

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 8, 2022

MEETING CONVENED: 7:01 p.m. Council Chambers/Teams Meeting Hybrid

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beth Chajes, Andrew O'Donnell, Mahi Palanisami, Helga Huntley, Sheila Smith (Presiding)

ABSENT: John Mateyko, Lauren O'Connor, Mikayla Rypkema

STAFF: Jeffrey Martindale, Chief Purchasing & Personnel Officer
Nichol Scheld, Deputy City Secretary
Joe Spadafino, Director of Parks and Recreation

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 AND OCTOBER 11, 2022:

MOTION BY MS. CHAJES, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: THE APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 13, 2022, MINUTES.

MOTION FAILED. VOTE 4-0

AYE: CHAJES, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: MATEYKO, O'CONNOR, RYPKEMA.

ABSTAINED: HUNTLEY.

Dr. Huntley chose to abstain because she was not at the September meeting and cannot verify if the minutes were accurate.

Dr. Huntley requested a modification to be made on page 3, the beginning of the third paragraph which summarized a statement made by Dr. Huntley. Dr. Huntley felt the language was too strong and requested for it to be written as: Dr. Huntley asked Mr. Cohen to justify there were no considerations.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MS. CHAJES: THE APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 11, 2022, MINUTES AS AMENDED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5-0

AYE: CHAJES, HUNTLEY, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: MATEYKO, O'CONNOR, RYPKEMA.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

3. AMENDMENT TO INCLUDE THE DEFINITION OF “CONSERVATION AREA” IN CODE – Joe Spadafino

Mr. Spadafino discussed the ordinance amending Chapter 2, Article IIV, of the Parks and Recreation Code within the City of Newark’s definition of “Conservation Areas”. Mr. Spadafino spoke with Councilmember Suchanec about several requests Mr. Suchanec received from residents who lived along the Christina Valley Stream area and wanted to have some trees and foliage cleared. The residents also asked why the trail was not paved. Mr. Spadafino spoke with Mr. Suchanec about defining the intent of the area in the eyes of the City.

Mr. Spadafino explained that the State had wildlife habitat designations and discussions with the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) determined that the areas within the City’s parklands and open space did not qualify for said designation. After further discussions involving the City Manager, staff decided to call the area a “Conservation Area” as there were no State qualifications for such a designation but the City would need to provide a definition of a “Conservation Area” within Code before assigning the designation. Mr. Spadafino circulated an email to the Commission which outlined two areas of interest that could receive the designation: the Christina Valley Stream, which was approximately four to five miles from the Rittenhouse Park to Church Road, and Dorothy Miller Park. He shared staff’s proposed language:

“A conservation areas is a tract of land that has been awarded protective status by the City of Newark in order to ensure that natural features, cultural heritage or biota are safeguarded. A conservation area may be a park, open space or other tracts of land that are owned by the City. Conservation Areas protect forests, wetlands, plant life, wildlife, and improve the overall health of our watersheds, including the quality and supply of the water resources such as recharge areas.”

Mr. Spadafino explained that there would be no changes to the maintenance of the area and the designation would help individuals recognize that conservation areas were to remain in their natural state as much as possible and that the areas would not be maintained as other parks throughout the City. He reiterated that trail maintenance throughout the area would be minimal and cutbacks would keep the trail easements passable but there would be no clearing of trees or brush unless safety concerns arose. He wanted the Commission to be aware of the City’s intent before going before Council.

Ms. Smith requested that “a tract of land has been awarded protective status” to defined what “protective status” meant. She believed that something would have to change because if “things” to be safeguarded were “living things” then they would need to be managed. Ms. Smith had not been in the Dorothy Miller Park but had been to the Christina Stream Valley along the Timber Line Drive area and observed many invasive plant species. She had been working in Phillips Park to remove invasive species and believed that if the City was going to protect forests and plant life, staff needed to address invasive species because if native species were lost to invasive species, wildlife would be lost except for English Sparrows and House Finches.

Ms. Smith addressed the portion: “to improve the overall health of the watersheds...” and noted there was barely a riparian buffer in places in the neighborhood and none on Westside looking across to

the Timber Line area; residents were mowing all the way down to the stream. She assumed residents liked the view of the stream, but it was not the best thing for a stream bank, wildlife, or clean water. She was also concerned about a lack of native species and that English Ivy was rampant in the area and smothering other plants. She had been removing English Ivy from Phillips Park and found nothing alive under the ivy. She requested that “managed” be added to address invasive species and asked if riparian buffers were County or State law and a member indicated the buffers were City law.

Ms. Chajes believed the purpose of the designation and definition of a “Conservation Area” was to inform the public of what could and could not be done if a residence was adjacent to a protected area and Mr. Spadafino confirmed. Ms. Chajes found “protective status” too loose a phrase as it did not specifically prohibit cutting down trees or growing grass to the edge. She requested more examples of other common actions that were prohibited. Mr. Spadafino explained that there were some areas where only parts of the land fall under the Conservation Areas designation. Ms. Chajes noted that Mr. Suchanec would be able to show concerned residents where Code protected certain areas and explain which actions were prohibited.

