

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 9, 2021

MEETING CONVENED: 7:03 p.m. GoToMeeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sheila Smith, George Irvine, Beth Chajes, MaryClare Matsumoto, Helga Huntley, Bob McDowell

ABSENT: Robyn O'Halloran

STAFF: Nichol Scheld, Administrative Professional I

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 12, 2021:

Ms. Chajes suggested making a change on page 11 from "restaurants" to "the public".

MOTION BY MS. MATSUMOTO, SECONDED BY DR. IRVINE: TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 12, 2021 MINUTES AS AMENDED.

MOTION PASSED: 6 – 0.

AYE: Smith, Irvine, Matsumoto, Huntley, Chajes, McDowell.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: O'Halloran

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

3. ANNUAL REPORT:

Dr. Irvine said that he distributed the annual report and received feedback from Ms. Smith and Dr. Huntley. He included their edits and asked for additional input from other members. Ms. Chajes would forward her minor corrections. Ms. Smith hoped everyone read the document and was pleased with the progress the CAC made in spite of the pandemic. She was amazed at how the plastic straw initiative came together with outreach, research, and working with the City's Communications Team. She congratulated the group on its efforts. Dr. Irvine emphasized that all of the work was completed remotely for nine months of the year and Ms. Smith agreed.

Ms. Matsumoto thought the annual report was great and commented on the two unfilled membership positions for District 2 and at-large. She was concerned with upcoming vacancies. Ms. Chajes informed that she would continue serving. Dr. Huntley asked Ms. Scheld for an update on applications for

the vacancies. Ms. Scheld replied that one vacancy would be filled an upcoming agenda, but she was unsure of any other nominations. Ms. Smith asked which position would be filled and Ms. Scheld thought it was District 2 but would confirm. Ms. Scheld asked when the annual report would be ready for Council and Dr. Irvine informed the CAC could make a motion to accept the report as submitted pending the minor edits from Dr. Huntley, Ms. Chajes, and Ms. Smith.

MOTION BY MS. CHAJES, SECONDED BY MS. MATSUMOTO: THE ANNUAL REPORT AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION PASSED: 6 – 0.

AYE: Smith, Irvine, Matsumoto, Huntley, Chajes, McDowell.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: O'Halloran

4. STRAW FLYER DISTRIBUTION PLAN UPDATE – CAC MEMBERS

Ms. Chajes explained the restaurant survey and the bookmark production were both in their final stages, awaiting final approval. She updated the survey as indicated at the last meeting and forwarded a copy to Leann Moore at The Newark Partnership (TNP). Ms. Moore would put the survey forward to TNP's board for approval and would then send the surveys to TNP's restaurant mailing list and publish the link in its newsletter. Ms. Chajes was waiting for an update.

Ms. Chajes continued that the bookmarks were redrafted and submitted to Vistaprint. She would meet with Jeff Martindale, Chief Purchasing & Personnel Officer, to review purchasing procedures and complete the final step to order. She spoke with a Vistaprint designer to ensure that there were no problems with the order and also received a 20% promo code. The total price decreased from \$370 to just under \$300 for 1,000 bookmarks. She revealed standard free shipping would arrive by February 24th, priority would cost \$18 and arrive by February 18th, and express delivery would cost \$24 and arrive by Friday or Monday. Ms. Smith asked if there was a deadline for delivery to the library. Ms. Matsumoto had informed the library that the CAC was still working on the bookmarks and she would reach out to her contact. She suggested giving some of the bookmarks to the Kirkwood Library because the patrons undoubtedly visited Newark restaurants. Ms. Chajes agreed and said the bookmarks could also be used for Community Day. Ms. Smith assumed the library would only give one bookmark per pick up and Ms. Matsumoto confirmed. Dr. Huntley did not think a rush delivery was necessary and did not support paying for express shipping. Ms. Matsumoto and Mr. McDowell agreed. Mr. McDowell offered to give bookmarks to his student activists who were involved in other conservation activities. Ms. Smith thanked everyone for their efforts and Ms. Chajes hoped to have the bookmarks by the next meeting. Dr. Huntley supported distributing bookmarks to remind students not to use straws. Mr. McDowell thought 100 bookmarks were enough for his students because he did not want to diminish the supply. He shared that he still distributed the Anti-Idling trifold pamphlets to students. Dr. Irvine reminded that the Newark Charter School students had presented on the merits of decreasing straw use and recalled Tami Lunsford was the educator who organized the students to perform the research. He wanted to offer Ms. Lunsford some of the bookmarks for the now junior class students.

