

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 10, 2023

MEETING CONVENED: 7:00 p.m. Council Chambers

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

STAFF: Jeffrey Martindale, Chief Procurement and Projects Officer
Jordan Herring, Administrative Professional I
Mike Fortner, Senior Planner

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2023:

Ms. Palanisami stated Ms. Purchase James wished for the Lenape tribe to be acknowledged in the community development plan. She asked if this comment was included in the minutes.

Jordan Herring, Administrative Professional I, confirmed it is included in the minutes.

Ms. Smith requested the minutes be clarified to reflect her statement that Sawtooth Oaks were not native to Delaware but chosen for their street use value. She additionally clarified she spoke about having planned meetings as opposed to having multiple meetings already.

MOTION BY MS. SIPES, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2023, MEETING AS AMENDED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, MATEYKO, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SIPES, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dr. Nancy Boyer, Nottingham Road, was concerned the State Legislature is disincentivizing solar energy usage. She did not understand why there is an 8% cap for the net metering residents are being reimbursed for. She believed Newark's enthusiasm and resources could contribute to the increase in solar energy usage.

Mr. O'Donnell shared Sen. Stephanie Hansen has frequent meetings about the net energy plan. It has increased to 8% after previously being 5%. The cap is due to how quickly the State should adopt solar energy. He agreed the amount should be more, but there has been progress made towards greater increases.

Dr. Huntley stated net metering is a separate issue from the cap. Every individual customer wanting to implement solar is not capped. It is over 100% of what was used in the previous year. The 8% cap pertains to how much a utility must accept from private solar. Newark customers need approval from the City to connect solar panels to the grid. They cannot deny connection until that 8% limit has been reached. This limit was increased when Middletown reached the 5% limit, and its customers were denied solar panel connection as a result. However, when increasing this limit, an issue in net metering was discovered. She explained electricity from solar panels counts as a credit to a customer's electric bill. When electricity is bought from a provider, this is counted first. Essentially, this means the provider is buying solar electricity at retail prices as opposed to wholesale prices. This is not sustainable for utilities in the long term. Now, providers allow net metering for all solar energy, but only for 12 months.

She further explained Newark does not run this 12 months from January to December, as solar energy is produced less mid-winter. The City's period begins in March, where in the spring, the ratio of production to usage is even. However, in the summer, credits can be accrued if more solar energy is produced than used by the resident. In the winter, those credits can be redeemed. Leftover credits at the end of the twelve months expire. Net metering is limited because it is not affordable for utilities.

Dr. Boyer recalled the base \$30 per month fee. She explained she has been using the City's process for the past three years and built many credits. She stated she was allowed to install what was projected to produce 110% of her usage average for the last two years. She tried to use as little electricity as possible and generated many credits. She hoped the CAC could encourage such practices.

Ms. Smith explained solar energy needs capacity, infrastructure, and time. The process is rather slow but is moving on a State-level and presumably a City-level. She asked if Mr. Martindale had any input.

Jeffrey Martindale, Chief Procurement and Projects Officer, stated the City is limited in what it can do as the issue is more statewide. He explained the CAC advises Council on actions to take, so there could be discussion of a resolution to make local change. They could additionally advise Council to target this issue for lobbying efforts in the next legislative session.

Dr. Huntley asked if Dr. Boyer's main concern is losing accrued credits.

Dr. Boyer claimed it is encouraging solar energy production in free real estate and incentivizing solar panel implementation. She stated she cannot recycle the energy she produces unless she goes off the grid. She must feed it into the grid for credits, but excess credits will be confiscated instead of bought. She hoped the CAC would consider ways to encourage more home production and bookkeeping of solar energy infrastructure.

Dr. Huntley stated the City must obey the State law that net metering credits cannot be taken after 12 months. The commission is in favor of increasing solar and does much work with the City to advance it. She noted Mr. O'Donnell is trying to work towards improvement with State legislators. She is aware net metering is not encouraging energy conservation. She encouraged Dr. Boyer to contact Sen. Hansen, who is investigating adjusting those rules to improve their function.

