CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 13, 2023

MEETING CONVENED: 7:04 p.m. Council Chambers/Microsoft Teams Hybrid

MEMBERS PRESENT: Helga Huntley, John Mateyko, Andrew O'Donnell, Mahi Palanisami, Savannah Sipes

STAFF: Jeffrey Martindale, Chief Procurement and Projects Manager
Jacob Higgins, Community Planner
Renee Bensley, Planning and Development Director
Tara Schiano, Director of Legislative Services
Mayor Stu Markham

Dr. Huntley called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES HELD ON MAY 9, 2023:

Dr. Huntley noted that she herself did not see the minutes and asked if anyone else received them in their email, thinking she may have missed it. Ms. Palanisami answered that she saw them today. Dr. Huntley then asked if they had a quorum with only five people, to which Ms. Palanisami confirmed. When she asked once more if anyone else received the minutes, the rest of the board confirmed. They proceeded, with Dr. Huntley noting she would abstain.

MOTION BY MS. SIPES, SECONDED BY MR. MATEYKO: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) APPROVE THE MINUTES HELD ON MAY 9, 2023.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 4 TO 0.

AYE: SIPES, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO, PALANISAMI.
NAY: 0.
ABSTAIN: HUNTLEY.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Leslie Purcell mostly grew up in Newark before living on the west coast. She wished to speak with the CAC about solar, recounting the solar at McKee's Park, and noticed how much open parking lot space there was between the STAR Campus and the train station. In her observation she wondered why there was no solar in that area and why that space was not being used to create energy. She explained that in Ventura, California, they put in a solar canopy over the administration building's parking lots which warranted a positive response due to giving shade and creating energy. A second batch was due to be implemented because it was so successful.

Ms. Purcell further explained that she presented this to the University of Delaware Board of Trustees meeting last month and receive positive feedback. The operations manager and Representative Paul Baumbach had advised her talk to the CAC and the City of Newark, as UD had a deal with them for electricity. She looked up the sustainability plan on the City's website and recalled that on Pages 7 & 8 there was a section on the City's relationship to UD, particularly with opportunities and challenges with the rapid development of STAR Campus. She stated that while it said they were trying to do green development, it had also said that the resources and demands for electricity and water might hinder progress towards the sustainability plan's goals. She made the point that if the need for electricity was so great, then why was there not more solar.

Ms. Purcell also pointed out the note that collaboration was a shared commitment to sustainability with UD, and they pledged to reduce their carbon emissions and implement energy saving & alternative energy source technologies. She did not know exactly how it would work with the CAC, knowing that they had their own solar City-run project, and apparently there was a proposal with the Institute of Energy Conversion at UD for seven public buildings of the City to have solar roofs that she did not know the progress on. She hoped it would possibly extend to UD buildings as there was great opportunity for solar on the rooftops and in parking lots.

Dr. Huntley thanked Ms. Purcell for attending. She explained that currently, the CAC completely supported using solar as much as possible for energy generation and very much would like to promote the use of renewable energy to a much greater extent than what the City was currently using. They were trying to figure out how to make that transition work so that the City would transition from its current source of electricity to a higher percentage of renewables. In principle, the CAC was completely on-board, and even beyond that, they had worked with the City administration on expanding the existing solar rays, so they put additional solar arrays by McKee's and by the reservoir. In addition, they now had solar on top of City Hall and the maintenance shed behind Phillips Park. They were also very much aware that parking lots were great places for solar arrays for the same reasons that Mr. Purcell stated. Dr. Huntley affirmed the CAC had discussed looking into implementing things such as solar arrays or parking lots for new projects like the park development off Paper Mill Road; however, they had not brought up the STAR Campus at all, partially because that was completely UD territory. She was glad that Ms. Purcell mentioned she had already talked to UD and they supported this idea. Dr. Huntley pointed out that the Mayor was in the room, recalling that the University of Delaware in the past had to negotiate with the City for the solar arrays on the arena; she asked what the limit was to how much solar power the City allowed the University to use.

Mayor Stu Markham informed that UD could generate up to 5 MW on its own. He believed they were currently far from that limit, but they still had capacity. Above that, they would have to negotiate with the City. He recalled that solar in parking lots was previously looked into, the issue being financial viability.

Jeffrey Martindale, Chief Procurement and Projects Manager, explained that in addition to all prior mentioned solar projects the City recently implemented, they were also looking at installing rooftop solar on Building 2 at their maintenance yard, noting that the building Dr. Huntley mentioned was Building 1; they were looking at expanding their rooftops over there to the extent possible as well as at the George Wilson Community Center, and there were plans in place to expand in the near term. He also pointed out that they, with the CAC's funding, had also done a feasibility study for what parking lot canopy solar would look like at City Hall. Including the recent tax credits coming from the federal government, the payback was such that it would not be feasible to staff's determination to implement such, but that did not necessarily preclude them from looking at other areas such as parks. There were certainly other opportunities to do canopy solar elsewhere in the City.

Mr. Markham mentioned he was going to say they did not qualify for tax credits, to which Mr. Martindale clarified they would qualify as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA.) It was an odd calculation to determine how they would qualify for tax credits, as a tax-exempt organization, but they would qualify for a 45% tax credit on those. However, even including that, the payback was not such that it would make financial sense at this time.

Mr. Markham mentioned that one thing that City had to look at financially was what it could do to keep within its current finances in terms of cost, payback, etc. It was much easier to explain when one could say five years where it could pay for itself continuously, as that was the strategy with McKee's. He asked if Ms. Schiano could confirm and let the CAC know what generation UD was at currently, as his understanding was that UD was nowhere near the limit of 5 MW. He recommended asking the Electric Director.

Dr. Huntley stated to Ms. Purcell that the CAC would put it on their list of topics to discuss with UD's Sustainability Office, as the STAR Campus was particularly a UD issue; if they had not maxed out their solar generation allowance yet, then she believed there was no reason why they could not.

Mr. O'Donnell offered the Green Energy Program, explaining that with any Newark resident that paid their electric bill, there was a form to fill out for a 100% renewable opt-in program and added a small fee on the electric bill, roughly $5 a month, and they would be buying into Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). That fund primarily would buy the credits that were generated locally, and that money would go towards the CAC's future projects expansion.

Mr. Markham noted that the last he knew, all new customers were automatically signed up for 100% renewable, so they would have to opt out. Dr. Huntley clarified that this was so, but old customers would have to opt in. When Ms. Sipes asked when that went into effect, Mr. O'Donnell answered two years ago.

Mr. Martindale pointed out that he believed a quarter of the City's electric customers were in that program currently. Renee Bensley, Planning and Development Director, clarified that this was actually 46% of the City's electric customers. Mr. Markham stated that they made significant strides of progress, and Mr. O'Donnell approved.

Mr. Mateyko thanked Ms. Purcell for coming. The site was easily able to be seen from the overpass; even if the actual kilowatt or megawatt provision of the ray would be small, it would be an effective, teaching, and important example for everyone who had a private sector parking lot. He thought it was wonderful to put PVs everywhere, and there was an extra advantage in putting it somewhere in this early stage where it was only that 1%-4% of buildings had it. The example being deployed would mean that it would spread faster.

3. POWERING OUR FUTURE PROPOSAL & VOTE – MICHAEL SMITH

Dr. Huntley stated that Michael Smith, Powering Our Future, intended to be here this evening but was not currently present. She wanted to remind everyone that he brought forward a proposal to the CAC to try to expand on a project he was currently running to distribute electric leaf blowers.