5. ANTI-IDLING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION UPDATE – SHEILA SMITH

Ms. Smith told Dr. Irvine she wanted to pick up the signs in his possession so she could give them to Public Works and Water Resources Director Tim Filasky. Mr. Filasky said that he would work with the

owners of the Park & Shop to install the signs. Ms. Smith asked where the anti-idling cards stood, and Dr. Huntley recalled that Ms. O'Halloran would update the designs with the CAC's feedback and return with a final draft. Ms. Smith asked that the agenda item be added to March. She continued that she was a member of the League of Women Voters and took part in a Zoom meeting with its Transportation Committee. The Secretary of the Delaware Department of Transportation addressed the Transportation Committee to discuss emissions and Ms. Smith introduced the concern of idling. She revealed the Transportation Committee would not pursue the issue as it was out of their purview but reported that three League of Women Voters members were interested in pursuing anti-idling at the State level. She would reach out to Mr. Filasky for an update. Dr. Irvine briefly left the meeting to count the signs in his possession and Ms. Scheld offered to receive the signs at the Municipal Building the next day for Mr. Filasky.

6. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST – SHEILA SMITH

Ms. Smith asked if Ms. O'Halloran's article had been published and Ms. Chajes confirmed that "Plastic Bag Ban Moves Delaware One Step Closer to Cleaner Environment" appeared in the Newark Post on January 29th. Ms. Chajes added that Dr. Huntley's article on straws was published on December 18th. Dr. Irvine said he had not submitted his article but would be able to complete it shortly. Dr. Huntley pointed that the last article was published on January 29th and suggested that Dr. Irvine submit his article as soon as possible for Josh Shannon to decide which edition would be appropriate.

- February – Annual Report - George Irvine
- March – Spotted Lanternfly - Sheila Smith
- April – Composting - MaryClare Matsumoto, Robyn O'Halloran
- May – 100% Renewable Energy – Helga Huntley
- June – Flooding and Riparian Buffer Zones – Helga Huntley, Bob McDowell

Ms. Smith suggested that the CAC could write an article about its collaboration with The Newark Partnership.

7. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

Ms. Smith reminded any interested individuals that the Comprehensive Development Plan virtual meetings were scheduled for 7pm on the last Tuesday of every month. Ms. Matsumoto interjected that she thought the next meeting was Thursday, February 25th and informed that the meetings would not be held on the same day each month.

8. OLD/NEW BUSINESS – SUSTAINABILITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION NEXT STEPS

Ms. Smith wanted to determine how City staff would approach the Comprehensive Plan as it related to the Sustainability Plan. She reminded that one of the goals in Theme 2 was to plan and develop for all, which was also a goal on the State level for the League of Women Voters Transportation Committee. She informed that James Wilson, Bike Delaware, was proactive on development and continued that one of the City's goals was to implement sustainable land use principles based on the Delaware model for complete communities. She explained Mr. Wilson promoted the use of the Delaware Complete Communities toolbox, developed by the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA), and acknowledged the tie to Dr. Dan Rich, TNP. She asked the CAC for feedback and wanted to make sure that the groups were not involved in separate projects. She asked if the CAC should

be pursuing complete communities development given the toolbox, serious interest from residents, and its mention in the Sustainability Plan. Ms. Matsumoto asked if anyone could present to the CAC and Ms. Smith suggested the CAC could request to read the document and then speak to the Planning Department. Ms. Smith wanted to suggest the Planning Department should be utilizing the toolbox.

Dr. Huntley explained that the IPA was a research group for hire and a profit center for UD. She revealed that the IPA performed work based on contracts from different communities and one of their offers was to write comprehensive development plans for cities. She thought the IPA tended to include its complete communities documentation into the comprehensive development plans they wrote. She revealed the information was publicly available for anyone to use but she was unaware that the Planning Department knew about or used the toolbox and did not think that Dr. Rich was directly involved with the IPA. Ms. Smith wondered how to approach the Sustainability Plan and how to determine if the Planning Department was including any of the ideas.

Dr. Irvine believed that Mike Fortner either received his master's degree from UD or took many professional level programs with the IPA. He explained that the IPA offered training for public sector officials, as well as contract work, and received State funding to offer the trainings. He believed that Mr. Fortner was aware of the IPA information and continued that IPA students either interned or researched for the City through the Legislative Fellows Program. He revealed that the Planning Department hosted at least one student. Ms. Smith asked if she should inquire if the Planning Department used the toolbox and Dr. Irvine confirmed and suggested the CAC could make a Council recommendation that to strongly encourage the Planning Department to use the ideas. Dr. Irvine assumed Mr. Fortner was aware of the information and believed he researched best practices related to land use for the Sustainability Plan and the Newark Energy Transition Committee. Dr. Irvine supported Ms. Smith's question and suggested she invite Mr. Fortner to a future meeting. Dr. Huntley corrected herself and confirmed that Dr. Rich was a senior fellow of the IPA.