Dr. Boyer responded she has not been in much contact with the State.

Ms. Smith stated this is in the CAC's sustainability plan and they have met their 2023 renewable energy goals. However, it will once again be a goal to meet in 2024.

Jan Baty, District 3, quoted an excerpt from "Nature's Best Hope" by Doug Tallamy: "In 1903, with the State of Arizona on the verge of mining the Grand Canyon, President Roosevelt stood on the canyon's lip, gazed out over its unique magnificence, and uttered the five words that would save it: 'Leave it as it is.' Unfortunately, because only 5% of land in the lower 48 states is now in anything close to a pristine, self-sustaining ecological condition, we've lost the opportunity to save most of our country from such development. 95% of the country has been logged, tilled, drained, grazed, paved, or otherwise developed. Our rivers have been straightened and dammed, and several no longer reach the sea. Our air has been polluted, our aquifers pumped nearly dry, and our climate changed for centuries to come. We have purposefully imported thousands of species of plants, insects, and diseases from other lands, which have decimated many native plant communities on which local food webs depend, and we have carved the natural world into tiny remnants, each too small and too isolated to support the variety of species required to sustain the ecosystems that support us."

Ms. Baty noted the last sentence of the excerpt. She has always supported the idea of a home-grown national park, introduced in the book. This idea consists of understanding neighborhoods and communities to find and create healthy ecosystems. When digging up her yard in the past, people gave her plants to add to it. However, she and others need assistance in knowing what plants should be added. She believed communities need to be advised on how to create shared understanding to be able to affect their local ecosystem. She asked the CAC to consider how a collaborative community can be created and educated for this purpose, possibly including Mr. Tallamy.

Ms. Smith stated she was impacted by reading many of Mr. Tallamy's books, but he does not become too involved. However, he gives frequent lectures in the area and is very engaged in these ideas. She could access the home-grown national park initiative online.

She shared she received an email from Dr. Chris Williams, Director of the University of Delaware's Sustainability Council. He asked her about funding as he and the co-chair discussed how to connect and create a wildlife corridor from STAR Campus to White Clay Creek. She wanted to assure Ms. Baty there was interest in this project.

Ms. Smith added representatives of the Delaware Nature Society from the National Wildlife Federation can visit Ms. Baty's yard upon request. However, this will not happen on such a large scale unless her neighbors wish for it. This potential project along with Dickey Park will be two examples and strong advertisements of this initiative. The CAC is a large advocate for the Dickey Park project while she herself is involved in habitat efforts at Phillips Park. She stated there is a large learning curve with these initiatives.

Ms. Baty shared that she saw a beautiful hummingbird in a former CAC member's yard. She wondered how many people would be inspired to create similar environments in their own if they had that experience.

3. NEWARK BIKE PLAN – MIKE FORTNER (30 MINUTES)

Mike Fortner, Senior Planner, stated he was presenting today with Heather Dunnigan, WILMAPCO and board member of the Newark Bike Project, and Mark Deshon, a founder of BikeNewark. Mr. Deshon

is credited with starting Newark's "Bike To Work" day.

Mr. Fortner introduced this presentation will share updates to the Newark Bicycle Plan. As it is a ten-year project, the last was done in 2014, and this will be the plan for 2024. The beginning process itself will take approximately one year, however. This consists of community engagement and reaching out to different groups for input. Eventually, a draft will be brought forth. He requested the CAC's endorsement as biking is a form of transportation that greatly aligns with overall sustainability goals. It will be approved by both Newark's and WILMAPCO's Councils.

Mr. Deshon explained BikeNewark originated from the Newark Bicycle Committee, an actual City committee in the early 2000's. In 2017, it became its own nonprofit partnership. Partners include the City of Newark, WILMAPCO, Newark Bike Project, the University of Delaware, DelDOT, Bike Delaware, and Delaware Greenways. BikeNewark's success has come from their ability to work with these foundation partners and form ad-hoc partnerships depending upon the project. They believe bringing together stakeholders and decision makers is the best way to quickly get things done. Part of their mission is to accelerate their progress in Newark. They additionally feel this initiative is a way to encourage clean transportation, less car usage, and more safety. He shared their objectives are rather broad, but BikeNewark continues to work with the City and DelDOT to encourage both new and existing projects.

