

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 9, 2021

MEETING CONVENED: 7:02 p.m. GoToMeeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sheila Smith, Beth Chajes, Helga Huntley, Andrew O'Donnell, John Mateyko, MaryClare Matsumoto, Jean Hedrich

STAFF: Jeff Martindale, Chief Purchasing & Personnel Officer
Nichol Scheld, Administrative Professional I

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 12, 2021:

The minutes were not completed prior to the meeting and would be addressed in the December meeting.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

3. REMAINING COMMISSION FUNDING OPTIONS

Dr. Huntley shared that she and Mr. O'Donnell met to discuss the options. She explained that Mr. O'Donnell spoke once again with Energize Delaware and asked the questions brought up in the October meeting. Energize Delaware admitted the process was complicated and requested to speak with the Commission in the future. She revealed that there was no existing program to which the Commission could contribute and that she and Mr. O'Donnell decided that the avenue was still a promising option for Commission funding investment, but they would like to postpone support until next year. She wanted to invite a representative to speak to the Commission so all questions could be answered.

Dr. Huntley contacted all of the principals of City schools regarding bike racks and the Charter school did not feel it was in a safe enough location for children to bike to school, so they did not want a bike rack. Newark High pointed to bad timing given the construction project on Delaware Avenue and wanted to wait. She informed that two elementary schools were interested: West Park Elementary and Downes Elementary. She spoke with Heather Dunigan from WILMAPCO to determine the range of prices and learned that the cheapest option for four bikes would be \$300. Ms. Dunigan suggested a range of \$600 to \$1,000 for each bike rack for each school.

The third option was for the Commission to work with Parks and Recreation on either adding bike racks to City parks or supporting tree planting. Dr. Huntley shared that Parks and Recreation Director Joe Spadafino was happy to have the Commission support City programs but acknowledged the year was coming to a close and he did not feel that anything could be implemented given current staffing levels. Mr. Spadafino wanted to work with the Commission next year. Dr. Huntley wanted to start the process earlier next year and consider programs that the Commission wanted to support.

The last option was Mr. Martindale's suggestion of supporting the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. Dr. Huntley thanked Mr. Martindale for the leg work because he was able to provide the Commission with a quote for an EV charging station which had actually increased and included a \$600 logistics surcharge. She noted that the surcharge was a consequence of the shipping bottlenecks which increased the shipping costs for the charger components. Mr. Martindale confirmed the cost was between \$11,000 and \$12,000. Dr. Huntley explained that the Commission did not have to pay the part that the State rebate would cover; the cost to the Commission would be \$7,000 less than the asking price. Ms. Smith asked if the cost was per station and Dr. Huntley confirmed and clarified that instead of \$11,000 per dual port charging station, the cost was closer to \$4,000 per charging station. She explained there was another level of complication because the City had forgotten to budget for getting electrical infrastructure to the charging station during the last project, which was quite expensive.

Mr. Martindale acknowledged that there would be some level infrastructure cost with getting the charging stations online and staff had hoped to run electrical lines from the transformer at Rittenhouse Station, across Veterans Lane to City Hall. Unfortunately, the scenario was not possible, and staff had to run a line from South Main Street and install a new transformer which was nearly double the cost of what it would have been in February 2020. He continued that instead of the \$15,000 budgeted for infrastructure costs, the final cost was nearly \$33,000. He noted that while the increase was substantial, the rebates were also more substantial than initial budgets; the total shortfall was in the \$13,000 to \$14,000 range, which the City would need to reconcile, regardless of the Commission's vote. He noted that the Commission could vote to help reconcile the 2021 infrastructure cost which would allow for additional stations to go in at a reduced cost because staff had already done the legwork to support future stations. He noted there was the current potential to add one station at a reduced cost, less rebates.