Mr. Martindale recapped that Mr. Smith was asking for $10K to do a rollout of an electric leaf blower giveaway program to City residents. He and Mr. Smith had been coordinating for the last couple of weeks; Mr. Martindale had said they would reconvene on this topic in July as scheduling conflicts on both ends did not allow for enough time to sort out the details.

Dr. Huntley asked if they would be rescheduling for July, to which Mr. Martindale agreed. He continued that he and Mr. Smith discussed that they had not yet put together a grant program as part of this committee, so he was trying to figure out what was the best opportunity to maximize the CAC's funding with ensuring that they were protecting public funds as well. They had been going back and forth on if $10K was the correct amount for a pilot program or if it should be something less to verify there was interest in this first. They also wondered if Powering Our Future had the opportunity to buy and then seek reimbursement after the giveaway so that they could verify that each participant in the program was a City electric customer and within City corporate limits before giving money away. They were sorting out those details in terms of what the giveaway would look like and how the City would reimburse Powering Our Future based on that. Mr. Martindale imagined they would put a memorandum of understanding (MOU) together with Powering Our Future that would spell out specifically what needed to be done to get the money, at what point would they do that, and what would be the reporting criteria after the fact to verify that they spent their money wisely.

Mr. Mateyko asked if Mr. Martindale was aware of anyone putting together an accolade for garden landscapes that had zero carbonization through using electric machinery and that was of a fossil fuel and chemical free metric, as he himself had never heard of such a thing. Mr. Martindale asked if Mr. Mateyko was talking about an award program or something different. Mr. Mateyko stated it would be like the signs they all would see for nature, but it was an additional metric that needed to be achieved. He stated a way of thinking was to not use fossil fuel equipment or chemicals so there would be no harmful import of energy. Mr. Martindale was not aware of anything like this.

Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Martindale was still discussing the details of what the CAC should ultimately vote on with Mr. Smith. Mr. Martindale did not recommend voting on anything at this meeting and his intent was to bring a memo back to the CAC next month that would explain all the fine details and recommend a motion for them to vote on.

Dr. Huntley asked if anyone wanted to make a comment at this stage without seeing the memo, or if they should wait until July. Mr. Martindale asked if everyone was on board with this thought generally before they invested additional time into putting the memo together. Dr. Huntley preferred if there was some sort of token cost instead of it being a completely free giveaway, because consumers would often take free things that they simply did not need. She suggested that they should target those who already had gas-powered leaf blowers and trade them in as opposed to pushing out more leaf blowers; the goal was to take the gas-powered leaf blowers off the streets and yards.

Mr. Martindale mentioned the consideration was that staff had gas-powered leaf blowers, weedwhackers, chainsaws, etc., so he thought of looking at the City's equipment before moving onto residency.

Mr. O'Donnell suggested doing a one-for-one swap, where a customer could bring in a gas-powered leaf blower and receive an electric leaf blower with no monetary cost to get the former off the street. Mr. Martindale thought this was realistic, having a token cost for no trade-in vs. having zero cost for a trade-in.

Ms. Sipes asked if there would be any way to target landscaping businesses who were using leaf blowers more regularly than the average resident. Mr. Martindale replied that he would defer to Mr. Smith's judgement on that, as he did not know the number of landscaping companies that were incorporated inside of Newark.

Dr. Huntley recalled that Mr. Smith priorly stated that they used more powerful machinery and that the electric leaf blowers were not quite there yet to satisfy the commercial need.

Ms. Sipes commented that she liked the idea of targeting the City employees first.

Mr. Martindale replied that they would talk about budget later, but he believed that they had the capability to do both as an option.

Dr. Huntley stated that as the next two items were Mr. Martindale's, he could choose in which order to discuss the budget more generally and the efficiency smart funding update.

4. <u>EFFICIENCY SMART FUNDING UPDATE – JEFF MARTINDALE</u>

Mr. Martindale explained that last month they voted to put $10K into a pilot program for the super rebate program, and that was well underway with their Communications Division working on pushing out both a press release and social media posts. He believed they had gotten it to a pretty good system in terms of how they would process these. In effect, if they were to buy one of the energy star window air conditioning units discussed, they would get the $50 rebate from Efficiency Smart in the form of a check and then they would receive a $100 per unit electric bill credit for that purchase. They determined that processing it as a credit was much more simplistic with the way their billing system worked than cutting individual checks for each one of those rebates; that would streamline the process, automating it to some extent, and should, if expanded on in the future, automate the process generally.

Mr. Mateyko stated that the credit was very important; he was reminded in a prior conversation that low-income people would not plug in the air conditioner when given to them as they did not think they could afford to use the energy. Pairing the unit with the electricity to use it in the form of funding was what they needed to deliver if they believed it was a health necessity.

Dr. Huntley commented that Mr. Mateyko's statement was an interesting point, as to her understanding at first was that Mr. Martindale stated they were doing this for convenience in paying this extra rebate as an electric credit. However, Mr. Mateyko made a very good point that could also psychologically help consumers think they could afford it.

Mr. Martindale pointed out that they received conflicting information from Efficiency Smart; they had said that during the first super rebate program in Oberlin, they tried it both ways and got better benefit out of a physical check; there was something psychological about having that money in-hand vs. having it on credit.

Mr. Mateyko informed that in Pennsylvania that there was a similar project with small air conditioners, but the money was also allowed to be used to repair an existing house-wide system that did not function properly. He thought that was a problem because when it was done as they were doing it here, it was left to the consumers to decide where to put small air conditioners in the areas they needed them most. However, in the context of a larger system for the whole house, it was different: while they did not want to encourage that for new construction, the issue was in existing construction which needed to be looked at very critically. He believed that was where it started to move towards a horrific and counterproductive signal to the public that the way to escape the extreme heat was to acquire more air conditioning.

Dr. Huntley recalled that Mr. Martindale mentioned this project was well underway in its implementation, but it had not been advertised yet. She asked if there was a target date as to when it became live, and people could begin applying for it.

Mr. Martindale responded that yesterday would have been his preference, but as he mentioned prior, he had time off so his portion in this process was slightly delayed. Between now and their next meeting in July, he hoped the CAC knew exactly where they were due to being well enough advertised to where they could find out without him having to share it.

Dr. Huntley asked if he had a sense from Efficiency Smart's experience elsewhere as to how long they should run this program. Mr. Martindale explained the setup as of right now was that the current program would expire at the end of this year, so they would take the CAC's funds and chip away at them up to $10K in terms of bill credits until they were depleted. So, they had not put them in a separate fund, and it would not carry over into next year. The hope was that by the time this year ended, they were beyond the point in the year when people would be buying air conditioner units, so they would have a pretty good idea of where they stood and what they could look forward to next year should they decide to continue this program.

Ms. Palanisami asked if there was a list of landlords to contact because tenants typically did not have control over the AC, which Energize Delaware told her was their biggest problem. She asked if there were any methods to communicate with them. Mr. Martindale stated that Ms. Bensley would probably be the best person to have a list to get the word out. He clarified that they made the program specific to the electric customer so that the individual tenants were the ones receiving the benefit from the program, as opposed to a large landlord taking the full $10K and using it to upgrade their units on the City's dime.

Ms. Palanisami asked if this was dependent on the lease and in some cases was it the tenant or the landlord paying the electric bill. Mr. Martindale believed that in most instances, it was the tenant, especially in Newark.

