

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 8, 2022

MEETING CONVENED: 7:26 p.m. Council Chambers/Teams Meeting Hybrid

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sheila Smith, Co-chair Helga Huntley, Beth Chajes, Andrew O'Donnell, John Mateyko, Mikayla Rypkema

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

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:26 p.m.

(Secretary's note: the meeting began late because of a technical issue. Electric Director Bhadresh Patel was unable to participate, and it was decided that he would participate in the April meeting.)

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 8, 2022:

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MS. CHAJES: TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 8, 2022 MINUTES.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, CHAJES, O'DONNELL, SMITH, MATEYKO, RYPKEMA.
NAY: 0.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

3. CITY DEPARTMENT / SUSTAINABLE NEWARK

Ms. Smith shared with City Manager, Tom Coleman, that the Commission wanted to meet with department's that had some responsibility in the Sustainability Plan: Electric, Planning, Communications, Public Works, and the Police Department. She confirmed that Mr. Coleman set up the first meeting with the Electric Department and suggested that another participate at the April meeting. She continued that the point of the discussions was to address the progress the departments made towards the City's Sustainability Goals and the Police Department would pertain to the use of electric vehicles (EV) and perhaps anti-idling. She asked for Commissioner feedback.

Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Martindale would continue to provide an update sheet or if the updates would be given during the meetings by the department heads. Mr. Martindale explained that Mr. Coleman created the spreadsheet, but he would reach out about reinstating the updates and taking ownership.

Ms. Smith asked if it would be redundant to have a department representative attend and emphasized that she did not want to have an interrogation, just a conversation, because the CAC was tasked with monitoring the Plan. Mr. Martindale explained that his role was to serve as the City's liaison but of the issue was that questions were asked in real-time and he was not always prepared to provide answers. He suggested that if the questions were provided in advance, he would be able to meet with the departments and avoid paying a premium for overtime during the Commission meetings. He did not want to deter participation but cautioned once a year would be suitable.

Dr. Huntley thought it would be helpful for directors to participate in order to get direct input and perhaps allow the Commission to update the Sustainability Plan. She wanted the directors offer insight on points that were working well with the Plan, what was unrealistic, or what was missing. Mr. Martindale agreed, emphasized Mr. Coleman's support for the meetings, and suggested that the directors attend once a year to provide a general update; the questions could continue on a monthly basis.

Mr. O'Donnell added that once the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory was finalized, the Commission could directly address sources.

4. 2022 BUDGETARY SPENDING – JEFF MARTINDALE

Mr. Martindale reminded that there was a scramble at the end of the year on spending the remainder of the Commission's budget and he wanted to address spending opportunities earlier in the year. He wanted to poll about what would be worthwhile investments for the Commission as it pertained its budget and create a preliminary budget to keep on track to spend the money that was allocated. Ms. Smith asked if the budget had changed, and Mr. Martindale confirmed that it was still \$100,000 and reminded that the Commission had already committed \$8,590.88 for the Tree Giveaway; the remainder was \$91,155 for the year. He spoke to Mr. Spadafino earlier and learned that 81 trees had been given away out of the 155 purchased. Ms. Smith noted that Mr. Coleman suggested either adding more trees or hosting another event in the fall. Mr. Martindale confirmed that he had the same conversation with Mr. Spadafino who suggested expanding the current program by 40 trees because of supply issues. Mr. Martindale agreed that a fall event would be fruitful.

Ms. Smith asked for opinions on extending the program.

Dr. Huntley supported expanding the program but suggested that the Commission first have a discussion on its goals and then decide on possible budget spending to align with the goals.

Mr. Martindale explained that the City's accounting system allocated money from different pools distinctly and noted that what he previously presented was tied to the project rollup in the accounting system for EV charging stations. He clarified that staff labor and inventory were not captured and did come at an increased cost that was included in the original numbers. He noted that staff labor was budgeted elsewhere but reminded that consideration be given moving forward. He reported that the City spent \$98,000 in infrastructure to get the charging stations up to par and the Commission contributed \$20,835. Ms. Smith suggested the Commission consider a yearly contribution to further progress the initiative. Mr. Martindale clarified that any further expansions in the City lot would not incur such a high cost because the infrastructure was now in place but if there were plans to expand elsewhere, the projects would incur additional infrastructure costs.