Ms. Smith agreed with Ms. Chajes that specific concerns should be precisely addressed and people should not be allowed to plant non-native, invasive species or dump yard waste. Mr. Spadafino informed the specifications were already in the park rules and regulations. Ms. Smith asked the rules and regulations needed to be revisited to be more specific. Dr. Huntley believed that the rules and regulations were not being enforced and understood that residents were not allowed to plant anything in a City park without explicit permission from the City.

Ms. Smith recalled working with Mr. Spadafino on the Tree Committee and wanted to have specific language for the rules so that Mr. Suchanec could explain them to residents without having to go into more detail because she found did not believe the rules were obvious. Mr. Spadafino did not believe it was the responsibility of Council to police the areas. Ms. Smith clarified that the language was not clear that mowing to the edge or clearing away trees was prohibited. Mr. Spadafino explained that the initiative was to first add the designation to Code and then further explanation or expansion of the description could be a separate item to be developed. Staff planned a press release to explain conservation areas but there was no way to compose a release that precisely encompassed all of the rules.

Dr. Huntley agreed with some of Ms. Smith’s concerns and asked if the ordinance was motivated because people were confused about how the Christina Valley Stream Park was being managed; she did not believe anything in the new addition of Code would change that and changing the name of the type of area did not indicate how a park was different from a Conservation Area. She felt the aspects that confused people were not addressed and she was not sure that it would serve the intended purpose. She suggested explaining some of the actions that would be prohibited in Code.

Ms. Chajes stated that people had different ideas about what would enhance a natural area without knowing what was natural to the actual area.

Mr. O’Donnell agree with previous comments.

Dr. Huntley stated that “in order to ensure that natural features, cultural heritage or biota is safeguarded” were not compatible goals. At the last meeting, the Commission was asked to support cultural heritage conservation which might not be consistent with natural conservation. She asked if it would be better to protect cultural heritage in a different way than by including it with conserving natural

resources. She argued that if a historic building was to be conserved then leaving the vegetation and trees contradicted the conservation of the building but if the goal was to conserve the natural area, then the verbiage made sense. She suggested there should be a different management approach for each item and recommended a “Conservation Area” and a “Cultural Conservation Area” or a “Cultural Heritage site”.

Ms. Chajes appreciated staff’s efforts because the initiative was necessary. Mr. Spadafino added that Parks and Recreation worked with Public Works and City Solicitor.

Ms. Smith requested that “native plant life”, “protective status” and “native wildlife” be added to the definition section listed before the actual Code. Mr. Spadafino agreed and would expand on the term “maintenance” and what it should include, such as removal of invasives. He revealed there were over 700 acres of parkland and credited Ms. Smith’s volunteer efforts to Phillips Park and leading volunteers but indicated there was not enough staff to do all the work. Ms. Smith stated that it was important for people to understand the importance of the Christina Stream Valley.

Dr. Huntley pointed out that there was not specific language to the prohibition of planting in the parks and asked for language to be added that plants could not be added without permission; the current Code read that people were not allowed to deface or injury plantings already there.

Ms. Smith wanted the riparian buffers to be enforced and Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Spadafino had suggestions on how to make progress on the topic. She reminded that the CAC provided some education through its column, and she understood that the Stormwater Management Team on City staff had also provided some educational outreach through its activities, but all efforts had not solved the problem along the upper Christina. Mr. Spadafino admitted the task was difficult and acknowledged that the Public Works Department provided some educational mailings in the past.

Ms. Smith asked for suggestions on how to make public education conservation workshops better attended; the workshops could cover conservation principals for a protected status of a conservation area such as riparian buffers, removal of invasives, native plants and native wildlife, which the Commission covered in its Conservation Corner articles.

Dr. Huntley thought the CAC could produce a flyer for residents bordering the area of the Christina Valley Stream being designated a “Conservation Area” to explain the significance because she did not believe many residents read City Code.

Mr. Spadafino stated that once approved by Council, staff would post signs to designate the “City of Newark Conservation Area” along the Valley Stream and other areas to notify visitors they were in a conservation area. He informed that the Newark Post would also be invited, and staff would issue a press release and circulate promotional material.

Dr. Huntley asked for the anticipated timeline and if the adoption would coincide with the designation of the two parks. Mr. Spadafino was unsure if it would be presented to Council before the end of the year, so staff hoped for early 2023. He added that the language would be written so the Parks and Recreation Department would not have to present to Council upon each new designation.