Dr. Huntley believed that was correct, as there was a large turnover of electric customers every end of the school year due to many students moving out.

Mr. Martindale stated that in the 100% Renewable program, the turnover increasing was indicative of that. This was what drove the number up as opposed to the consistent landlord holding all the electric accounts in a particular building.

Ms. Schiano interjected to ask for a five-minute recess due to technical difficulties resulting in no audio being broadcast through the hybrid system.

5. REMAINING BUDGET DISCUSSION & PLAN – JEFF MARTINDALE

Mr. Martindale stated that the CAC had an annual budget of $100K and this year to date, they had spent $41.5K, being almost halfway through their budget through the halfway point in the year. They already put money into things they knew they would be funding so they needed to begin thinking about the ways they could invest the rest of the budget into the remainder of the year. He proceeded to give a reminder on projects that the allocated funds were used for:

- $7.5K was put into the Dickey Park Community Garden Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements.
- $1.5K was put into lower-hanging fence line bushes at Newark Solar Park reservoir following complaints that the solar park was unsightly.

- $5K was put into train station window replacements and repair assistance.
- $1K was put into the Newark Center For Creative Learning (NCCL) Greenfest donation.
- $1.5K was put into CAC branded gear for Community Day and other events.
- $15K was put into the Parks and Recreation Tree Giveaway program.
- $10K was put into the Efficiency Smart CAC super rebate program.

Mr. Martindale added that the Powering Our Future investment was still on their radar which he believed would allocate $5K, but the request was $10K, so it was somewhere in that range. He informed that they submitted for a grant for $750K to the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) program to install eleven charging stations at different spots across the City. Included in that grant, the grant itself was an 80-20 mandatory match, so the federal government would give 80% and the City would need to match 20% of that. Most of the City's match was coming from staff labor, so most of the work would be done themselves and would help in that regard since it was not out of their pocket. They would pay them whether they were working on that or something else so that worked in the City's favor.

Mr. Martindale explained that they also accounted for the Delaware Department of Natural Resources (DNREC) charging station rebate per station, so they proposed eleven stations which would be $55K from DNREC. Unfortunately, the new DNREC rebate program had changed where it was $40K max per applicant each year, so depending on when the City heard back from the grant program and if they were approved for the grant program, he would possibly approach the CAC for the discrepancy between the $40K and the $55K. He stated that he was also open to discuss other ideas for funding with them and could go over other things they had on their initial list discussed in January but had not yet funded.

Mr. Mateyko commented that he heard from the Parks and Recreation office that after the second day of the Tree Giveaway program, all the trees were well accounted for, and the same for after four days. When they opened business the first morning, they opened their inbox to fifteen emails for applications for trees, and everything went very quickly. He wondered if that was indicative that the people were receiving trees had high knowledge of the giveaway, and that by the time word would spread through the community, the trees would be gone. If this was correct, he wondered if they would be better to experiment and add in increments of, for example, $5K worth of trees for the next fall if it was not too late to do so. This would be to see what happened and if they were subscribed almost immediately, which could be discussed. Right now, it seemed to him that they were just now scratching the surface of the market and that the market window did not stay open long enough for word of mouth to reach other people.

Dr. Huntley believed that Mr. Martindale had previously said the fall giveaway program was not as popular as the spring giveaway program last year, to which he confirmed as correct. She recalled that there were plants left over, and Mr. Martindale believed that they were eventually all used in a trickle effect and not as quickly as four days. He thought that the entire discussion was indicative of the fact that it was still a new program, and this was the second year that they had it in effect, only doing three rounds of it. The spring of last year was very popular, and fall was not, which meant they did not necessarily know what to do with that data going into this spring. Now with two full years of data, Mr. Martindale believed they could certainly look into boosting the numbers in spring and reducing the numbers in the fall to make sure that the demand was matched.

Dr. Huntley suggested also extending the exclusion time, as in the fall people who had gotten trees in the spring were not allowed to get another; however, in the spring, they were allowed to get another tree if they had already gotten one in the year prior. If they were still running out of trees in the springtime, maybe an option would be to make it so that those who got trees in the whole of the last year would not be eligible for another free tree. Mr. Martindale liked that idea as well.

Mr. Martindale stated it would be something to discuss with Parks and Recreation for sure, and he was still discussing survey options with them to see how the trees that they were giving away were doing. Dr. Huntley noted she was just about to ask about that, and then asked Mr. Martindale if there was anything else on the radar. He responded that this was so.

Mr. Mateyko stated that it would possibly hold value in seeing the reaction when inquiring if the Sustainable Energy Utility had a program to subsidize organized tree planting as the City was doing it. It would be an organized program to save energy as opposed to the retail level of one citizen at a time. He asked if that was what they did, believing they did not think that way.

Mr. Martindale stated that Energize Delaware was giving the City a lot of money on other projects, so he did not want to push too much. However, he thought that would be a worthwhile discussion.

He pointed out that he forgot to mention one more budget item was the Newark Housing Authority (NHA) investment. He explained that discussion was stalled out on non-staff parties, so that was something he needed to remind them of to get the ball rolling again to see what they could do to potentially have a discussion on that improvement for the NHA.

Dr. Huntley tried to remember where the last discussion ended and believed she recalled it was where Mr. Martindale suggested that giving the money to Energize Delaware and having them add it to their grant to the NHA was an easier way for the City to administer this than giving it directly to the NHA themselves.

Mr. Martindale stated that this was correct, and they had a discussion on whether they wanted to add Energize Delaware as a pass-through organization or if it would make more sense to give the money outright to the NHA. In doing some more research and collaborating with Energize Delaware, they determined that they already had the mechanisms in place that the City would need to invent to activate this. Because of this, he believed it made sense to go through Energize Delaware for this program. The other concern was Energize Delaware using City funds to supplant theirs to make it look as if they were giving out this money when it was coming on the City's dime. Now that the NHA had gone through a first-run application and the City knew what the ask was and what they received, they had a quantifiable delta that they could start to chip away at with Energize Delaware and believed this was where they needed to currently invest their effort. He thought it was about $25K in terms of asks that was left on the table, and the discussion at this point was to split that 50/50 between the CAC and Energize Delaware to make those weatherization improvements for the NHA.

Dr. Huntley noted that Mr. Martindale stated the discussions had stalled and asked what the CAC were waiting for before they needed to decide. Mr. Martindale stated that in effect where they had left it, he had spoken to Jim Purcell from Energize Delaware, and he was going to talk to Marene Jordan to have her resubmit an application for that delta that was discussed prior. He was unsure of where that was left in the process because with having them administer everything, the CAC was hands off in that regard, so he was not sure which party was stalling things out at this current point. However, it was not on the CAC, as far as he was concerned. Once they determined where that was, he would be sure to bring something back to the CAC for discussion.

Dr. Huntley recapped the possible timeline: first the NHA needed to apply to Energize Delaware for an additional $25K to complete the project that they originally proposed, then Energize Delaware would get in touch with the City of Newark and propose partnering on funding this $25K grant, and then Mr. Martindale would bring that to the CAC who would agree or disagree. Mr. Martindale confirmed this would go from the NHA to Energize Delaware and then to the CAC, then back to Energize Delaware and then to the NHA.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if they should set aside $12.5K, and Mr. Martindale responded he would be happy to have that discussion with the CAC and believed that made sense as long as they as well supported that. Mr. O'Donnell said it would be one way they could help and expedite things.