Dr. Huntley added that she originally wanted the new charging stations to be installed in different locations but noted that the Commission would need to add costs for infrastructure. Ms. Smith wanted to determine the most ideal spot and wanted to know if there was a simpler way to tie in. She asked if there was a place that begged for a charging station and Mr. Martindale wanted to first meet with the Electric Department. He suggested Phillips Park because infrastructure was already in place and believed that Rodney was not a possibility given the length of cable needed. Mr. Mateyko asked how the charging stations were currently being used by City vehicles. Mr. Martindale replied that all three of the City's charging stations were finally online and available for shared public use. He confirmed that the City was potentially running the risk of all spots being occupied when City vehicles needed to be charged but reminded that Newark was only 9 square miles. He confirmed that staff was investigating fleet-only charging station options but had not made the move because most City EVs were headquartered at either Lot 1 for the Parking Division or at City Hall for the other two divisions. He assumed the public did not yet know that the chargers were online so there had not yet been much competition for use.

Dr. Huntley asked where the City was charging its vehicles prior the stations coming online. Mr. Martindale replied that there was one station online and two of the three were faulty from purchase, which was not an ideal beginning. There were also two Charge Point Flex home charging stations that were plugged into the garage at the Maintenance Yard where staff would charge the Leafs intermittently.

Ms. Smith asked the members for their thoughts on using the remaining funds for the charging station. Dr. Huntley replied that given the unfortunate restrictions, the Commission could invest in one additional charging station to be installed in a place that was already well-electrified, use some of the funding to defray some of the earlier infrastructure cost, and use some money for the bike racks. Ms. Smith agreed and asked if it was possible for Mr. Spadafino to store the bike racks until they could be

installed. Mr. Martindale confirmed that as long as the purchase was made within the year and noted that the schools would facilitate their own bike rack installations. Ms. Matsumoto noted that Downes and West Park Elementary Schools wanted bike racks and asked if the Commission needed to buy extra bike racks to store. Dr. Huntley clarified that one suggestion was for the Commission to purchase racks for City parks now and have staff store them until Mr. Spadafino was ready to install them. Ms. Matsumoto did not think it was sensible to buy the racks now and wait for installation; she wanted to purchase the two racks for the schools and support the infrastructure and an additional charging station.

Ms. Hedrich supported the bike racks for the schools as well as racks for City parks that staff would store until installation was possible. Ms. Smith explained that she had forgotten that the racks were for schools, and she was thinking of City parks when she spoke earlier.

Ms. Chajes supported the plan for bike racks and a charging station and had no objections.

Mr. Mateyko supported the overall package and wanted to help the City install EV systems and defray costs.

Mr. O'Donnell supported the proposal and acknowledged that the Commission had been pushing the City to electrify the fleet; he thought it made sense that the Commission would provide backup support for EV infrastructure. He asked how much was going towards EV chargers and how much would be left over for bike racks. He wanted to have the Commission logo on the chargers and bike racks to show the community that the Commission was involved. Dr. Huntley replied that the proposal was for one new charging station, two new bike racks (one each) for the schools and the remainder of the funding to pay for the infrastructure costs for the existing charging stations.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION ALLOCATE THE REMAINDER OF ITS BUDGET TO SPEND ABOUT \$2,000 ON TWO BIKE RACKS FOR DOWNES ELEMENTARY AND WEST PARK ELEMENTARY, ONE NEW DUAL-PORT EV CHARGING STATION, WITH THE REMAINDER TO BE USED TO DEFRAY THE INFRASTRUCTURE COST FOR THE EV STATION.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 7 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, HEDRICH, CHAJES, MATEYKO, O'DONNELL, SMITH, MATSUMOTO.

NAY: 0.

Ms. Smith reminded that Eco Plastics made bike racks from recycled plastic and suggested investigation. She described the racks as colorful and noted that the company also made benches. She explained that the company recycled bird food bags to use in its products and Ms. Matsumoto pointed that Eco Plastics was a local company. Dr. Huntley believed that the bike racks would be chosen through a collaborative process, and she would make sure that Eco Plastics was an option. Mr. Martindale thanked Dr. Huntley and Mr. O'Donnell for their efforts and offered to assist with the research for the bike rack. He reminded that the \$22,000 was the remaining amount from the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory which was \$77,000. He asked that the members consider future projects for the upcoming year.