4. NEWARK REBATE ENHANCEMENT – EFFICIENCY SMART – Tom Coyle and Scott Lynch

Scott Lynch, Vice President of Asset Development for the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation (DEMEC), was asked to provide the Commission with information on enhanced rebates because the organization already supported an energy efficiency program within the City. He informed that Newark was one of eight DEMEC members and informed the other seven had similar programs. He explained that an enhanced rebate was an additional rebate added to existing rebates issued by the City to promote a particular technology or effort. He stated that examples were given to the Commission prior to the meeting and explained that if a resident purchased a certified refrigerator, an Efficiency Smart rebate could be \$50, and then an additional rebate could be \$100 for a total rebate of \$150.

Tom Coyle, Efficiency Smart, stated that the group had worked with Oberlin, Ohio, and likened Oberlin to Newark in size and climate action goals. He continued that while trying to increase the participation on the residential level as opposed to commercial landlords, Efficiency Smart strategically guided residents to replace heat pumps and water heaters with electric units to have a cleaner energy portfolio which decreased GHG (greenhouse gas) issues by using electricity versus natural gas. He revealed that Efficiency Smart updated its yearly distributed incentives and presented Oberlin's flyer which depicted the rate and additional rebate rate, and then explained a high-level overview of the program. Ms. Smith and Dr. Huntley requested clarification and Mr. Coyle explained the program automatically provided a \$50 rebate if a resident purchased a qualified energy star refrigerator. The resident would then complete an application proving status as an Oberlin electric customer. Finally, Efficiency Smart notified Oberlin which residents were eligible for the "super" rebate and Oberlin would pay out the additional set rebate. The program helped residents overcome cost barriers and encouraged energy efficiency while lowering GHG emissions.

Ms. Chajes was doubtful that a two-stage process would be enticing for the customer and asked why it could not be a one step process. Mr. Coyle explained that the customer was only required to complete the initial application not the secondary fund, which would be handled internally between Efficiency Smart and the participating community. He informed that Efficiency Smart was not able to distribute on the City's or Commission's behalf. He clarified that the customer would not be impacted by having to reapply and would receive two checks. Ms. Chajes noted the City would have to issue the second check and Mr. Lynch confirmed. Mr. Coyle explained that Oberlin dispersed funds quarterly to a local grassroots nonprofit that performed door to door campaigns to relay various programs to residents and issued the additional rebate.

Dr. Huntley asked if the City would be able to staff a similar program and if there were partners with which to engage. Mr. Martindale assumed the anticipated volume was feasible, but the Finance Department would need to be consulted and warned there may also be an administrative burden but issuing checks quarterly could possibly reduce the volume of work.

Mr. O'Donnell suggested the City pledge to double the amount of rebate funds now, review how much usage occurred over the next year, and then pay the tab the following year.

Mr. Martindale stated a discussion and vote in January was feasible because the City was between fiscal years which led to additional administrative constraints. He explained that if funds were allocated into a separate account for the program, it should be done so at a fixed dollar amount for the current year which would allow additional flexibility for which year to place it in. He continued that if the vote occurred in January and passed to be doubled for the year, it would not be \$100,000; there would need to be a grand tally in November. Mr. Coyle added the program had been in place for twelve years and historical data could be provided to the Commission.

Ms. Smith asked if Efficiency Smart was asking the Commission to provide the funds needed to double existing rebates. Mr. Coyle confirmed, and the amount would be slightly over \$10,000 over three years. He added that the program had been in Newark for three years but twelve years in its entirety. Ms. Smith questioned Efficiency Smart's funding capacity and Mr. Coyle explained that Efficiency Smart had budgets in place because it was not typical to have an exorbitant number of customers making large ticket purchases at once. He pointed out that in comparison, Oberlin recently renewed fifth three-year contract. Further, Oberlin was 25% of Newark in size, roughly achieved the same dollar for dollar rebate match as Newark.

Ms. Smith felt there would be a lack of interest given the limitations on which models were available for the rebate and viewed the program as one for residents with more disposable income than others. Mr. Coyle agreed to an extent but emphasized that the Inflation Reduction Act would have a positive effect because it was an income qualified program so there would be funds available for customers to upgrade residential electrical service to accommodate upgraded appliances. Ms. Smith asked if Efficiency Smart was asking for the Commission to add \$10,000 to double the rebates program. Mr. Lynch explained that Efficiency Smart was asked to introduce concepts to the Commission and Mr. Coyle added that the option was not currently being discussed in any other DEMEC community. Mr. Lynch suggested that the Commission promote the program and explained that residents could sign up online for newsletters. Ms. Smith noticed the promotions on her monthly electric bill.