Mr. O'Donnell attended a Delaware Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) meeting and learned that there were funds coming in for specific use towards municipal EV infrastructure. Mr. Martindale confirmed that he and Finance Director David Del Grande were closely monitoring the situation and decided to hold off on installing anything else until the Federal funding details were available; they wanted to determine if it was possible to leverage the funding to get more stations in place or lower the cost to the City.

Dr. Huntley asked if the \$100,000 was for the City's parking lot or also for Lot #1. Mr. Martindale replied that the cost included both and the six spots were three stations. Dr. Huntley stated that two stations were in the City lot, and one was at Lot #1. Mr. Martindale confirmed.

Dr. Huntley asked Mr. O'Donnell for a reminder on Energize Delaware. Mr. O'Donnell replied that Energize Delaware had a designated fund that would take any amount of money for the City. Dr. Huntley asked if a representative would be available to speak to the Commission and Mr. O'Donnell confirmed and suggested the fund could be a catch-all for remaining budget funding. Dr. Huntley thought a presentation would help the Commission decide on how to spend its funding. Mr. O'Donnell would reach out and send an invitation for a future meeting. Ms. Smith noted it was also possible for Federal funding for retrofitting, insulation, and windows for Energize Delaware so that residents would be able to winterize their homes and save energy.

5. ANNUAL REPORT DISCUSSION

Ms. Smith informed that she sent the annual report to the Commission the previous week and asked for feedback. Dr. Huntley explained that Ms. Smith tried to link all of the different achievements to specific goals from the Sustainability Plan, but some were missing so she made the edits. She asked if the intent was to still discuss the goals because she was hesitant to include the items at the end of the list. Ms. Smith stated that she had kept them on the list for sake of potential discussion; she forwarded the list to Mr. Coleman who then sent it to the Planning Department. She described the goals in question as being more Code related and she did not want the Commission to concentrate on initiatives that were already underway by the City. She received a response from the Planning Department and asked if it was possible to take more time to investigate how Mr. Mateyko's suggestions about trees, heat islands, permeable surfaces, parks, tree canopy, nature-based solutions for cooling, and heating and cooling systems related to the Green Building Code. She reported that there was currently no tree canopy mandate or requirement for permeable paving beyond the options in the Green Building Code. She shared that Mr. Coleman responded that in order for a plan to be approved, a developer had to earn 50 points under the Green Building Code. Dr. Huntley interjected that the nature-based solution discussions were covered under the Commission's Goal #5. Ms. Chajes noted that Goal #3 of tracking and regularly evaluating the City's progress should include a Planning Department staff member who worked on the Green Building Code. Ms. Smith agreed. Dr. Huntley noted that Will Hurd was on the Planning Commission and not a City staff member. Dr. Huntley suggested that after the Commission finalized the Goals, then members should volunteer for the goals to monitor. Ms. Smith agreed.

Ms. Chajes asked if the goal between 12 and 13 needed to be numbered and Ms. Smith confirmed. Ms. Chajes noted there were then 14 goals.

Dr. Huntley stated the only edit she had for the Annual Report was renumbering the goals: there were no substantive edits. Ms. Smith credited the completion of the report to the partnership of the Commission.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. MATEYKO: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION APPROVE THE ANNUAL REPORT SUBJECT TO CORRECTIONS OF THE NUMBERING OF THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN GOALS.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, CHAJES, O'DONNELL, SMITH, MATEYKO, RYPKEMA.
NAY: 0.