Mr. Fortner stated the 2014 plan provides a framework for the 2024 plan. This presentation will review progress since 2014, update their vision and action, and update recommendations to their bicycle network, programs, and policies. A new focus will be to better integrate equity and sustainability.

He shared one of their most innovative accomplishments was the Delaware Avenue bicycle lane and bridge. Another major accomplishment is the bicycle network with wayfinding signs from BikeNewark. He noted the Unicity buses used to have bike racks, but the program has since been sunset. However, upon the implementation of DART Connect Newark, their vehicles have bike racks and can be requested at more locations than typical bus stops.

Mr. Fortner proceeded to share a list of upcoming projects. He noted construction on 896, which consists of major bicycle improvements. One inclusion is a bridge that will be constructed to I-95 for bicyclists and pedestrians. The 896 Transportation Improvement District (TID) will have multiple improvements to make it more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. This will lean over the I-95 highway and connect to a bicycle network along the other side of the bridge. This should be completed in a few years.

Another is a connection between the Charlie Emerson Bridge and Pomeroy Trail. He pointed out the south side of the bridge empties out, and while there is a sidewalk, the trail does not continue. This will create a trail to connect to the Pomeroy as well as additional links.

Mr. Deshon stated this project is a part of the planned Newark Bikeways Network. This is a segment that will need to be completed by present time and 2025. The addition of the City project will enable them to complete another segment of the bikeway. He noted other projects include protective bike lanes along Wyoming Road and potential plans to slow traffic and increase bicycle safety on Chrysler Avenue.

Mr. Fortner noted many projects were completed, including the TID and New Castle County Bicycle Plan. Additionally, there are many projects underway.

He shared Newark participated in a rating program by the League of American Bicyclists, starting in 2003. While first receiving an honorable mention, Newark achieved a Bronze level rating by 2010. This year, their rating increased to Silver as one of the top 150 bicycle-friendly communities in the United States. He noted Gold and Platinum are the next levels to achieve, with only five municipalities in the country achieving the latter. The criteria for reaching these levels are engineering, education, encouragement, evaluation & planning, and equity & accessibility. One factor BikeNewark is looking to improve is equity and inclusiveness in their plan. He explained the goal of Newark is not primarily to achieve a Gold or Platinum rating, but what they wish to do for bike friendliness as a community. The ratings mainly correlate to their evaluation.

Mr. Fortner shared recommendations for improvements from the League of American Bicyclists. He believed some may be more difficult to achieve than others, such as working with school systems, the Public Bike Share program, and the Vision Zero policy. Vision Zero correlates to adopting policies to reduce to zero incidents and deaths. Strategic issues BikeNewark will address are connecting with land use, equity, sustainability, Vision Zero, and bicycle parking.

He explained Theme 2 for BikeNewark is to plan and develop for all. Major components include supporting a car-free lifestyle, reducing the greenhouse gas footprint, and providing a safe place for residents to both walk and bicycle.

Mr. Fortner wished to know how this update applies to the CAC's goals of the sustainability plan. He noted this would not be the only opportunity for them to give input. After multiple events, they will return for additional input and recommendations.

Ms. Smith noted the Chrysler Avenue Project is on tonight's agenda.

Ms. Dunnigan stated that is an example of how bicycle planning could work in tandem with sustainability in a project.

Ms. Smith stated trees were a good way to improve comfortability for bicyclists and pedestrians. She noted there was frequent discussion of the warming climate and conditions on roads and sidewalks.

Ms. Dunnigan stated sustainability is a focus of this plan, but the goals will be set by listening to the community. This is the beginning of a year-long process. Cooling the streets of the community and improving bicycle facilities go hand-in-hand, and a comfortable environment to bike in is important. Incorporation of trees and pervious surfaces are critical for this initiative, especially with the increase in extreme temperatures. A bicycle network compatible for people who use their bikes for both recreational and mandatory purposes are important to equity and sustainability. She invited them not only to ask questions but voice what they wish to see.