Dr. Huntley asked if Oberlin had an increase in usage of the program after the increase in incentives. Mr. Coyle revealed there was roughly a 30% increase; heat pumps and cold climate heat pumps were added to the program in 2020, and Oberlin had roughly three or four cold climate heat pumps purchased each year. Dr. Huntley asked if the increased incentives made a difference and Mr. Coyle offered to reach out to his Oberlin contact to verify but he unaware of anyone expressing unhappiness with the program. Mr. Lynch explained that the question was difficult as some of the purchases were a natural consideration for homeowners and a rebate with a bonus added to the decision to make the purchase.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if there had been a percentage increase in enrollment or applications with the percentage increase in the "super" fund. Mr. Coyle confirmed but explained that Oberlin was learning that 30% growth was not necessarily 30% more in dollars, it was 30% more rebates being provided. Mr. O'Donnell asked how much of a percentage in growth would there need to be in funding with a 30% growth in rebates. Mr. Coyle would have to investigate but pointed out that the comparison was difficult because large rebates were being paid currently that were not being paid earlier, such as heat pumps. He believed the result could be a 42% increase in dollars due to the larger amounts being paid out for newly added items.

Mr. Martindale explained that if the City were to increase the rebates to Ms. Smith's earlier point, lower to moderate income households could be prompted to utilize the program and he believed Efficiency Smart to be a natural fit to expand the program because of its existing working program with the City. Ms. Smith requested that more informational ads be placed on the electric bills circulated to residents, but Mr. Martindale believed the rebate program was advertised consistently on the bills and social media. He informed that he worked with Mr. Coyle and Mr. Lynch to target customers during specific times of the year and suggested to cover the topic in a monthly Conservation Article.

Additionally, Mr. Coyle offered Efficiency Smart's to provide the Commission with more information on the program, the promotion of others, and to complete research where needed. Dr. Huntley asked for direct contacts and Mr. Coyle volunteered himself and Mr. Lynch; he added that Mr. Martindale could also forward any questions.

Dr. Huntley asked if Oberlin was the only municipality to increase the rebates and Mr. Coyle confirmed. Mr. Lynch clarified that the Commission would oversee the funds, and Efficiency Smart would take direction on what area to target such as cold climate heat pumps or thermostats; the Commission could also impose timeframes on incentives.

Mr. Lynch explained that when Oberlin began its program, the rebates had doubled and tripled. In preparation for the conversation with the Commission, he asked Oberlin staff for its thought process. He learned that there were some products with summer coincidental peak savings that were better so it would help the city lower its transmission and capacity cost as a utility and, after internal calculation, the city found that some rebates could be doubled or tripled. Mr. Lynch explained that there were five "coincidental" peaks during the summertime where the regional grid added everyone and was what DEMEC was judged on for its cost of capacity.

Dr. Huntley recalled that the Commission recommended that Council adopt the higher value option for the Efficiency Smart program, but Council learned that the cost and energy savings would be spread out amongst all the DEMEC communities and would not directly come back to Newark. She asked if Mr. Coyle's strategy would also be spread out among the communities, or if the City would specifically benefit as the catalyst causing the decrease. Mr. Lynch explained that if a program was enacted to reduce a peak, then it would be spread out to everyone and noted that Milford installed a 15-megawatt solar facility which benefitted Newark. He emphasized that one benefit was growth and its impact on the infrastructure. He added that the City could avoid upgrades and certain maintenance if it was more energy efficient which could provide a direct savings to the City. He noted that Newark had been the only City which used its Green Energy Fund to provide individual grants to residents and, if Newark decided to be a leader in the movement, it could be seen as a positive example to other municipalities to mimic the program.

Mr. Lynch reiterated that Efficiency Smart was invited to describe ways to offer proven ways to offer larger incentives to customers, above and beyond Efficiency Smart's current offer, and for the Commission to consider if the additional rebates for participants in the Efficiency Smart program was an appropriate use of its funding. Mr. Coyle explained that Efficiency Smart's current rebate for thermostats was \$100 on its online store or for purchases from retailers. He informed that Efficiency Smart was hosting a Black Friday promotion at the end of the month where a device could essentially be free to the customer between Efficiency Smart's rebates and additional manufacturer rebates. He explained that Efficiency Smart would only reimburse the purchase price after a manufacturer rebate so that no one was making money off the program.

Mr. Martindale asked if there was a way to increase a rebate amount for just low- to moderate-income customers. Mr. Coyle explained that Efficiency Smart did not want to income qualify customers and to do so would require that income verification tools be put into place.

5. REMAINING CAC FUNDING OPTIONS – Helga Huntley and Andrew O'Donnell

Mr. O'Donnell reminded that the Commission needed to make the final decision on its final spending for 2022. He wanted to fund a program that would make the most impact on climate change and help low- to moderate-income households by putting funds towards Energize Delaware to reach the goal.

Ms. Smith assumed the Commission only needed to indicate where to apply the funds and Dr. Huntley clarified that after reading the minutes and recalling previous conversations, the Commission was being asked to design the program and Energize Delaware would administer the funds. Ms. Smith asked if it was necessary or possible for the Commission to design the program. Mr. O'Donnell stated that at the bare minimum, the Commission would provide the funds to Energize Delaware to administer the funds as necessary or the Commission could specify which projects to target and/or propose ideas. Ms. Smith asked if the CAC could place terms upon the distribution of funds after the funds were provided to Efficiency Smart, but Dr. Huntley stated the terms would have to be set before the funds were provided to Efficiency Smart. Ms. Smith asked for the September minutes to review the previous conversation and Ms. Scheld pointed out that there were discussions in September and October.

