenic to see if they would like to attend a future meeting.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 2016.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Tara A. Schiano
Secretary

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