Ms. Smith voiced her appreciation for the engineering and roadwork done for these bicycle-friendly areas.

Mr. Mateyko believes shade will be needed in the future for these ideas to be feasible. He believed Newark's intersections are the most important but most difficult locations to implement these. He suggested bump-outs could possibly make these changes easier. The difficulty would be in integrating the bump-out with the cut-in for the bus so the bus stop could also receive shade. He believed shade is a necessity for bus stops in the future.

Ms. Dunnigan stated BikeNewark could incorporate designs and suggestions to point the City of Newark in the right direction.

Ms. Palanisami asked if there are any efforts to further bike education.

Ms. Dunnigan stated Newark must improve this item as per the League of American Bicyclists. They suggested that Newark offer a smart cycling class geared towards those who are already frequent bicyclists and wish to improve. The Newark Bike Project plans to collaborate with Downes Elementary School to offer bike classes for the children. Last semester included a bicycle rodeo where multiple students take part in a bicycle course. They observed many young people did not know the foundation of how to ride. This partnership will offer mechanics and introduction to riding classes.

Ms. Smith recalled Downes Elementary School had a site for Safety Town. This taught the children automobile, traffic, and walking safety. She believed the University of Delaware students could benefit from further education.

Mr. Deshon noted he is on an email chain with Tom Coleman, City Manager, and Councilwoman Corinth Ford regarding bicycle safety. He agreed Newark must make efforts to reach its community, especially that of university students. He suggested to Mr. Coleman and Ms. Ford that they must reach out to UD's upper administration. If they work with the City, DelDOT, and BikeNewark, they could begin the process in preventing other serious incidents.

Ms. Smith stated this connection needed to be made as many young people do not increase their visibility when riding their bikes at night.

Dr. Huntley suggested encouraging Newark High School students to commute to school through bicycling. She wondered if a trail along Kirkwood Highway could help make Shue-Medill Middle School biking accessible.

Ms. Dunnigan shared WILMAPCO has begun working with DelDOT and New Castle County on a Kirkwood Highway corridor study. This will include the discussion of bicycling. Additionally, there is another Newport-to-Newark study the county is leading. It provides alternatives to driving directly on Kirkwood Highway.

Dr. Huntley noted Downes Elementary, West Park Elementary, Newark Charter, and Newark High are all bicycle accessible. Shue-Medill is an outlier and is not, which is why it should be incorporated.

Ms. Smith estimated Shue-Medill is a fair distance of 4 miles from Newark.

Ms. Palanisami asked when BikeNewark would like a recommendation.

Mr. Fortner noted this is a year-long process, so there will be time to revisit. There will be available public workshops along with other opportunities to share feedback.

Ms. Dunnigan agreed with Mr. Fortner. There will be in-person workshops for collaboration. They will additionally make efforts towards online public outreach. She welcomed recommendations for other groups to reach out to.

4. CHRYSLER AVENUE PROJECT – WRA – KELLY LOCKMAN/ANDREA TRABELSI (30 MINUTES)

Andrea Trabelsi, Whitman, Requardt & Associates (WRA) LLP, stated she had coordinated with Tim Filasky, Public Works & Water Resources Director. WRA is being consulted for the City's Chrysler Avenue bike and stormwater feasibility study. This is funded in part by a Delaware Bicycle Council grant. This project has been worked on for multiple months. It is a concept-level study to identify opportunities for bicycling as well as stormwater improvements on a planning level. She believed the CAC would be pleased to hear these ideas and how they contribute to sustainability.

Ms. Trabelsi stated in August there was a walk through the corridor with stakeholders to discuss opportunities, challenges, and needs. In September, this presentation was shared with several stakeholders. WRA is hoping to fine-tune their plans with further feedback and produce a presentation for the public and Council. She hoped this would be in mid-November.