Dr. Huntley suggested hiring a consultant to perform education outreach to target low-income neighborhoods. Mr. O'Donnell stated using funds to pay a consultant would result in less funds to distribute. Dr. Huntley countered that if no one knew about the funds, then they would not be used at all. Ms. Chajes read from previous minutes, "Mr. Martindale believed that Energize Delaware was capable of outreach efforts inhouse." Ms. Chajes recalled Energize Delaware's offer to setup community meetings if the Commission wanted to target a specific area.

Ms. Smith preferred to provide funding to Energize Delaware because of their goals and, because the money came from the City, it would make sense to try to reach more people with the impact; Energize Delaware focused on low- to moderate-income household education. Dr. Huntley thought it was illogical to target a small percentage of people as the money came from the entire community and suggested the program to target the people who needed assistance the most.

Ms. Smith advised that the conversation had been an ongoing discussion since 2021 and the Commission had been researching options that would help low- to moderate-income households reduce energy and energy costs. Dr. Huntley asked what Energize Delaware's footprint was within the City and whether providing the funds would allow expansion of the current program offered in the City or necessitate the creation of an entirely new program.

Mr. O'Donnell recalled that if funds were given to Energize Delaware, then the organization would use the funds for the residents of Newark. Ms. Smith added that the Commission wanted the organization to target a specific part of the population which was already practice. Mr. O'Donnell stated that everyone who paid their electric bills had the same green energy fund at the same rate so even though a household might be a "high" earner, the rate would be a very small part of their income whereas a "lower" earner at the same rate would pay a larger proportion of their income.

Dr. Huntley wanted a clear answer as to whether Energize Delaware had a footprint in Newark or if the opportunity would give them a footprint in Newark because she recalled only examples from Rehoboth and Milford. Mr. Martindale believed that Energize Delaware did have charges from the State to prompt programs statewide, but he had not researched their specific footprint. He assumed there was a mandate that would require Energize Delaware to already be performing work in Newark to some extent.

Dr. Huntley noted that while Energize Delaware had a mandate to perform work in Newark, she did not believe the organization had much of an impact and was concerned if providing more funding would make them more effective.

Ms. Smith asked Mr. Martindale for direction. Mr. Martindale advised that the Commission had relatively 50% of its funding available and pointed out that the Commission had accomplished several projects with its funding such as tree give-way programs, the solar feasibility study for City Hall, the Dickey Park Community Garden, and that GHG inventory. He reminded that the Commission directed funding for several small projects that would impact the community the most.

Mr. Martindale explained that if there were no decisions made during the meeting regarding the remaining \$50,000, then the funds would be absorbed back into the electric reserves. Ms. Smith asked if the Commission could designate where to place the funds if returned to the City and Mr. Martindale explained that if the Commission wanted to proceed with Efficiency Smart and designate the money towards a super rebate program, the funds would be set aside specifically for the use instead of returning to the electric reserve account. Ms. Smith asked for next steps if the Commission had not settled on specific uses for Efficiency Smart. Mr. Martindale stated that should the Commission move forward with allocating funding, then the most appropriate way would be for the Commission to set aside funds and Mr. Martindale would present a proposal to the Commission. Dr. Huntley asked if the same could be done with Energize Delaware, Mr. Martindale believed in theory that could be done.

Ms. Smith asked if it would be possible to provide each organization with a portion of the funds and then have Mr. Martindale provide each with the specific guidelines and programs to be offered within the City. Ms. Chajes added the Commission could then determine which organization did the most with its allocation and then the Commission would know how to proceed the following year.

Mr. Martindale explained that the City typically did not issue purchase orders in December which was why funding needed to be decided in November with the assumption that each idea was considered an individual purchase. The Commission could essentially set aside money internally for Efficiency Smart and then provide a check to Energize Delaware to continue its current program. In the end, only the conversation be in December because the Commission would not be writing a check to any entity that month.

Mr. Martindale felt more comfortable with Efficiency Smart because he had more personal experience with them and if Commission wanted to work with Energize Delaware, he the Commission request a proposal. Ms. Smith asked if Mr. Martindale could request the proposal and Mr. Martindale would place the request on his calendar for early 2023.

Ms. Smith asked if the Commission should provide the funds now and adjust guidelines later. Mr. Martindale preferred to wait for another discussion in December and possibly provide \$10,000 because the amount had been provided to organization over the last three years and would enable the Commission to track the progress.