Ms. Smith thanked Dr. Huntley and Dr. Irvine. She informed that she wanted to invite Department spokespersons to update the CAC on the Sustainability Plan progression. She reminded that the Sustainability Plan was developed in part by inquiries made by AECOM to the various department heads on how the City was working towards sustainability. The Department heads then crafted goals and actions from the inquiries. Ms. Smith reiterated her desire that different department heads join CAC meetings for Sustainability Plan updates and Dr. Huntley supported the suggestion. Dr. Huntley admitted Jeff Martindale was usually sent to provide updates, but she thought the advantage of Ms. Smith's suggestion was that the Sustainability Plan in the forefront for each of the Department directors. Ms. Matsumoto agreed.

Dr. Irvine explained a 2021 CAC goal was to assess the implementation of the Sustainability Plan and suggested to frame invitations to the Department heads as opportunities to share ideas on implementation. He wanted to foster a conversation instead of a confrontation. Mr. McDowell also wanted to address any instances of limitations for City staff where the CAC could assist and progress the plan. Ms. Smith was enthusiastic about becoming more informed and for offering CAC assistance.

Dr. Huntley added that the riparian buffer education was in the Sustainability Plan and was also one of her priority CAC items. She spoke with Director Filasky about the City partnering with the CAC on riparian buffer education and he agreed the issue was a priority and looked forward to the partnership. She suggested the education could be through a workshop or display boards at the Rodney Park opening. Ms. Smith asked if Rodney Park was on schedule and Dr. Huntley reported that Mr. Filasky said the project

would take a while. Ms. Smith considered leading educational nature walks at the park as part of her commitment to the Master Naturalists Program because the landscaping would be 100% native plants. She thanked Dr. Huntley and emphasized the necessity to push the CAC's agenda. She reiterated that the CAC would review the Sustainability Plan and invite presenters. She suggested inviting Mr. Fortner to ask about complete communities.

Dr. Irvine revealed Mr. Filasky was on the March agenda to the discuss possible CAC contributions to for the trail portion of the Christiansted bridge renovation project which was in a riparian zone. He explained that high water knocked out the bridge supports, and the bridge held the sewer line for a portion of the City, so it had to be repaired. He continued that a trail ran across the bridge allowing for walking and biking to the downtown area. He revealed ideas posed by Mr. Filasky and Councilman Lawhorn that because the trail was near the Old Phillips Mill, there was a possibility it could be a historic trail mill trail to educate users on the role of waterpower in the early industrialization of Newark and the enslaved people who worked it. He noted the project could be a tool to support sustainable transportation as well as securing the sewer line. Ms. Smith asked if the bridge was over the Christina River and Dr. Irvine confirmed and informed the river was 16 feet across at his backyard. Dr. Irvine suggested the CAC could also ask Mr. Filasky about his department's actions towards the Sustainability Plan implementation. Ms. Smith recalled Dr. Irvine's previous comments that some lawns in his neighborhood did not have a riparian buffer.

(Secretary's note: half of the attendants lost power)

Dr. Huntley asked if the trail had a public right of way or if the project was a proposal for new riverside trail. Dr. Irvine confirmed the trail was public right of way but acknowledged that when Christiansted was built, it was designed with a trail network to be maintained by the Community Association. The Community Association opted to disband in order to avoid maintenance after the community was built. He confirmed there was a right of way and his property had an easement, but the trail was only maintained by volunteers. Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Filasky was going to discuss having the City maintain the trail and Dr. Irvine confirmed that it was a question of quality of life for connecting the neighborhood with West Branch, West Main Street, and Nottingham Road to keep pedestrians from walking along 273 without a sidewalk. Dr. Irvine asked if the trail was for the public and not for the neighborhood as Dr. Irvine believed it was supposed to be public access but there was a gray area because the homeowners did not maintain the trail in order to keep users out of their backyards in spite of the easements in the properties. He continued that repairing the bridge was necessary regardless of the trail, but he felt the trail was an excellent way of connecting residents to other parts of town. More details would be available during the March meeting as the City retained an engineering firm to determine what was necessary to shore up the bridge because floods had undermined the ramps and, over time, the river would erode the dirt and supporting buttress around the sewage pipe. He specifically moved to the area for the well-designed trails but was the use was thwarted by individual actions of non-maintenance. He believed the trail would increase property values and noted the abundant local wildlife in the area.

Ms. Chajes informed there was a power surge in the City. Dr. Irvine informed he sent the annual report and made the edits during the meeting. Dr. Huntley suggested that the meeting adjourn.

9. NEXT MEETING – MARCH 9, 2021

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY DR. IRVINE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Nichol Scheld
Administrative Professional I

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