She stated feedback from the Chrysler Avenue community consisted of speeding concerns. While not constant, the community feels uncomfortable when excessive speeds are reached on the street. The stakeholders wished to prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists as well as other users of the roadway. They wished to retain on-street parking, make ADA improvements, enhance the safety of pedestrians traveling to school, and explore how Gravenor Lane can be used as a potential route. Gravenor Lane is specifically a low-volume street that would allow right-of-way. The City is interested in investigating how this can be opened for bicyclists, pedestrians, and others.

Ms. Trabelsi stated this feedback helped to conclude it would be best to take a traffic-calmed bicycle boulevard approach. They believed it would not be worthwhile to investigate more detailed concepts. Many of these concepts did not allow for feasible parking and held general safety concerns. A bike boulevard shared lane accomplishes the most objectives.

She described the existing conditions of Chrysler Avenue. The roadway is 36 feet curb to curb. There is an existing shared roadway condition with bicyclists using the roadway. There are 5-foot sidewalks, a boulevard, and parking on each side. There are both underground and above ground utilities that must be considered in the design.

In contrast, Ms. Trabelsi described the conditions under the discussed proposed design. The roadway would be narrowed, but not in its entirety. There are opportunistic locations for chokers (bump-outs.) This would be intermittent with on-street parking. Types of treatments for traffic calming they would consider are curb extensions that would the distance pedestrians will need to cross, chokers or extensions into the road, planted medians, corner extensions with curb radii reduction to slow the turning of cars, and mini roundabouts. The last is not a preferred option. The values of stormwater management are also considered. With these treatments, there are also opportunities for plantings, stormwater retention or detention, and beautification.

She proceeded to share the geographic extent of the corridor and possible design options, beginning with the western edge at Elkton Roads. Many examples could be applied to multiple sections of the corridor. Currently, WRA is identifying the most beneficial treatment areas. After this study, there will be follow-up coordination with residents of the corridor with what treatments make the most sense to them. Two additional options have been explored.

Ms. Trabelsi shared Option A of the Chrysler to Lehigh portion of the corridor. This consists of extending the curb outward and narrowing the street as cars enter and exit Elkton Road. This reduces the distance and exposure of pedestrians crossing the roadway. Bikes would still be traveling in-lane, save for the fact that traffic will be slower. She added chokers could be a range of distance, making them easy to accommodate to a resident's needs. Extending the curb forces traffic to move slower. ADA compliant curbs and pedestrian ways help to guide those that are sight impaired. She acknowledged this is a special route which encourages navigation identification and the addition of wayfinding signage.

She proceeded to share Option B, which consists of the addition of a planted median treatment. This reduces the ability for cars to park directly on Chrysler Avenue, but it can be retained for the four homeowners on the adjacent roadways. The curb distance would be shortened by the pedestrian island rather than narrowed roadways. A mini roundabout would be included in this plan.

Ms. Smith noted she is very familiar with how residents of Chrysler Avenue frequently use on-street parking. She worried about the likelihood of the median and bump-outs eliminating it. However, this specific section may not be as problematic. Regardless, she did not want to encourage residents to pave more of their property due to a lack of parking.

Ms. Trabelsi responded this treatment would only apply in the Elkton to Lehigh location currently being discussed. For the reasons stated by Ms. Smith, this option is not recommended further down the corridor. She clarified the roundabout would not likely be planted because of safety concerns for larger vehicles making left turns.

She stated Option C attempts to explore a transition toward a notable point along the express greenway route. This would be where a transition would be made in the southwest redirection toward the Elkton Road, side path. The idea is to narrow roadways and add potential planting. Some could be reduced if more parking is desired. On one side, this would not be possible. The safety improvement would be that bicycles could traverse across this intersection and have slightly less potential for conflict points as they approach the west side path. However, as there are two parallel roadways, there would be potential conflict points on the other side. She noted this option's design is close to that of the northern Delaware greenway. However, it did not receive much positive response when presented to the stakeholders.

Ms. Trabelsi began to address the Kenyon and Swarthmore portion further east into the corridor. There are opportunities to extend the curb and narrow the width of the overall roadway. This is positive for pedestrian safety, slower speed of traffic, and parking preservation.