Dr. Huntley stated the Commission had been discussing Energize Delaware for over a year because they had not been able to agree on working plan. She thought the Commission should consider providing a small grant to see how the organization used the funds, then the Commission would review the results for a possible larger allocation in the following year.

Ms. Smith and Mr. Martindale agreed with Dr. Huntley's suggestion, but Mr. Martindale was not sure if he would have enough time within the next month to schedule Energize Delaware to present to the Commission in December. He asked Dr. Huntley what dollar amount was preferred and Dr. Huntley and Ms. Smith agreed on \$10,000.

Ms. Chajes read from her notes "they said they have the Help Initiative which can canvas to get word out about programs"; she wanted to help the City advertise but felt that the Commission was small, and she could not see the Commissioners going door to door and Ms. Smith pointed out that it was not the Commission's responsibility to go door to door. Mr. Martindale advised that the Communications Department performed the social media pushes and suggested to have a QR code for Efficiency Smart at Community Day at the Commission's table. Ms. Smith wanted to have reminders about Community Day sent out three times a year instead of once. Mr. O'Donnell informed that he chose to go paperless with his billing and there was not an informational ad at the bottom of his bill referencing Efficiency Smart when he downloaded the PDF of his bill.

Dr. Huntley did not believe that doubling or tripling the rebates with Efficiency Smart would be effective for the Commission because the rebates were already quite sizeable for some of the cheaper objects but if the Commission wanted to go with the Efficiency Smart program, she would be in favor of targeting large ticket items where an extra rebate would make the most impact, such as an extra rebate for a heat pump. Ms. Smith noted the systems were over \$13,000 and, in some instances, original pieces need to be replaced which ended up increasing the cost of the project.

Mr. Martindale mentioned that since the Commission would be managing the second part of the rebate, they could build it into the program to cover a certain amount of the conversion process. Ms. Smith recalled that Mr. Coyle stated that they could put a time limit on the rebate for when the deal ended. Dr. Huntley questioned the time restriction because investing in a heat pump could be a big decision, and might not be something a household could decide on within a month.

Ms. Smith stated the organization was very specific on what models were accepted. Mr. O'Donnell explained that when he used the program for his refrigerator and water heater, the program appeared to closely follow the Energy Star list. Ms. Chajes felt that the heat pump was a very contractor-driven product brand and type. Ms. Smith informed that the brand was not restricted if it had certain qualifications for a SEER (seasonal energy efficiency rating). Dr. Huntley revealed there were ten pages of information regarding which heat pumps were available and over 39,000 models were listed.

Mr. O'Donnell approved of both programs but noted one negative with Efficiency Smart was that a renter might not purchase a refrigerator or heat pump but Energize Delaware could lower their energy expenses. Ms. Smith noted the process would only work if the renter worked for the landlord. Mr. O'Donnell stated that if the residence was insulated then there would be an energy savings.

Ms. Palanisami admitted the whole process was complicated in the United States and she took issue with needing to understand the entire entity. She continued that by only considering houses, a home would have to be sealed first and then evaluated for electric efficiency. If a home was not sealed, it would be pointless to have an efficient system because any cooled air or heat would escape out of a leaky window. She believed that Energize Delaware considered the bigger picture and pushed against the model of the United States.

Ms. Smith proposed to award a grant to both programs per the feedback and points provided by both Mr. O'Donnell and Dr. Huntley; the Commission needed to determine the dollar amount to distribute to each program and then clarify guidelines. Mr. Martindale suggested to flip the order of Ms. Smith's proposal.

Dr. Huntley clarified that the Commission could allocate 2022 money into a fund that would be spent in 2023 for increased rebates through Efficiency Smart, Mr. Martindale confirmed the move could occur if the funds were designated properly at the time the transfer. Dr. Huntley clarified that with Energize Delaware, if the Commission decided to reserve some money to fund programs through Energize Delaware, it was not clear on how the funds would be used. Mr. Martindale stated that would be a fair decision as he did not feel comfortable that the Commission had enough information to designate the funding.

Dr. Huntley asked if other options were available. Mr. Martindale recalled discussions about feasibility study for solar canopies and Mr. O'Donnell stated the Commission voted on the issue the previous month. Dr. Huntley asked if there were any options available for the rest of the money left in the budget of the Commission, but Mr. Martindale did not believe there were other options to consider.

Dr. Huntley was not eager to spend \$50,000 altogether. Ms. Smith interjected that it was a small amount. Dr. Huntley proposed to designate some of the funds towards Efficiency Smart to target climate control and water heater heat pumps; she also proposed seed money funding for Energize Delaware so the Commission could review any successes. She was comfortable with not spending the entire remainder of the budget; Ms. Smith agreed and suggested small amounts because each program was an experiment for the Commission.

Mr. Martindale suggested to provide each group with \$10,000 with a clause of "pending additional staff review" in case research proved the investment was not worthwhile. Ms. Chajes wanted to give Energize Delaware more direction on the range of options as Efficiency Smart had a very defined mission.