4. FOOD WASTE RECYCLING

Dr. Huntley informed that she participated on a lunchtime webinar from Plastic Free Delaware

and one webinar introduced a local organization, WasteWell, that collected food waste from residents and returned fresh compost to the customers at the end of the year. She had lived in a few places where food waste recycling was part of the City's waste disposal service and thought the City might be interested. She explained that the company's current service area only extended to Hockessin, Greenville, and Wilmington. She thought if the City was interested in a collaboration to offer the service Citywide, then it might be worthwhile for the organization to expand its service area to include Newark. She emphasized that her idea was still in the planning phase and assumed that the City could advertise the service and residents would pay the company; there would not be an additional cost to the City. She hoped that the City would ultimately save money by on its solid waste disposal. She wanted to discern if the Commission had interest in developing the idea further.

Ms. Matsumoto thought the idea was good but was confused why compostable food was not included into the City's regular yard waste containers. She explained that her sister-in-law was a mayor in Washington state and the residents combined everything, including meat scraps, although she thought it was possible there was a separate container. She thought the City might exploring having the service available for residents. Dr. Huntley assumed that the City did not want food waste included with yard waste because the facility that took the yard waste was not set up for composting and food waste would attract rats.

Ms. Smith agreed with Ms. Matsumoto's comments that food waste should be able to be combined with yard waste similar to practice in Washington. She noted that restaurants produced large amounts of food waste and said it was a more compact way to remove waste from the City's waste stream but thought that it was possible that restaurants paid a larger fee. She pointed out that schools also produced a large amount food waste, and it was difficult for schools to get younger children to separate their waste. If the organization came to the City, she would be interested in focusing on school and restaurant participation. She was interested in the organization coming to the City to offer their services and asked Mr. Martindale who was in charge of the City's waste stream. Mr. Martindale replied that Public Works handled the City's refuse and informed that Jason Winterling or Tim Filasky would be the best contacts. Ms. Smith suggested that the organization could present to the Commission.

Ms. Chajes was interested in further investigation and thought the trick was determining the compost problem and how to avoid the pest problem described by Dr. Huntley.

Mr. Mateyko shared the same concern. He explained that Stanford was recently funded by the California Air Pollution Board to produce a peer-reviewed journal article. Composting was mandatory in California, and it was thought that the process did not generate methane, but the article stated otherwise. He revealed that large amounts of methane were produced by composting plants and asked how important the initiative was because Project Drawdown came out with a new way to calculate where and how to mitigate greenhouse gases. He revealed that the issue was not only end-waste food cycle, but also a cycle of production including farms, transportation, and distribution. He shared that the number one strategy for reducing greenhouse gases in Newark was likely food waste due to the large number of students eating at restaurants and the University. He revealed that globally, offshore wind had the potential to generate 47 gigatons, utility scale photovoltaic 42 gigatons, electric cars 12 gigatons, and reduced food waste could potentially generate 91 gigatons. He felt that it was not common topic of discussion because there was no money to be made in the process. He suggested a research project investigating the chain of custody of food waste, especially the proportion that was taking place within Delaware, because it had far more potential to offset greenhouse gases than other methods. Ms. Smith said that she stopped composting her food waste because she thought that the landfills were piping out

methane and it was better to send her food waste to the landfill. Dr. Huntley confirmed that landfills were the primary source of methane emissions. Ms. Smith assumed that the landfills were harvesting the methane and asked Mr. O'Donnell for insight. Mr. O'Donnell explained that that some places were capping renewable natural gases (RNG) in landfills and waste sites, but it was rare and over 90% were open air where the methane leaked out. He emphasized that methane was a major source of global warming and climate change and was even more impactful than carbon dioxide. Ms. Smith confirmed that the Commission wanted to learn more about the process.

Mr. O'Donnell added that he supported composting and wanted to cap and collect the methane. He was concerned that a truck picking up the compost would detract from the solution and asked if it was possible to use an electric truck. He believed that residents would be concerned with any increased costs.

Mr. Mateyko admitted the issue was complex thought the controversy was how the City and residents would reach net zero emissions. He thought a system where methane was burned was possible but then consideration needed to be given to offsetting the burn. He suggested a system that did not generate methane and commented that it was better to feed the worms.