Mr. Mateyko asked if it is possible to integrate smaller vegetation into the rain gardens. He believed heat will be a larger safety concern than traffic in the future. He asked if trees and vegetation were being omitted from the diagrams for clarity.

Ms. Trabelsi explained the initial concepts do not focus on the details of where vegetation would be planted. She stated the south side of the roadway is the location of most overhead utilities. There are additionally underground utilities on both sides. The details of vegetation will be considered when the design is decided.

Ms. Smith stated there is a fair distance along Chrysler Avenue with underground electrical wires. She asked if this was being considered in the design.

Ms. Trabelsi confirmed this is so. There are sections of the street with no overhead wires. She reiterated the next step is to plan vegetation that does not obscure sight and pose as safety concerns.

Mr. Mateyko asked if it is possible to incorporate a single tree into the center of the roundabout.

Ms. Trabelsi anticipated this would not be advisable. Larger vehicles may not be able to curve through. It could be explored further. Curb extensions were received more positively by the stakeholders.

Ms. Dunnigan added that placing trees on roundabouts poses safety concerns due to their mountable curb. It would need to be very skinny if so to prevent injuries and lack of visibility.

Ms. Trabelsi proceeded to show example of what this intersection could look like with alternative treatments. The narrowed road width, curb-to-curb, could be about 22 feet. However, the dimensions of the chokers and extended curb areas could vary. She noted there is flexibility, but there will need to be breaks for driveways.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if large vehicles would be able to navigate the narrowed intersections. Ms. Trabelsi confirmed they would be.

Ms. Trabelsi showed a diagram of the entire corridor. WRA completed a high-level analysis related to stormwater damage. There are points of interception where drainage from the Shull Drive and Chrysler Avenue intersection falls into. This area drains to Phillips Park. The western end of the corridor does not have stormwater pipes. There is more potential in other areas to tie-in to existing stormwater facilities. In reviewing an estimate of how much these extensions would reduce impervious surface, it was about 8,500 square feet. At that high-level evaluation, there is not a notable reduction of drainage flow. However, there is potential to reduce particulates and improve quality.

She clarified this study is not to design and engineer facilities. However, there could be facilities that tie into the stormwater pipe system. There could additionally be facilities that just catch the drainage.

Ms. Trabelsi further shared a graphic of how vehicles of various sizes would be able to turn at this intersection. She noted all could, albeit differently. When addressing how they would turn when a roundabout is present, she agreed there was a possibility of running over a tree in the middle. A large tree would not be desired for safety requirements. She shared there are many opportunities to add artistic aesthetic treatments to the roadways for the public to enjoy.

Ms. Smith asked how far along is this project's process and when the window for giving feedback would end.

Ms. Trabelsi stated this project is currently in the first stage of planning to create a report for the public. During a project for Wyoming Road, a public workshop was held in the lobby of Council Chambers before a recommendation report was presented at the Council meeting. Before being presented, it will need high level study work, design engineering, and identified funding.

Ms. Smith asked how much input Ms. Trabelsi would like from the CAC this evening.

Ms. Trabelsi stated she will take any feedback given, as refinements and planning level cost estimates will be considered soon. This feedback will help to see what is needed for funding and when it will move forward if it is to proceed.

Dr. Huntley noted Ms. Trabelsi stated the goals of this project are to make improvements to both stormwater and bicycle friendliness. She knew many of the residents of this neighborhood suffer from flooding. She recalled Ms. Trabelsi informing that the changes to impervious surface would not make a large impact on flooding. Dr. Huntley understood her statement to mean the volume of flooding will not be changed, but the water will be filtered more.

Mr. Trabelsi stated this could catch water and accommodate for more off the roadway. However, it will not significantly reduce the flow. This is an intervention to improve quality. She noted this project is currently only at its concept level.

Dr. Huntley asked if any other measures in engineering can be taken to improve the flooding.

Ms. Trabelsi responded this would be by adding pipes. She stated she had not yet heard much about flooding in this area but wanted to know more. WRA has not yet reviewed many of the engineering details for piping and infrastructure.

Ms. Smith noted Ms. Trabelsi was looking for feedback based on designs.