Dr. Huntley stated that they discussed both working with Energize Delaware and specifically supporting the NHA several times in the past, and she thought they were at a point where everybody understood. She suggested going down the table quickly to get a sense of who was in favor of reserving $12.5K. They would not be making final decisions and would not be permanent, and that would come later when they knew the full details. But for now, they would be reserving it so they would have that money available once the proposal was presented.

Ms. Sipes asked what the upgrades that the NHA would use the money for were. Ms. Palanisami stated that just before the meeting she was looking at the audits; there were four buildings, and Marene Jordan needed to replace four furnace oil units with heat pumps with electric water heaters. They were tightening the building to make sure that conditioned air did not leave through adding insulation to the ceiling. They were also insulating the basement and getting windows. She remembered that the seniors could not lift the windows because both the seniors and the windows were older, so Ms. Jordan was very on top of this matter. The tricky part in construction was where how much the budget would cover. That was part, if not all, of where the money would go. The remaining money would go to the energy counseling if there was anything.

Dr. Huntley proceeded to go down the table to ask for their input on reserving the funds for this project.

Ms. Palanisami was for it.

Ms. Sipes was for it.

Mr. O'Donnell was for it.

Dr. Huntley was for it.

Mr. Mateyko was for it.

Dr. Huntley concluded that the CAC would put that down as being reserved for the time being.

Mr. Martindale stated that on paper that would put the CAC at the halfway mark for their budget at this point in the year.

Mr. Mateyko suggested allocating a small sum of money between $1K-$2K to print handouts for the events they would attend, such as Community Day in the fall. This would better familiarize the neighborhood with the key programs that the CAC worked with, like naturalized gardens and the Dark Sky initiative. He gave the idea that they could be combined in a flyer or separate.

Mr. Martindale recalled, predating his time at the City, that something along those lines was conceived of and implemented a few years to half a decade ago. They ended up with a bunch left over sitting in someone's basement. Mr. Mateyko asked if he could look into seeing if there were anything of this sort in the back sitting somewhere.

Mr. Martindale stated Ms. Smith may know and it would be worth for a conversation next month.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if they could do a digital version instead of a paper version, to which Mr. Martindale replied that it was his belief they were moving towards more of a QR code setup for these types of things, which seemed in line with the CAC's charge generally and would get the word out.

Mr. Mateyko stated that if anything was already developed and printed then they could get more copies made.

Dr. Huntley asked Mr. Martindale if she could remind them of all previously discussed projects that they had not made any progress on.

Mr. Martindale stated that in January, they had said they were going to put $20K into infrastructure improvements for City Hall solar canopies; since that time, they determined that would not come to fruition, so that was now off the table. They also had $10K set aside for electric vehicle purchase assistance, and that was fortunately not needed as the grant from Energize Delaware was sufficient to cover the total cost of all vehicles needed. That made for seven electric vehicles for this year.

Dr. Huntley wanted an update on the train station as they originally asked for much more money that the CAC ended up granting them. She asked if Mr. Martindale had any idea on how the fundraising was going, as that was part of the idea that it was supposed to be a seed funding for the fundraising.

Mr. Martindale stated that it was to his understanding they brought in $7.5K from their Founders Day fundraising campaign; that was what the $5K that the CAC put towards was for, contributing a total of two thirds to what they made on that day. It was still a good haul for initial efforts from the train station's side. He believed that currently they were up to $35K in fundraising, making headway but much slower and steadier than what was initially anticipated.

Ms. Sipes asked what the goal of this project was, to which Mr. Martindale replied it was to complete the full renovations of the building, which was anticipated to be $750K. While well off the mark, it was better than zero, which was the amount at this time last year. He hoped there would be good news at next month's meeting. They had two large bond bill requests to the State of Delaware as inclusion in their budget for Fiscal Year 2024, 2M accounts for renovations to both the George Wilson Center and the train station, so if that came to fruition, they would, in effect, wholesale and fix that issue or set the groundwork for addressing it. The second was an expansion of the electric warehouse at the maintenance yard, which did not pertain to the CAC, except the fact that it would give more area for solar in the future.

Dr. Huntley asked if he would know as that was decided on by the end of June. Mr. Martindale remarked in jest that he would find out more than likely in the early morning hours of July 1.

Dr. Huntley asked if that could be put on the agenda in July, and then asked Mr. Martindale to remember to bring that back in July as she would like to follow up on that. Mr. Martindale agreed in that he would reinvestigate.

Dr. Huntley asked if there were any priorities that the rest of the CAC wished to consider in spending the rest of their money.

Mr. O'Donnell believed that if there was a leftover amount of money at the end of the year, it was his recommendation to give it to Energize Delaware, as they were very good at prioritizing what had the biggest cost-to-benefit ratio. He suggested funding them with what they had left and then letting Energize Delaware decide.

Mr. Martindale suggested that in a similar note, they could invest that funding into electrifying City vehicles, City lawn equipment, etc. in looking forward to future years and using that money to supplant their capital budget to make that transition happen quicker. It would also make for a better return on investment for the CAC.

Dr. Huntley asked if it was possible for the CAC to save up their money. She knew they could not reserve it, but she wanted to know if they could allocate it towards a capital project and then it could stay in that bucket. Mr. Martindale clarified that if it moved into the capital budget, that was a multi-year budget, so that would be one of the few instances where that would carry over. However, CAC's funding was in operating, so it was year to year; but if it moved into capital for a vehicle purchase two years from now, for example, that would stay in that fund until it was expended.

Dr. Huntley asked for clarification if they wanted to purchase a solar canopy for a park in 2025, they could reserve their operational money now and have it still be available in two years; however, if they wanted to run a tree giveaway in 2025, they could not because it was not a capital expense.

Mr. Martindale confirmed that she was correct, but the only distinction was that if they were to, for example, put $20K into a $2.5M solar project, they would also have to get Council's buy-in on the remaining $2.4M. He believed that if they were to go that route, the more appropriate path would be on the equipment side.

Ms. Sipes wanted to see more focus on native plants and increasing biodiversity. She felt that this was discussed in the few meetings she had attended so far and did not know what the roadblocks were for revegetating City property. That would potentially mean retraining landscaping staff to care for these plants differently than the plants they had currently.

Dr. Huntley wanted clarification that revegetating meant replacing current invasive plants with native plants. Ms. Sipes confirmed this was correct, stating if they could get rid of the lawns and put meadows, that would be positive. She felt that City buildings were a perfect example of where to do that to show the community that they were on board with this and encouraging that type of landscaping. However, she had not thought much about the logistics.

Dr. Huntley stated that she heard previously the City collaborated with someone at UD. Mr. Martindale believed that it was Herb White, Parks Superintendent. Dr. Huntley continued that this discussion was about removing invasive plants from a small section of a specific City park, but she did not remember the exact details.

Ms. Sipes interjected that this was in Phillips Park, where she and Ms. Smith volunteered regularly. Removing invasive species was Ms. Smith's ballpark. Dr. Huntley asked if this was a collaboration with UD, to which Ms. Sipes clarified not.

Dr. Huntley went on to clarify that someone already had an existing relationship with someone at UD who worked in the Ag College. They recently did a sample plot of trying to get the invasive plants out of a City park. She wondered if this research group at UD would be interested in receiving a grant from the CAC to expand those efforts.