Ms. Chajes stated the group was known for their energy audits and Dr. Huntley advised that energy audits were already subsidized by the State. Ms. Chajes offered to help with the education drive for the programs offered. Ms. Palanisami asked how the audits were subsidized by the State and Ms. Chajes explained that the State provided money and Dr. Huntley explained the State paid for the energy audit. Ms. Palanisami disclosed that when she had contacted the State, she was advised it would be \$450 for residential. Dr. Huntley did not remember the exact details but pointed out that her first energy audit was free, and she initiated a second audit because the improvements were not completed within a certain time frame so she had to pay between \$50 and \$100.

Dr. Huntley suggested that the Commission could request to target insulation and Ms. Chajes advised that Efficiency Smart already handled weatherization. Ms. Chajes suggested that Efficiency Smart provide a plan for what they could accomplish with \$10,000 to increase weatherization in low-income homes.

Mr. O'Donnell asked where the Commission's remaining funds would go if they were not expended, and Mr. Martindale explained that the funds would be placed into an electric reserve funds. Ms. Smith asked if the remaining funds could be used towards completing the second step of the

greenhouse gas inventory. Mr. Martindale stated that the purchase order placed with AECOM in 2021 to complete the greenhouse gas inventory was drawn from 2020 reserves.

Dr. Huntley recalled that the City had a program to help low-income residents or seniors with home repairs. Mr. Martindale was unaware of a specific program but confirmed that a program was tied to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program which funded through the Federal Government. He added that should the Commission want to a target low- to moderate-income rebate program through Efficiency Smart, there was an existing framework with the CDBG.

Dr. Huntley asked if it was possible to focusing on weatherization and tie into a program already in place within the City to help low- to moderate-income households. Mr. Martindale believed it was not possible. Ms. Palanisami suggested that Energize Delaware first perform an audit and explained that her background was in construction engineering, so the step was logical to her.

Mr. O'Donnell noted there was already minor home repair program and Dr. Huntley explained it was focused on seniors. Ms. Scheld added that the program was from 2018 and was unsure if the program was still viable because of inactivity due to COVID.

Ms. Smith personally felt that targeting heat pumps would not be as utilized as desired. Ms. Palanisami informed that replacement unit was a hybrid and cost \$18,000. Mr. O'Donnell explained everything would depend on how much the Commission set for the rebate amount towards each project.

Ms. Smith wanted to provide each group with \$10,000 and monitor how the funds were utilized. Then, the Commission could evaluate in 2023 after each group provided end results which would help the Commission be better prepared to make additional decisions in 2023.

Mr. Martindale recommended to provide \$10,000 to Energize Delaware for weatherization and outreach with Energize Delaware to determine how much to designate to the two-focus points. Mr. O'Donnell asked a motion was required.

Dr. Huntley wanted to change the recommendation after considering that the cost of a heat pump was \$30,000 and a \$700 rebate would not likely impact affordability. Mr. O'Donnell stated the amount was \$13,000, then Ms. Smith recounted \$18,000, and Ms. Palanisami announced that her cost to replace was over \$20,000 and was reduced to \$18,000 due to the rebate. Ms. Chajes added that her replacement cost \$12,000 and she had needed new wiring.

Dr. Huntley asked if the Commission should incentivize an additional \$2,000 rebate and provide Efficiency Smart with five grants given the current rebate was \$750. Ms. Smith thought offering \$250 towards each heat pump which would make the rebate \$1,000 total. Dr. Huntley felt that amount was too small to make a difference for such an expensive project.

Mr. Martindale offered since the Energize Delaware would need to have a purchase order issued in the current month, but Efficiency Smart did not, the Commission could move forward with allocating \$10,000 to Efficiency Smart. Dr. Huntley corrected the stated group wanted the proposal to be flipped.

MOTION BY MR. O'DONNELL: TO DESIGNATE \$10,000 OF THE COMMISSION'S 2022 GREEN ENERGY FUND TO ENERGIZE DELAWARE FOR PROJECTS TO BE DESIGNATED WITHIN THE CITY OF NEWARK AS DESCRIBED BY THE SEPTEMBER COMMISSION MEETING BY JIM PURCELL.

Dr. Huntley requested to remove the reference to the September description as she felt it was not precise enough to indicate the Commission's intentions. Mr. O'Donnell reminded that there was an hour-long discussion in September and Ms. Smith suggested to cut out the last sentence. Dr. Huntley requested and Ms. Smith agreed to add verbiage regarding the weatherization and outreach.

MOTION BY MR. O'DONNELL, SECONDED BY MS. CHAJES: TO DESIGNATE \$10,000 OF THE COMMISSION'S 2022 GREEN ENERGY FUND TO ENERIZE DELAWARE FOR WEATHERIZATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CITY OF NEWARK.