Mr. O'Donnell stated if pipes are trenched for drainage, this is an opportunity to underground overhead wires. This allows for planting trees and providing shade without overhead obstructions.

He supported the idea of a roundabout until the safety issues were posed. He suggested a pervious pavement or sod roundabout could help address both drainage and impervious surface. It can be driven over in the rare cases it needs to while adding green space.

Ms. Sipes supported addressing the stormwater issues for both Chrysler Avenue's flooding and the drainage to Phillips Park.

Ms. Smith encouraged more pervious surface as it could help in combatting flooding and street flow.

Mr. Mateyko supported these designs, wishing to see more quantity. However, he noted it would receive pushback and resistance until temperatures become more extreme. He suggested 24-inch plantings could help protect pedestrians from radiation reflected from asphalt. 18-inch plantings could be added at the end of driveways to allow for pedestrian visibility. He supported designing for additive change in the future.

Ms. Palanisami stated she will follow up with Ms. Trabelsi via email.

Ms. Sipes requested shielded lights to prevent light trespass and the addition of lights if they do not already exist.

Dr. Huntley agreed, noting the color of the lights is also important.

5. OPT-OUT POLICY FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY – ANDREW O'DONNELL (20 MINUTES)

This discussion was postponed to the following month.

6. DISCUSSION & VOTE ON MEMO FOR DICKEY PARK IMPROVEMENTS TO PRESENT TO PARKS & RECREATION (20 MINUTES)

Ms. Smith noted feedback from both the CAC and Mr. Spadafino was transcribed in September's meeting minutes. She noted there was consideration for many items they wished to recommend. Items included walking paths, more trees, aesthetic improvements, benches, cooling, ecosystems, native plants, and stormwater management. Many of these items are included in the sustainability plan.

Ms. Smith asked if the recommendation would need to be made at this meeting.

Ms. Herring explained the recommendation will need to be prepared, written, and voted on by the CAC. After submitting it to her, she will put it on memo paper. She recalled Mr. Spadafino stating he would like it in October at the previous meeting.

Ms. Smith asked if the CAC wished to put a list together to make a recommendation. She stated voting on a recommendation does not make guaranteed.

Ms. Palanisami asked if Ms. Sipes, as the District 4 member, had attended any meetings relating to Dickey Park. She thought it would be better for recommendations to come from the community rather than a commission.

Ms. Smith reminded Mr. Spadafino had provided the CAC with handouts including a map, a needs assessment, and opportunities for best practices consistent with the city's environment and climate goals. She stated these were to install rain gardens, incorporate habitat, install bike racks, install benches at the playground, and construct a walking path.

Mr. O'Donnell wished for this to be a pervious walking path.

Ms. Smith continued to share that other items included were to improve tree care, plant more trees, absorb stormwater, provide shade, incorporate native varieties, and create an overall better atmosphere. She stated upgrades will have a spreading effect.

Ms. Sipes asked for a request that their recommendations be published in the community.

Ms. Smith asked what the next step in this plan would be.

Mr. Martindale stated a park project such as this one stems from community feedback. While early in the process, the City will reach out to the community.

Ms. Sipes asked how this would be done.

Mr. Martindale noted the Parks & Recreation Department has a newsletter, mailers, and social media.

Dr. Huntley stated the CAC asked to give early input before the engineers are sent out for preliminary work. This is the first level of the project. She pointed out goals at a level like those presented by Mr. Spadafino are what the department is looking for. They could make a recommendation by supporting all goals listed or adding additional goals.

Ms. Smith offered to pass the document around the table to evaluate the goals presented.

Dr. Huntley supported the written goals and did not identify anything missing.

Ms. Sipes and Mr. O'Donnell agreed.

Ms. Smith wished to significantly reduce the amount of lawn and include more pervious surface.

Mr. Mateyko wanted to add more rain gardens for absorption. Dr. Huntley pointed out this is already included in the document.

Ms. Smith noted staff had already been out to the park numerous times to address the existing stormwater concerns. She stated this list must be more compact.

Mr. Mateyko suggested open cell grass pavers. He believed 70% of shading should include the benefit of grass or soil.