Dr. Huntley suggested assigning the goals to the members:

1. Continue outreach efforts, including Newark Post columns and tabling at public events as possible – **Sheila Smith**
2. Continue to develop collaborations with The Newark Partnership and the University of Delaware on environmental and educational initiatives – **Mikayla Rypkema**
3. Track and regularly evaluate the City's progress toward achieving its Sustainability Plan goals for Newark – **Monthly Agenda Item**
4. Continue to support the efforts to grow the City's tree canopy goal (SP goal 4.3) – **Sheila Smith**
5. Explore nature-based solutions to address Newark's vulnerability to urban heating and flooding (SP goals 4.3 and 4.5) – **John Mateyko**
6. Promote the use of electric cars by the City of Newark and by residents to reduce carbon emissions. (SP goal 2.3) – **Andrew O'Donnell**
7. Promote open space in Newark (SP goal 4.4) - **Group**
8. Develop and maintain a welcome packet for new CAC members, including FOIA compliance and training opportunities – **Helga Huntley**
9. Investigate actions to improve conditions for biodiversity within the City's boundaries (SP goal 4.4) – **Sheila Smith**
10. Urge City Council to form the Newark Energy Transition committee, so that we can get serious about transitioning to carbon-free energy. (SP goal 1.3) – **Andrew O'Donnell**
11. Use the forthcoming GHG inventory to formulate intermediate goals toward net-zero to propose to City Council. (SP goal 1.4) – **Group**
12. Establish next steps for the renewable energy program. (SP goal 1.1) – **Helga Huntley**
13. Support the development of solar energy within the city by organizing a Newark-based solar tour as part of the statewide Delaware Solar Tour event in October – **Beth Chajes**
14. Explore opportunities for Newark to participate in sustainability-related city coalitions e.g., Mayors & Municipal Leaders for Electrification, Ready for one hundred, RASCL (Resilient and Sustainable Communities League) – **Beth Chajes**

Ms. Smith shared that Dave Athey, AECOM, confirmed that nearly all components for the Greenhouse Gas Inventory were in place save for the issue with the Delmarva Power gas customers. She explained that the group attempted to use a formula to calculate but had been unsuccessful so they would reach out again to Delmarva for assistance. Mr. Martindale explained that there was difficulty in isolating the customers who lived within the City. Mr. O'Donnell commented that Delmarva would likely not want to share any information that would make them a target. Ms. Smith confirmed that Delmarva was unable to isolate data for customers within the City limits and Dr. Huntley revealed that there were statistical methods to overcome the issue and AECOM was capable. Ms. Smith further explained that Mr. Athey claimed that there was a flaw in using the square footage data from the City that was used in applying generalized gas usage rates because of duplications and misclassifications. Mr. Coleman authorized

AECOM to return to Delmarva to attempt another solution and then use the County data as a secondary solution. Mr. Mateyko doubted AECOM's strategy had been very successful because it appeared that the information was not forthcoming and doubted that there were no capable algorithms. Ms. Smith explained that the difficulty was not in determining gas usage, rather it was defining customers within City limits. She noted the City electric was only available to City residents, but Delmarva customers were all over. Ms. Chajes added that sorting by zip code was also inaccurate. Mr. Mateyko suggested that staff speak with the Public Utilities Commission for a response because it was important to know to whom gas was being sold. He noted that once the gas system was installed, it was expensive for customers to switch, and they were locked in. He thought the situation was unfair because the Commission had a responsibility and if it was clear that something was not sustainable, then the Commission should make a clear statement that gas would not be a positive point when selling a home. Ms. Smith noted that Mr. Mateyko's argument was not within the Commission's purview; it was necessary for AECOM to complete the inventory and they had been requested by Mr. Coleman to return to Delmarva to try to get more data. Mr. Mateyko wanted to fully inform homeowners of the impacts of installing gas in their homes.

Dr. Huntley interjected that Delmarva was not allowed to share personal information and could not divulge how much gas a home used; therefore, they could not provide AECOM with an address-by-address account for gas usage and so had to aggregate it. She continued that Delmarva's database did not keep track of a customer's city and it might be impossible to extract the data needed by AECOM to complete the inventory. She did not want to suspect Delmarva of devious motives and suggested that it might not have been a consideration to keep track of customers by political boundaries. She explained that AECOM needed to downscale the data statistically. Ms. Rypkema asked if Delmarva's information was separated by businesses and Ms. Smith explained that AECOM was asking for all customers. Dr. Huntley confirmed that the inventory was to cover all greenhouse gas emissions throughout the City. Ms. Smith informed Ms. Rypkema that the Commission helped to fund the inventory which was part of the City's Sustainability Plan and had been underway for six months.

6. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST

- March – Cooling/Summerizing – John Mateyko
- April - Eastern Box Turtle Habitat Conservation – Jean Hedrich
- May – Lawn Equipment and Greenhouse Gases – Beth Chajes
- June – Hillside Park and its Plantings – Sheila Smith
- July – Renewable Energy Program/City Solar Update – Andrew O'Donnell
- August – Reservoir Plantings/Clover Lawns

Ms. Smith was in receipt of Ms. Hedrich's article and informed that Mr. Mateyko wrote instead on cooling and summerizing instead of WasteWell/Food Recycling. Ms. Chajes offered to write an article for May on the output of greenhouse gases on lawn equipment and Mr. O'Donnell offered to forward resources. Ms. Smith emphasized that the subject was controversial because people opted to use leaf blowers as a timesaving measure, but she argued that the point should be to reduce lawns and use electric equipment. She admitted that manufacturers were migrating away from detrimental equipment and revealed that she asked if AECOM could incorporate the City's mower emissions into the GHG report but learned that the City did not currently keep track of the information that would have been usable. Ms. Smith assumed that blowers did not burn cleanly, and Mr. O'Donnell informed that two-stroke mowers burned oil.

Ms. Chajes reminded that former Commissions had written articles summarizing the annual report accomplishments. Ms. Smith suggested the topic be covered in June. Ms. Scheld asked if the Commission had ever covered clover lawns and Dr. Huntley did not recall.

Mr. Martindale shared that the City was planting at the reservoir and the final walkthrough for McKee's was scheduled for the upcoming week although staff still had to get the meter online. He explained that staff debated leaving the groundcover at the reservoir as grass. Ms. Chajes asked if he was speaking about under the new solar panels and Mr. Martindale confirmed that the City had a mowing contract for the area that would be slightly more expensive because the addition of the panels meant that the area had to be cut by hand. In response, staff discussed planting white clover, which was endorsed by KCI, the solar project manager through Seiberlich-Trane, and had successfully planted elsewhere in the country. Ms. Chajes asked if the clover supported pollinators. Mr. Martindale said that staff had only begun preliminary research and were looking to add it to the 2023 budget but confirmed that a more detailed investigation would take place.

Dr. Huntley asked if the discussions were for future plantings and the current grass would remain in the meantime and Mr. Martindale confirmed. Ms. Smith asked if it was possible to let the grass grow, and Mr. Martindale confirmed but reiterated that the area would need a more frequent mowing cycle because of a concern of the grass blocking the panels. Mr. O'Donnell suggested using sheep as was common in Europe and Mr. Martindale knew of a facility in the area that used sheep in its solar panel field. Mr. O'Donnell suggested reaching out to see if the sheep could be rented out. Dr. Huntley replied to Ms. Chajes' question and answered that clover was typically great for honeybees. Ms. Smith pointed that bees were less active in the shade and informed that the plantings at Hillside Park was nearly 100% native. Mr. Martindale noted that many large projects were upcoming, and the Hillside Park plantings would be done within the next month.

7. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

8. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Smith asked that the NET discussion be added to the agenda. She briefly explained the Commission's joint venture with UD's Sustainability Council and The Newark Partnership for Lights Out, which assisted migratory birds. Ms. Rypkema knew some members of the UD Sustainability Council and Lights Out had also been mentioned in some of her classes. Ms. Smith explained that efforts were underway to get more participants to help monitor from ornithology classes and clubs.

- **COMMUNITY DAY – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2022**

Ms. Smith requested the item be added to the April agenda and Ms. Chajes offered to review previous plans from previous years. Ms. Smith shared that former Commission Chair George Irvine delivered two boxes of materials from prior events.