Ms. Sipes stated that students and professors at UD had gone out to the community, to the point of even selecting specific Newark residents, to redo their landscaping. She thought that this would be positive if it could be done at a City park.

Mr. Mateyko asked if the landscape architecture program had an ongoing studio that worked on municipal-scale green parks and streets. Ms. Sipes was not aware. He went on to explain that evidently, they had a program; he purchased his house from a professor, and the landscaping for the rain gardens was done by this department. They needed real-world example and non-litigious situations. He believed that this could work and make it very simple for the CAC.

Dr. Huntley was thinking about the timeline and liked that suggestion because that was something that had been on the CAC's priority list for a while, but they had only talked about it. It was already June, and they had three or four months to work this out. Mr. O'Donnell pointed out that historically, the last couple months went by very fast.

Ms. Sipes suggested that whether this ended up coming out of their budget, this year they could focus on what they wanted to do for next year and to try to lay the groundwork. They could start forming relationships with people at UD who could help bring their ideas to fruition.

Mr. Martindale recalled that in January his goal was to have 90% of their budget expended by this point of the year and then use the second half of the year to start planning for the following. He stated that they were nowhere near that mark, but it was worthwhile to begin thinking about it. Dr. Huntley and Mr. Martindale agreed that they were moving in the right direction.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if they could buy some more solar panels on more City roofs to save more space. Mr. Martindale saw that as being a possible option for them; however, there was an issue now that they were running out of rooves. Newark was 9 square miles, and they had a much smaller portion of that as their property, so they were packing them full of solar panels wherever they could. They needed some additional design, but that could possibly not come to fruition by the end of the year.

Dr. Huntley stated that regarding her long-term vision, other cities had rented rooves for their solar placements. She asked if this was a consideration. Mr. Martindale replied that this was not necessarily something he wanted to speak about currently, but the City had considered and discussed it.

There were no other suggestions for funding.

Dr. Huntley asked Ms. Schiano if she was aware if the City invited Jeff Summerhays from UD to come back and speak with the CAC. Ms. Schiano believed that Ms. Smith was going to let her know something on that topic. Dr. Huntley further mentioned it seemed as if they had many issues that were pertaining to UD and it would be a good time to get a representative into the room, and that Mr. Summerhays seemed interested in talking to them.

Ms. Sipes agreed that she as well thought Ms. Smith was working on that, even wondering beforehand if he was going to be at this meeting.

Dr. Huntley clarified that in actuality Ms. Smith was working on getting someone from the Dark Sky Initiative to speak with them.

Dr. Huntley recapped that they had spent not quite half of their budget; although with the reserve they made prior with the informal vote, they knew how they were going to spend half of their budget. The other half was left, which would be discussed in the next two meetings to set their priorities.

6. <u>DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES RELATED TO SUSTAINABILTY PLAN & ANNUAL REPORT</u>

Dr. Huntley stated that this was an agenda item Ms. Smith requested but did not communicate to her exactly what it entailed. In Dr. Huntley's reinterpretation, she reviewed the fourteen goals set in the last annual report and thought about how much progress they had made with them as well as how much more they could do towards them. She suggested for each committee member to talk about what they wanted the CAC to focus on now that they were halfway through the year so they could meet their goals for 2023.

Dr. Huntley began to list the goals for discussion:

1. *Continue outreach efforts including articles in the Newark Post and tabling at the Community Day and other community events.* – Dr. Huntley stated they had done multiple of these actions and were planning on attending Community Day in September.
2. *Continue to evaluate the City's progress towards achieving at sustainability plan goals for Newark.* – Dr. Huntley stated that Mr. Martindale owed the CAC an update from Tom Coleman, City Manager. She remembered that there was a spreadsheet detailing what was in the works and what had been done. Mr. Martindale asked how long ago this was, to which Dr. Huntley replied this was a year ago. He mentioned that he sent it recently, and Dr. Huntley replied that she had not seen one this year.
3. *Continue to develop collaborations with The Newark Partnership, University of Delaware's Office of Sustainability, and other entities as appropriate.* – These were in the plans.
4. *Continue to support efforts to grow the City's tree canopy.*
5. *Continue to promote the use of electric cars by the City of Newark and by residents to reduce carbon emissions.*
6. *Urge City Council to form the Newark Energy Transition Task Force.* – Dr. Huntley believed that this was already done, however she would address it later.
7. *Work with AECOM to formulate the intermediate goals toward net zero greenhouse gas emissions based on the greenhouse gas inventory.*
8. *Establish next steps for the renewable energy program.*
9. *Determine appropriate actions to limit the future growth of fossil fuel infrastructure.*
10. *Continue to support community efforts towards sustainability, such as community gardens.*

11. *Support low- and moderate-income households in achieving energy efficiency improvements.*
12. *Identify actions to improve conditions for biodiversity.*
13. *Identify opportunities to implement nature-based solutions to address Newark's vulnerability to urban heating and flooding.*
14. *Maintain the welcome packet.* – Dr. Huntley stated that she was on top of this.

She stated that they had big ambitions for this year but accomplished many. She asked if the other committee members heard anything amongst these goals that they wished to focus on in the remaining time this year. She had her own thoughts, but she would like for the others to share first.

Mr. Mateyko introduced that nature-based solutions became suspect as corporate greenwashing over the last couple of years. However, it was still a very good phrase to have nature carbon solutions just to differentiate it. It had nothing to do with set-asides as the real thing; in this case it was guilt by association. He saw this as intimately linked to leave the leaves, leave the water, and where it fell, it would infiltrate; he wanted the Mayor to be aware of this, as it had huge implications for the whole hydrology system. He believed that it was an issue that was worth bringing up now because it was suspected that billions of dollars in the Biden infrastructure were still around and was explicitly infrastructure gradually naturalizing. The naturalizing of the hydrology of the City was large; the lock-in was difficult due to multiple regulatory organizations and people that had a hand in this, such as the County, State, Federal, etc.; this meant that there would be no movement. He believed this to be wrong, as that was the cheapest, most effective, and foolproof method of cooling.

Mr. Mateyko suggested leaving the leaves, leaving the water, and leaving the dark, as all of these were related to the complete functioning of nature, just like people. If there was noise all night, it did not matter the state of nutrition or hydration – their mood would still be affected the next day.

Mr. Mateyko also explained that many would believe these ideas were unconventional, but it was the CAC's job to normalize them as basic science. Humans understood that if lights were flashing outside of their bedrooms, they did not sleep well – this was the same for all organisms. It did not count as habitat if it could not be used due to the light and sound pollution. He suggested that a first-year goal could be to popularize that, so Newark residents would know what that meant.

Dr. Huntley pointed out that the topic that Mr. Mateyko brought up was very broad and had many different aspects but given Ms. Smith's particular interest in the Dark Sky Initiative, light pollution would be a good starting point.

Ms. Sipes believed that in forming partnerships, especially with UD, getting the Office of Sustainability to speak with the CAC would bring light to subjects and projects they could accomplish by the end of the year. She thought forming a relationship with the new Head of Sustainability was crucial to impacting the City and university. Dr. Huntley commented this was especially so since the university made up half of Newark's land.

Dr. Huntley suggested inviting the new executive director of The Newark Partnership again as they had not actually discussed anything with him yet.