Mr. O'Donnell requested to abstain because he wanted to "go all in". Ms. Palanisami asked to abstain as well. Dr. Huntley explained that if anyone were to abstain then no funds would be dispersed due to the lack of a quorum.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5-0

AYE: CHAJES, HUNTLEY, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: MATEYKO, O'CONNOR, RYPKEMA.

Dr. Huntley clarified that Efficiency Smart would be postponed until December, and Mr. Martindale would then return with a recommendation. Mr. Martindale confirmed that he would contact Mr. Lynch and Mr. Coyle again for additional information on the number of heat pump rebates already disbursed. Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Martindale could determine how many heat pumps were installed during 2022 and how many received rebates and Mr. Martindale confirmed. Ms. Chajes asked if contractors received rebates from Efficiency Smart for customer installations. Mr. Martindale stated the rebates were only eligible to City residents. Ms. Palanisami learned about the rebate through Community Day.

Ms. Smith clarified that the Commission would revisit Efficiency Smart in December and thanked Mr. Martindale for his time.

6. FOODWASTE RECYCLING – Helga Huntley

Dr. Huntley requested to postpone the topic.

7. ANNUAL REPORT – SHEILA SMITH

Ms. Smith thanked Ms. Chajes and asked for the Commission to review the document. Ms. Chajes would email it to everyone. Dr. Huntley suggested to organize the annual report according to the goals from the previous report and noted there were fourteen goals so the 2023 report could be organized by listing each with a summary of what was accomplished with additional items added if necessary. Ms. Smith asked for each member to advise as to which paragraph they would like to summarize by the December meeting.

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

Ms. Smith was unaware of any submissions and Ms. Chajes stated that did not complete her submission for October. Dr. Huntley verified Ms. Chajes' topic and suggested that she report on the greenhouse gas inventory and to switch timeframe submissions with Ms. O'Connor.

Ms. Smith suggested to add Conservation Areas and Efficiency Smart to the topic list.

9. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

Ms. Smith was appalled at how the trees and plants at the Railyard were not maintained through the summer. She observed that not many native plants were used, and the plants were not watered during the drought. After a discussion with Mr. Spadafino, she learned that the complex did not have the manpower to monitor the landscape but had two years to correct the issue and to maintain it.

10. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Smith asked if Mr. Martindale had an update regarding the solar project. Mr. Martindale asked if the topic was a carryover from the previous meeting as he believed the topic was the feasibility study and if not, he had anything to report.

Ms. Smith informed that she had examples of flyers and signs provided to her from the previous Commission Chair for anti-idling.

Dr. Huntley suggested to ask the schools to issue flyers at the beginning of the school year to all students. Ms. Smith asked if any member would be interested in taking some of the available flyers and Mr. O'Donnell confirmed. Ms. Scheld verified that the flyer design was not archived in the Commission SharePoint.

Dr. Huntley recalled the public request from the previous month that the Commission support the rebuilding of the cider mill. She wanted to know if the Commission was interested in adding the topic to the agenda or if the issue was not in the Commission's purview. Mr. O'Donnell and Ms. Smith agreed that the topic was outside of the scope of the Commission.

Dr. Huntley would report on the Zero Waste Delaware program during the December meeting under the Food Waste Recycling agenda item. Ms. Scheld stated Dr. Huntley had three weeks to choose to keep on the next agenda and Ms. Chajes would advise if the item would need to be postponed.

Ms. Scheld reviewed the agenda for the December meeting:

- Zero Waste Delaware – Dee Durham
- Efficiency Smart Funding Update – Jeff Martindale
- Annual Report (assigning goals)
- Monthly Conservation Article with the Newark Post
- Planning and Development Reports
- Old/New Business

There was a group discussion on whether to finally table the anti-idling topic. Dr. Huntley stated noted that anti-idling was already a law, and it would be difficult to measure its effectiveness. Mr.

O'Donnell believed that young students today were more environmentally minded, and that the topic of gas house emissions was a current concern. Ms. Chajes was not comfortable with approaching people individually who idled, and Ms. Smith explained that the task fell under the Parking Authority. Mr. O'Donnell asked who managed the Parking Division and if further measures could be taken. Ms. Smith stated she had contacted the person in the past and was provided direction. Ms. Chajes asked if the Parking Division could explain why signs had not been put up. Ms. Smith wanted to speak with the City Manager at length regarding the topic.

Mr. O'Donnell requested to revisit discussions regarding language on banning fossil fuel because the Planning and Development Department would need to be involved. Mr. O'Donnell was advised that direction needed to come from City Council. Dr. Huntley recalled the last conversation on the topic involved Ms. Bensley, Planning and Development Director, who explained the complications of trying to have the request adopted and the advice was that the Commission would have to take into consideration all the unintended consequences of introducing the language to Council.

11. NEXT MEETING DECEMBER 13, 2022

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

Danielle S. Mapp-Purcell
Administrative Professional II/Paralegal

/dmp