Ms. Smith asked if there was interest from the Commission for WasteWell to participate in a regular meeting. Ms. Chajes suggested that WasteWell be a topic for the Conservation Corner to encourage behavioral changes among residents. Mr. Mateyko offered to write the article and would forward the Stanford publication. Ms. Smith informed that she would invite WasteWell to a future meeting. Mr. Mateyko shared that he had no food waste in his trash and considered that if food waste disposal was systemic, then it would be possible to reduce the activity of the garbage trucks and improve health by curbing pests. He noted it would be cheaper for the City because truck services could decrease. Dr. Huntley added that the potential to which Mr. Mateyko quoted assumed that there was zero food waste, it was not just that food waste was composted, but that society stopped producing food that went unconsumed. She thought the problem would be difficult to tackle on a small scale because much of the food waste happened before it ever entered the City. She understood Mr. Mateyko's claim that the global food production system needed to be addressed in order to lower GHGs, she felt that the Commission had little influence locally. Mr. Mateyko agreed that there was a whole chain of custody where food was wasted but believed that individuals could have control over final part of the chain of custody which he considered to be an inspirational teaching moment.

Ms. Hedrich added that a UD student group was attempting to glean leftover food from the restaurants to use at the Empowerment Center and food cupboards. She pointed to that the restaurants were concentrated in the Newark area and suggested that WasteWell work with the restaurants, so they did not have to drive around the City. Ms. Smith agreed and reiterated that schools and restaurants were concentrated; she wanted to meet with WasteWell on a future agenda. She agreed that public education was a heavy lift and thanked Dr. Huntley for bringing the issue forward.

Ms. Smith asked Mr. O'Donnell if he was interested in adding gases to a future agenda. Mr. O'Donnell explained that there was a large amount of information on RNGs and how to avoid methane buildup to create something useful. He shared that in Pennsylvania, Delmarva gas customers could opt-in to RNG, but the option was not available in Newark. He suggested that if City customers pushed for the option, Delmarva gas would likely respond. He explained that a farm north of Philadelphia capped its farm waste to create RNG.

5. ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. Smith explained the process of creating the annual report and said that it needed to be broken down into which members worked on which initiatives over the year. She listed:

- Opt-in Renewable Energy - Huntley
- Working with The Newark Partnership - Smith
- Straws and bookmarks – Chajes, Matsumoto
- Electric Vehicles – O'Donnell
- EV Stations – O'Donnell
- GHG inventory - Chajes
- Lights Out - Smith
- Conservation Corner Articles - Hedrich
- Anti-Idling - Smith
- 100% Renewable –
- Planting follow-up - Matsumoto

Ms. Smith asked for the members to choose a topic and write a paragraph. She also said that she would reach out to Jayme Gravell for the anti-idling card designs. She was contacted by a person interested in using the data collected for the GHG study for use in a comparative data study of other cities that did GHG inventories. She shared that the study should be finished by January. Mr. O'Donnell assumed that the report could be used as a basis for the 2022 budget. Ms. Matsumoto reread last year's annual report and shared that all of the goals were listed:

- Outreach and education efforts via social media
- Community Day
- Reforestation Day

Ms. Matsumoto was unsure why Reforestation Day was cancelled. Dr. Huntley said that Mr. McDowell used to organize the event, and no one had taken over when he left but agreed that COVID was also a factor. Ms. Smith noted that City staffing was also an issue.

Ms. Matsumoto continued:

- Opt-in
- Assist City staff with tracking Newark restaurants' voluntary compliance with the straw resolution
- Rename Better Newark Award to Newark Sustainability Award
- Educate public about riparian buffer zones
- Promote EVs
- Promote open space
- Continue FOIA training
- Evaluate City's progress with Sustainability Plan

Discussion ensued regarding listing the articles and Ms. Smith noted that anti-idling signs still had not been installed but recognized that there were shortages with City staff. Mr. Martindale agreed but asked her to follow-up. Mr. O'Donnell apologized for not having completed his article, but Ms. Smith emphasized that the articles were new and there was no pressure associated.