Ms. Sipes believed that exploring more collaboration in the second half of the year was a good idea. Dr. Huntley agreed, as this could lay the groundwork for what they could achieve together in 2024.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that the CAC had made a lot of progress regarding electric vehicles (EVs). Something else that would help their funding, in learning that much of the City's revenue came from electricity expenses, would be to steer people into getting EVs in which the City would benefit from the increased electricity revenue. He explained that the State used to have rebates for home electric charging stations, it being at a maximum of $300 when he received his own. They would possibly be able to do the same, with $100 each as an example and a limit of one per household. This way, they would encourage EV adoption within the City, and it would pay them back in the long run.

Dr. Huntley asked how feasible it would be for the City to implement something like a rebate program for EV chargers. Mr. O'Donnell added that they could use Efficiency Smart or something that was already existing instead of using more staff time.

Mr. Martindale asked if this would be private, multimodal, or single-family.

Dr. Huntley clarified that the State used to have a rebate for individual households, but their current rebate was only for apartment buildings and public chargers. She interpretated Mr. O'Donnell's proposal as filling that gap that the State left. It was to her understanding that the State moved away from individual chargers because they thought that they could get a higher cost-to-benefit ratio by getting apartment and public chargers. She asked if the City would be able to do this for individual households.

Mr. Martindale responded that technically it was, but he was hesitant to say if staff would recommend it. The current issue with the installation of EV charging was keeping up with the load. As more EV chargers were installed in homes, the City needed to upgrade the infrastructure to account for that increase in demand. To him, it did not seem responsible for the City to encourage it outright without having the necessary steps in place to improve the infrastructure to go along with it. They were for it, but it needed to be staggered in a way that they were able to keep up with it; this was a common concern with or without a rebate program in place.

Dr. Huntley suggested that the CAC's next step would be to invite the Electric Director to speak about the issues related to electrification and what concerns he had.

Mr. O'Donnell recalled that the last time he attended, he had a couple different ideas, and one was to have a separate meter or rate plan for EV charging. Mr. O'Donnell wanted to get more detail from him about time of use rates, as well.

Mr. Martindale explained that it was to his understanding that the study was by no means a small task and had been ongoing ever since he had been with Newark. Mr. O'Donnell commented that it had been going on for many years at this point.

Dr. Huntley asked why it had not been completed yet. Mr. Martindale commented it may have been due to COVID-19.

Ms. Bensley understood that the electric rate study had not been completed in part because the observed variables were skewed due to COVID-19 usage. With the university being shut down for a while and many people were working from home as opposed to businesses being open, it skewed where the load was during that time, and they had to wait for things to normalize more to be able to complete an accurate study. She believed that they were in the process of getting that done now since things were back to normal and moving forward but did not know what the projected time of completion was.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that it had to happen; there were going to be problems, but he thought they should do it anyways.

Dr. Huntley thought it would be good to have that conversation. She always thought it was good that when the CAC wanted to advocate for something, they heard the concerns of the people that they needed to convince so that they could address them if possible.

Mr. Mateyko asked if the charging station units that the City was planning to implement were Level 2. Mr. Martindale responded so, and when Mr. Mateyko asked how long it would take for them to charge, he explained that it depended on the voltage and amperage. The ones they currently had installed were 50-amp units, so they were a little slower than an 80-amp unit, which was what they were potentially looking forward to in the future to keep people moving quicker. The current chargers were as well being used as hybrid fleet and public charging, and they wanted City vehicles to charge much quicker than they currently were. The F150 Lightning they had would take fourteen hours to charge on the current charger which was a significant inconvenience to the police.

Mr. Mateyko recalled once more that there would be eleven of those and asked when they would be up and running. Mr. Martindale stated they just submitted the grant application, so it would be a while; there was also no date given to hear by, so it could have been this year, the next, or even the following. The program ran until 2031, so Mr. Martindale hoped that it would be within the decade.

Dr. Huntley asked if the desired chargers were specified when the application was submitted, and if they were faster. Mr. Martindale answered they did, and the chargers that were specced out would be faster than the ones currently in place. It was a matter of 80 amp vs. 50 amp. It was still Level 2, but the quicker version.

When Dr. Huntley asked if she had anything to add, Ms. Palanisami responded that she did not.

Dr. Huntley wanted a return to a discussion about how to protect large trees that were on people's property. There was currently a method of protecting them on a property that was to be developed, but there was nothing to protect them after the development. She recalled there was a member of the public that spoke to the CAC a few months ago that informed them of an ordinance in Washington D.C. to protect their trees; she wanted to see if that was something they could look into and make progress towards.

Mr. Mateyko added that Rehoboth Beach had a tree ordinance, as well.

Dr. Huntley asked Mr. O'Donnell if he wanted to pursue limiting future growth of fossil fuel infrastructure further beyond what they had already done in light of the Mayor's suggestion that the CAC try to take smaller steps.

Mr. O'Donnell explained that he had taken the Mayor's advice to see if he could get some buy-in and had a one-on-one meeting with his Councilmember, Dr. Jay Bancroft, who was open to the idea of bringing that up to Council and getting it on the agenda as he saw the merits in it.

Dr. Huntley reiterated that the CAC passed a very broad recommendation of banning future fossil fuel infrastructure, and she was not putting all the caveats into the summary that they had in their recommendation. She asked if Mr. O'Donnell would like to try smaller steps if City Council balked at doing something that drastic.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that he would welcome the balk with specific reasons on what was wrong with it, and then the CAC could address those points. However, he thought this needed to be presented to them the sooner, the better. He encouraged the rest of the committee members to meet with their Council members to see if they could get support for the fossil fuel ban or onto the Council agenda for discussion.

Ms. Sipes asked if this proposal that they drafted was sent around, and Mr. O'Donnell and Dr. Huntley responded that they voted on it. They would share it with her, as that may have been a month before Ms. Sipes had joined the committee.

Ms. Sipes asked if this was presented in front of City Council on the Mayor's suggestion.

Dr. Huntley asked if this had been scheduled as an agenda item for City Council.

Ms. Schiano explained the process would be that the recommendation would be sent to Council and then Council would let her know when they wanted it to be put on an agenda. However, she could certainly follow up.

Mr. O'Donnell reiterated that they should contact their individual Council members and encourage them to get the fossil fuel ban on the agenda for discussion.

Dr. Huntley suggested an alternative strategy being to take the three minutes during City Council's public comment section and bring it to them as a resident without it being scheduled.

Mr. Mateyko suggested that a way to deal with the destruction of trees would be a more ambitious tree canopy proposal phased in over six years, adopting the American Forest Group's recommendation for tree canopy coverage. It was now upped from 50% to 60% for suburban communities such as Newark's.

Dr. Huntley asked if Mr. Martindale knew the current tree canopy coverage was for the City, to which he did not.

Mr. Mateyko recalled that Ms. Smith may have stated before it was in the low 30's. He repeated that the metric that American Forest Group recommended was 60% for suburban communities, so they were roughly at 30%; to get to 60%, they could increase in increments of 5% each year for six years. This was already written down so the CAC would not have to create it, and there was also exclusions and other things that would be added into the proposal. It seemed to him that now they could establish that over the period of six years, they could up their canopy goal by 5% until they reached 60%. That would majorly help to deal with existing trees because there was some provision for the tree canopy for that given species. There was a metric that said that after three or five years, a mature tree could be largely home free. This would incentivize anyone that had an existing tree to leave it.

Mr. O'Donnell commended his point but asked how it would be implemented and how they would encourage the public to do it. Mr. Mateyko did not have a method in mind but stated that evidently it had been done before all over the country.