9. NEXT MEETING – APRIL 12, 2022

Ms. Smith asked members to review minutes from the May 2020 meeting to recreate the suggestions for the NET members.

Mr. Martindale revealed he received an email from the Newark Center for Creative Learning (NCCL)

during the meeting that invited the Commission to be a \$1,000 sponsor-level for the Kids' Greenfest on April 9th. He explained that CAC was welcomed to host an informational booth at the event where members of the Commission could share their connections with the environment and the City. He read:

Sustainability is a journey for each of us. While some are able to make large changes like installing a solar energy system, most of us are beginning to examine small but substantive ways to leave less of an impact on our environment. Who better to help lead us on this journey than our children?

Dr. Huntley shared that the event was from 11 am to 3 pm. Mr. Martindale informed that a Green Sponsorship level would add the CAC logo to the school even page for its website, two dedicated Facebook posts with the logo from the Greenfest Event page, an invitation to host a booth, and a logo added to the day-of-event signage. He likened the event to Community Day and suggested it might be a good idea to help children learn conservation early. He explained that the funds needed to be allocated that evening because the event would take place before the next meeting. Dr. Huntley asked for the amount and Mr. Martindale replied that there were different sponsor levels. Ms. Smith asked how the funds would be used and Mr. Martindale was unsure but assumed they would be used towards the school or the event itself. He continued that the Green Sponsor was \$500 - \$1,499, the Sustainability Sponsor was \$1,500 - \$2,000, and the Lead Sponsor was \$2,500 and above. He explained that Lead Sponsor included mentions on the radio and other advertising. Dr. Huntley noted that the event had not been an in-person event for a few years, but it had always been very well-attended when she went. She informed that it was primarily attended by families that had some sort of link to NCCL or their friends and the target audience was children so the Commission's informational booth should be an activity for children. Mr. O'Donnell asked if the Commission could borrow one of the City's Nissan LEAFs and Mr. Martindale believed the request was feasible; he added that Jayme Gravell might attend the event and be a good point of contact.

Ms. Smith reminded that it had been practice for the Commission to have some sort of interactive activity at its booths. She asked for volunteers to attend - Mr. O'Donnell and Ms. Chajes stepped forward. Mr. Martindale said that he would follow up on the details. Ms. Smith wanted to have more details about what would be done with the funding, but Mr. O'Donnell interjected that the sponsorship sounded like a good investment for children's' education. Ms. Chajes pointed that the Commission supported two other elementary schools last year with its funding.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION ALLOCATED \$1,0000 OF ITS 2022 BUDGET TO SUPPORT NCCL'S KIDS' GREENFEST IN APRIL.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 6 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, CHAJES, O'DONNELL, SMITH, MATEYKO, RYPKEMA.
NAY: 0.

Mr. O'Donnell said that he would bring his own electric vehicle and Ms. Smith would bring anti-idling information because the school did not have a sign and the parents idled during pick up. Dr. Huntley informed that a popular activity was a pinwheel where children were able to answer trivia questions and possibly receive a prize. Ms. Chajes believed that she owned a pinwheel and would look for it. Ms. Smith offered to reach out to the principal to determine appropriate activities.

Dr. Huntley asked if the Commission had the design for the anti-idling cards that she could distribute.

Ms. Smith agreed it was time to reinstate the effort. Ms. Chajes reminded that the Commission used Vista Print in the past and Ms. Gravell could help order the cards. Mr. Martindale interjected that he would order the cards once the design was finalized. Ms. Smith reminded that the cards had a negative tone and Dr. Huntley agreed that it should be redesigned to something positive. Mr. Martindale volunteered for Ms. Gravell to help redesign the cards.

Ms. Smith added that the booth could also have QR codes linking to the Conservation Corner articles for Community Day. Dr. Huntley recalled that the Commission used to ask Community Day attendees to list their priorities which could also be fun to do with the children.

MOTION BY MR. MATEYKO, SECONDED MS. CHAJES: TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Nichol Scheld
Administrative Professional I

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