Dr. Huntley asked whether monitoring the City's progress with the Sustainability Plan should be included in the annual report or a separate report. Ms. Smith noted that nearly all items were related to the Sustainability Plan. Dr. Huntley said that it would be useful to include a table similar to Mr. Coleman's table that was presented to the Commission in January. She agreed with Ms. Smith that it was important to reference which Sustainability Goal the action items were linked. Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Martindale could secure an updated table and he confirmed that he would speak to Mr. Coleman. Ms. Smith assumed that the team would be able to complete the report by the end of the year.

Ms. Matsumoto said that she would forward the list of articles to Ms. Hedrich. Ms. Smith then asked the members to have their portions ready for the December and January meetings.

6. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST

- November – GHG Emissions and Lawn Equipment – Andrew O'Donnell
- December - City Trees – Sheila Smith
- January – Carbon Pricing – Beth Chajes
- February – Stormwater Management – Helga Huntley
- March - WasteWell/Food Recycling – John Mateyko
- April - Eastern Box Turtle Habitat Conservation – Jean Hedrich

Ms. Smith was enthusiastic regarding the lawn equipment article and Mr. O'Donnell offered to partner with her. Ms. Hedrich offered to write an article for eastern box turtle habitat conservation and Ms. Smith noted that the habitat conservation was linked to mowing which would tie to the Sustainability Plan.

7. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS – CITY LANDSCAPING UPDATES

Ms. Matsumoto shared that the County's parcel where Leon's Garden World was located had been annexed into the City. She noted the parcel would be another Wawa although she was unsure of the status. Mr. O'Donnell attended the Planning Commission meeting and objected to the installation of more gas pumps but learned that EV charging stations might be included. He asked if there could be a City ban on gas pumps. Ms. Smith asked if the Wawa deal was confirmed. Mr. Martindale explained that the land was now part of the City, and the stage was set for additional development as part of the City. Ms. Smith asked for the rationale for the purchase. Mr. Martindale replied that the land was not purchased and likely had to do with the current owner and eventual developers pushing their agenda for the parcel. Mr. O'Donnell replied that the annexation had to do with zoning restrictions and the parcel was a flood plain so the developer would have to backfill the land. Dr. Huntley shared that the Planning Commission wanted to annex parcels as requested by the owners because then the City would have some control over development.

Ms. Smith asked if the Comprehensive Plan Review had been completed and Mr. Martindale said he did not believe so. He noted that there had not been much discussion as of late but knew that the Planning Department was bringing in two new planners. He informed that the Department encompassed Code Enforcement and Parking but the planning portion itself only had four employees, including Director Mary Ellen Gray. He explained that the two employees were employed for two temporary terms of two years with the opportunity to extend; a third employee would be hired as a Deputy Director. He emphasized that the Department was receiving the staffing necessary to continue with the increase in

planning throughout the City which would help the Department keep projects on track. Ms. Smith asked if Mr. Fortner was running the Steering Committee for the Comp Plan and Mr. Martindale confirmed.

Ms. Smith received plans from Dr. Huntley for the Dickinson property and met with Mr. Spadafino because she was concerned that the developers were planting too many non-native species. She learned that the plan had improved, and the developers had planted many trees, but she was unsure of the species. She shared that the community did not want the triangle area to be forested and preferred it remained open space. Ms. Matsumoto informed that the location was called “the beach” and students used the area frequently as open space. Ms. Smith encouraged members to view the location and was initially galled by the loss of the oak trees but acknowledged that the developers had a mitigation plan that would plant more trees. She wanted to ensure that shade trees were installed to mitigate the heat sinks that asphalt created. She reported that the initial plan was rejected by the Parks Department who insisted that more trees and natives were to be included.