Ms. Sipes asked if this would be simply planting new trees or if they would have to be connected to other trees to be part of the canopy. Dr. Huntley explained that the concept of tree canopy measurement was to take a satellite shot of the area of the City and count how much of the area was tree vs. how much was not. For example, if she planted an oak tree on her own, it would probably not count towards the tree canopy percentage for a couple decades.

Mr. Mateyko proposed considering it as increasing the tree canopy, to which Dr. Huntley replied they could put it under tree protection, as it was one of their specific goals. Mr. Mateyko continued that all these things could work together, as it was comparable to human health in which taking out a variable resulted in the whole system failing. Leaving water would be one, leaving the leaves would be another, and then leaving the dark and leaving the canopy.

7. <u>DARK SKY INITIATIVE – SHEILA SMITH</u>

Dr. Huntley stated that she would not discuss the Dark Sky Initiative this evening as it was Ms. Smith's topic and suggested waiting until she returned for next month's meeting.

8. <u>CONSIDERATION OF SUPPLEMENTING REVENUE SHARING FUNDING FOR 2024 GRANT YEAR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RELATED APPLICATIONS – RENEE BENSLEY</u>

Dr. Huntley commented that she was excited about this topic, previously running into Ms. Bensley a few weeks ago and having a short exchange with her about this idea of having the CAC work with the Community Development and Revenue Sharing Advisory Committee.

Ms. Bensley thanked the CAC for speaking with her this evening. She explained that the Planning and Development Department was tasked with administering their Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Revenue Sharing funds for the City of Newark. The CDBG was federal grant money that was given to Newark as a sub-grantee of New Castle County to administer for the purpose of assisting low-income individuals in their community. Revenue sharing was a program of City funds that they used to distribute to nonprofits in the area, and those funds each year were given out in the form of grants to local nonprofits and community organizations that were doing work to support the residents of the City of Newark.

Ms. Bensley explained that one of the things in conversation with individuals this year that had come up was that they were aware that the CAC had been interested in looking at different mechanisms for potential grant funding for groups in the community, and the Planning and Development Department typically received roughly three to four times the amount of requests than they actually had for grant money to give out each year. While the CDBG money and the Revenue Sharing funds were not specifically targeted toward environmentally related goals, they did get grant applicants that had goals they thought would overlap with the CAC's that often were not able to be fully funded because of the lack of funding to go around.

Ms. Bensley continued that an idea they had internally was to see if there could be an opportunity for partnership as to where the CAC could have an avenue to put some of their funding toward community organizations that were doing environmentally related work. That would go into an existing grant structure that had an application process, a review process, a reporting process, and an MOU they did with organizations to check the reimbursements and make sure they were going toward helping City residents. She shared a couple examples of programs they had received applications for recently. One was the NHA; the Revenue Sharing Group had given them funds to help rehab some of their houses to have more environmentally friendly options as far as heating – they did conversions of oil heat to heat pumps, insulation-type projects, replacing windows and doors, weatherization-type things, etc. to help them. Another was several home repair projects that did weatherization and energy efficiency related repairs as part of that for low-income Newark residents. They had the home improvement program which was run through the Planning and Development Department. They had the Senior Home Repair program with weatherization, run through the Newark Senior Center that they gave money to. More recently, they had the Good Neighbors program, which was a nonprofit that did home repair and fixes for residents who were low-income in the City.

Another group they had that could potentially had been partnered with the CAC was Powering Our Future, which came to the Revenue Sharing Group last year; they were only able to fund 20% of their request, as they requested $5,656 and they were only able to fund them by $1K. That would have been an example of a possible partnership.

Ms. Bensley explained that in looking at this for the future, if the CAC were to provide grant funding for some of these projects, they would want to introduce a step in the approval process to where the CAC had the opportunity to review the applicants that the Revenue Sharing Group would be recommending for funding with their dollars. Typically, the way this program worked was that they accepted applications through mid-to-late August, and then the Community Development Advisory Committee would get together in September to vet all of the applications, discuss where the money should be applied, and other things of that nature. If there was an additional pot of money from the CAC, at their October meeting they could bring forward any applications that would be environmentally related that had been reviewed for consideration prior to taking the final recommendation to Council. The grant year for Revenue Sharing ran from January 1 to December 31, and for CDBG, ran from July 1 to June 30. They would more than likely look at having any CAC funds run with the Revenue Sharing funds from January 1 to December 31 as that was the City's budget year, and that was when the CAC funds would be expended anyway.

Ms. Bensley stated they were looking to the CAC for feedback as to their interest and then perhaps discussion in the upcoming months before they got to the point where they were reviewing applications to see if there were funds that they would like to put in this either as a pilot or something larger for next year, and then have that be a part of that discussion when they were reviewing grant applications for this year as to what was possible.

Dr. Huntley once again commented that she was excited that this idea brought to the CAC in part because she thought they had targeted certain organizations that they happened to know about and asked whether or not they wanted to partner in projects that the CAC could fund, and this would be an avenue for them to put the call out and have other groups that they did not know about actually come to them so they could forge new partnerships.

Mr. O'Donnell agreed with the October timeframe as by that point the CAC would often realize they still had an amount of money and needed to use it or lose it.

Ms. Bensley clarified that they would be dedicating 2024 dollars because what they would be considering in this year would be grant applications to be funded in 2024. This would not help to spend 2023 money, but it would be dedicating an allocation of their 2024 dollars.

Mr. O'Donnell responded that it fit well within Mr. Martindale's recommendation of planning in the second half of the year for the year following.

Ms. Sipes asked for the amount of applications usually received every year.

Ms. Bensley stated that they had about 15-20 applications last year, but not all of them were necessarily going to be in CAC's wheelhouse. There were many different projects throughout the City that they funded, whether that was subsidizing daycare for low-income kids, doing their first-time homebuyer program and helping with downpayment and settlement assistance, doing work with Public Works to help with ADA accessibility in the City, etc. Those all qualified under CDBG but did not fit with the mission of the CAC. They would want to make sure that any dollars the CAC put forward were put toward applications that fit their mission. For example, if a successful application was to supplement the money for the home improvement program, they would try to make sure that any applicants who were coming through that program, the funds the CAC put forward would be dedicated toward helping to weatherize or improve energy efficiency. Not every project that came through that program would fit that goal, but they would try to make sure that when dipping into the dollars from the CAC that it would fit their goals.

Dr. Huntley asked if this would be a separate call or if it would just go under the Revenue Sharing program.

Ms. Bensley explained that they would be looking likely to supplement the existing Revenue Sharing program with dedicated dollars toward environmentally related projects. She would need to speak to the accountants as they had specific visions about what was done with different money and how it was accounted for, but her vision would be that they were running it through the same grant program, and they would not be having necessarily a separate application process or pot of money. It would be more directing applicants into the same process but letting them know that if they were related to environmental sustainability or conservation, they had the opportunity to dip into the additional pot of funds.

Dr. Huntley assumed that they sent out communication to different groups to advertise this program and asked if it would be possible to put in their clause to say that if they were proposing a conservation related project, they had to include a paragraph to describe how it would essentially fit the CAC's goals. Ms. Bensley responded that this was something they could do. She as well explained that when they would receive the applications and get them ready for review, if they flagged something they believed could be related and did not think was fleshed out enough, they could ask the applicant for supplemental information to make sure that the CAC had what they needed to make an appropriate decision.