8. OLD/NEW BUSINESS – SOLAR PROJECT UPDATE

Mr. Martindale informed that the solar installation was ramping up and shared that the warehouse at the Maintenance Yard was now completely covered on one side with solar. He continued that installation was ongoing at the Municipal Building and workers would run power along the roof to support the solar in the upcoming week. He shared that the contractors intended to have the solar at the Maintenance Yard online by the end of the week and noted that staff met the previous week to discuss the solar installation on the western side of the reservoir beyond Preston’s Playground. He informed that tree trimming was necessary for the installation near the electric lines, and he wanted to speak to the Commission in 2022 regarding lower hanging plantings that would not block the sunlight for the solar panels and not impede the overhead electric lines. He continued that installation at McKees might be paused until spring or summer given the state of the ground but confirmed the project was in the queue and staff had the materials ready to go. He was excited because solar was the first agenda the Commission pushed for when he first joined the City and now the task was underway.

Dr. Huntley asked for the timeline for the reservoir solar panels. Mr. Martindale estimated spring of 2022. Dr. Huntley asked if the reservoir would come before McKees, and Mr. Martindale replied potentially because McKees was started earlier but depended on weather and landscape issues. Dr. Huntley asked if the Maintenance Yard would be online in the upcoming weeks and Mr. Martindale repeated as early as the current week.

Ms. Matsumoto asked if the installation at the reservoir would be closer to Paper Mill Road from Preston’s Playground or on the other side. Mr. Martindale confirmed the opposite side. Ms. Matsumoto asked if the land was being monitored by the Delaware Nature Society. Mr. Martindale confirmed that the Audubon Society had birdhouses in the area and staff was working closely with the group who had been very accommodating. The birdhouses were moved to the outskirts of the area to allow for the panel installation. Ms. Matsumoto believed the Audubon Society also planted trees in the area and Ms. Smith confirmed. Mr. Martindale displayed a photo of the area and noted that one sloped area was difficult for staff to facilitate but it could be a possibility in future. Ms. Matsumoto assumed the project could not be closer to the reservoir because of restrictions and Mr. Martindale confirmed. He explained that the contractor was initially excited about wrapping the reservoir completely in solar, but staff emphasized that structure was a key concern. Ms. Smith asked if there was solar at City Hall and Mr. Martindale confirmed that solar would be on the City Hall side and explained the municipal complex included City Hall and the Police Department. He noted that the Police side did not have the proper angle for solar

energy.

9. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SKILLSET AND INTERESTS AS RELATED TO CAC

Ms. Smith explained that Mr. Mateyko requested backgrounds on members to discern skillsets as related to the Commission. She shared that a member of another City board had been targeted at their home, so the decision was made to remove all personal information from the City website. Ms. Smith noted that Ms. Hedrich was a wildlife expert and suggested that members include why they were on the Commission and specific skills or interests. Ms. Scheld explained the reasoning behind redacting personal information on committee applications.

Ms. Matsumoto credited Ms. Chajes on her article on carbon tax and encouraged members to read it. She shared that Matt Myer signed an ordinance on November 4th which required that all new homes and apartments receiving building permits be EV capable starting in July 2022. She asked if the City's Green Building Code had the same ruling. She asked if the City had to be EV capable and if it was requirement. Mr. Martindale did not know the specifics but acknowledged that part of the new building permit process included a point structure with an incentive for the installation of EV charging stations but maintained that it was not yet a requirement. He commented that the City could look forward to the initiative and did not know if New Castle County had any specific rebate support programs because they were a much larger governmental entity than the City. Ms. Matsumoto thought it would be interesting to have a speaker to present to the Commission to determine whether it made sense for the Commission to make a recommendation to Council. Ms. Smith assumed the Planning Department might already be involved in the process.

Mr. Mateyko reported that the cost to install an at home EV charger for new construction was less than \$300 a few years ago. Ms. Matsumoto agreed that if new construction was already set up for an EV installation, then an EV purchase was more likely. Ms. Scheld noted that single family homes were not a usual form of construction in the City and most development projects were for multi-family structures. Ms. Smith agreed with Ms. Matsumoto to reach out to the Planning Department to determine if EV charging stations were required under the Green Building Code.

10. NEXT MEETING – DECEMBER 14, 2021

MOTION BY MS. MATSUMOTO, SECONDED MS. SMITH: TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm.

Nichol Scheld
Administrative Professional I

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