Mr. Mateyko asked for the magnitude of funding level that was usually encountered with this. Ms. Bensley asked if this was for what was being given out or what was being requested. Mr. Mateyko clarified that he was asking regarding the money they gave out. Ms. Bensley explained that typical CDBG was around \$260K-\$270K and Revenue Sharing was in the \$70K neighborhood. They expected a decrease in their CDBG funding, however, because they had an undercount of 10% with the 2020 census and that money was based on population.

Dr. Huntley asked what the average grant size given was. Ms. Bensley explained that they could range from $1K to $50-$60K depending on what funding they had for the year and how many applications received. The highest was $80K-$100K, but that was very rare. Many programs such as the home improvement program and the first-time buyer program were loans and not grants, so when that house would be sold in the future, they would receive that money back which would be program income. When they had program income, they would sometimes put additional funds into the home improvement program or similar because the demand always exceeded what they had available. In such a year where they had higher amounts like that, it was due to program income where someone had sold their house with loans and that money was paid back.

Dr. Huntley suggested taking time to think about this proposition and vote on it at a future meeting. She thanked Ms. Bensley once more for attending.

Ms. Bensley reminded that they would have their application deadline in August, so she suggested that the CAC give their answer regarding funding this before the end August as when the Revenue Sharing group would start evaluating the applications, they would know what they were working with as far as funding.

Dr. Huntley suggested putting this on the agenda for July. She reiterated they could communicate if they wanted an extra section about there being additional money for conservation-related projects.

Before moving onto the next agenda item, Dr. Huntley acknowledged Michael Smith of Powering Our Future was now in attendance. She explained that he missed that the CAC postponed his agenda item until next month in light of his absence.

9. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST

- June – Nature Equity Well-Being – John Mateyko
- July – Conservation Corner: Electric Bikes – Helga Huntley
- August – English Ivy – Sheila Smith

Dr. Huntley stated that in there was supposed to be a May article from Lauren O’Connor regarding PFAS Forever Chemicals, however she had not seen it.

She noted that Mr. Mateyko volunteered to write about Nature Equity Well-Being in June, to which he responded he did not recall. She asked if he wanted to write on another topic, and he asked when this would be for, to which she responded it was for this month. Dr. Huntley then asked if he wished to write for a future date or if he wanted to be taken off entirely. He did not know when, so Dr. Huntley suggested September.

Dr. Huntley reminded that she and Mr. O’Donnell were going to write about electric bikes and suggested writing that this month so it would be released in July. Mr. O’Donnell pointed out that he sent her an article to use as a source already.

Dr. Huntley read that Ms. Smith was scheduled to write about English Ivy in August and asked if anyone wanted to add anything for the future.

Ms. Sipes responded that she would keep thinking.

Dr. Huntley asked if either she or Ms. Palanisami were still in touch with Ms. O'Connor and asked if they knew what happened to the PFAS May article. Ms. Sipes responded that it may have been the case where she had forgotten about it and could follow up with her about it, to which maybe she would be able to write it in September or October.

Dr. Huntley thought it was a great topic to write on as there was currently a City investment in PFAS treatment.

Mr. Mateyko stated that before, he did not know which article Dr. Huntley was talking about, but his June article had already been sent to Josh Shannon of The Newark Post.

Dr. Huntley recounted that they had articles through August, and they would see what would happen for September.

10. <u>OLD/NEW BUSINESS</u>

Ms. Palanisami stated that she had a prior DEMEC question during the priority discussion, to which Dr. Huntley remembered that she had intended to give her the floor during that conversation.

Dr. Huntley recalled that Ms. Palanisami brought up a Senate bill that was up for discussion in the last legislative period regarding setting renewable energy goals for the State. It ultimately was pulled and reintroduced this current legislative period; the main reason for its pulling was DEMEC's disapproval. Their main argument was that they thought there was not enough time to consider was what in the bill rather than they substantively opposed it. However, she heard that in discussions they also voiced objections to similar renewable energy goals themselves. The CAC became concerned that DEMEC was not representing the City of Newark's position on renewable energy.

Mr. Martindale explained that this was SB-305, a climate change bill, last year. Newark's position was that the goals of the bill were mostly in line with the sustainability plan with slight differences. From Newark's perspective, they did not have much issue with this bill for that reason. DEMEC initially took opposition stance to the bill until such a time that the DEMEC Board of Directors were able to meet to discuss it fully.

He went on to explain that bill was introduced around effectively this time last year, and asked Ms. Bensley how many legislative dates there were left in this session. Ms. Bensley responded that there were nine. He informed that the concern was that this was a very large bill introduced very late in the legislative process; beyond that, it was to his understanding that this was pulled before DEMEC was able to reconvene on this subject and come back with additional thoughts. He did not know their current stance, but he knew that Newark was not alone in the fact that they were indifferent to the bill passing.

Ms. Palanisami stated that she would do more research to see the status of the bill now.

Michael Smith approached the mic to clarify that this bill was now called HB-99 and was just passed out of the House last week. It was now in the Senate Environment Energy and Transportation Committee waiting for consideration.

Ms. Palanisami asked if he knew of DEMEC's current stance on it, to which he responded that he did not.

Mr. Martindale stated that he had not heard anything on either front and assumed that they were at least not in opposition, or they would be hearing of it already.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the CAC was in favor of the bill passing and if they had any reason to oppose of it.

Dr. Huntley stated that City Council talked to its lobbyist frequently, and asked if they gave any instruction to him regarding this bill. She then asked if the City had taken an official position on it. Mr. Martindale replied that they were monitoring it.

Dr. Huntley suggested being more cognizant of these things in the future to pay attention to State legislation and encourage City Council to take a positive stance on these issues.

Mr. Mateyko clarified that he did not know the backstory or how much interaction went on between the City and DEMEC, but he perceived that there were two main opponents of the bill and did not know which one had more power. These were the Chamber of Commerce and DEMEC, and it came very sudden. The idea was to hit quickly and stop it, as the next week it was coming up for its hearing. He believed that it was not a policy issue; it was more so just politics. He was concerned about the standing position on how someone like DEMEC voted or represented the public at the political level. They were a very large fraction of their constituency, and it would have been appropriate for that to be represented.

Ms. Bensley explained that DEMEC was similar to the City in that they had a board that they reported to. The City's was City Council, and DEMEC had its own Board of Directors. Staff was not empowered to take positions without guidance from the Board. For example, City Council gave direction to the lobbyist as to what position the City was going to take on an issue. It was not the City Manager or staff; they got their direction from City Council. When a bill was introduced, and appropriate time was not given to adhere to public meeting laws in the City's case or to get the Board together in DEMEC's case, they could not vet it and get a position from the board to take it. They could not support something that they did not have the time to vet and get a direction from the Board to do so. Ms. Bensley cautioned that what appeared to be something contradictory to Newark's goals may simply be a function of time. She believed that the idea that in the current version, DEMEC had not, to her understanding, taken a negative position on the bill. She would not hold last year against them when there was a bill that was introduced and was put right into committee without any time for stakeholders to go back to the appropriate groups to take an official position.

Dr. Huntley replied that it was good to hear that this year was working out better. She thought that an organization should not take a positive or negative position if they were not empowered by their Board. However, if this was working out better, then she believed they were on the right track.

11. <u>NEXT MEETING – JUNE 13, 2023</u>

MOTION BY MR. MATEYKO, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: TO ADJOURN THIS MEETING.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Jordan Herring
Administrative Professional I

/jh