Dr. Huntley would like to keep the recommendation as a broad scope of what the CAC aims for. She suggested the inclusion of environmental justice and renaturalization of the park.

Mr. O'Donnell remarked this would be like a home-grown national park.

Mr. Mateyko wanted to implement a template of thermal criteria to be used.

Dr. Huntley stated this could be added through climate resilience.

Ms. Smith stated this would be the goal of climate resilience, environmental justice, and renaturalization.

She believed the CAC is striving for Dickey Park to be a model for future park renovation.

Ms. Sipes began to record the recommendation as stated by Dr. Huntley:

"We, the Conservation Advisory Commission, recommend to the City of Newark's Parks & Recreation Department to pursue improvements to Dickey Park according to the opportunities for best practices outlined in the document provided by Joe Spadafino at our September meeting as well as to increase the pervious surface and reduce the lawn area overall. The overall goals should be to renaturalize the park, to improve climate resilience, and to achieve greater environmental justice for the surrounding neighborhoods and city overall. We would like this park to become a model for future park renovations."

Mr. Mateyko proposed adding the definition that naturalized should be understood to include the following: natural occurring absence of chemicals, thermal, sonic, and light pollution.

Dr. Huntley wished to keep the recommendation simple and non-exhaustive.

Mr. Mateyko believed this definition to not be too detailed as it could incorporate a new way of thinking. He worried these items contributed to habitat destruction.

Dr. Huntley believed the recommendation's current language captured his wish.

Ms. Smith wished to support no chemicals but believed it could potentially slow the process of the recommendation. She noted Parks & Recreation staff do not use most chemicals except for Roundup for certain types of vegetative management. They could not stop because they do not have enough workforce to complete that excess maintenance without it.

Mr. Mateyko asked if Ms. Smith was permitting for the continued use of Roundup.

Ms. Smith clarified that was not her point. She asked if there was a way to shorten his definition of renaturalization. She wondered if there was a definition that could be reviewed. She noted the CAC has a contact in Parks & Recreation that understands and shows interest in renaturalization.

Dr. Huntley pointed out the CAC will have more opportunities to provide feedback.

Ms. Smith stated this was the CAC's recommendation that Parks & Recreation are on the right track.

Mr. Martindale echoed Dr. Huntley's point. He suggested moving on to vote on the recommendation.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: TO ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATION AS DICTATED TO SAVANNAH.

MOTION PASSED.

Dr. Huntley offered Mr. Mateyko an opportunity to amend the motion.

MOTION BY MR. MATEYKO: TO AMEND THE RECOMMENDATION TO DEFINE NATURAL AS MEANING NATURAL CHEMICALLY, THERMALLY, SONICALLY, AND LUMINOUSLY, OR LIGHT, SOUND, CHEMICALS, AND HEAT.

THE MOTION FAILED TO RECEIVE A SECOND, MOTION DEAD.

Mr. Smith suggested revisiting his suggestion in the future as parts of his amendment were hard to achieve. Light and sound would be hard to achieve due to the presence of the nearby neighborhood and roadways.

Mr. Mateyko stated this would correlate to what takes place inside of the park.

Dr. Huntley pointed out only allowing natural sound would prohibit residents from enjoying the swimming pool. She did not find his definition clear and did not wish to add it to the recommendation.

Mr. Mateyko wanted to address sound given by machinery and how it could be controlled. He believed adding his definition of naturalization could help the department.

Dr. Huntley believed it would be best to move onto a vote as the rest of the CAC did not support adding his definition. She reminded Mr. Mateyko he could vote against it if he wished.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: TO ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATION AS DICTATED TO SAVANNAH.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, MATEYKO, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SIPES, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

7. CITY FUNDING REQUEST FOR LANDSCAPING BETWEEN NCCL SCHOOL AND FIELD OPERATIONS COMPLEX – JEFF MARTINDALE (10 MINUTES)

Jeff Martindale, Chief Procurement and Projects Officer, explained Newark is on par with the fleet electrification of Austin, TX. They have additionally received more grant funding as a percent of their electrification budget than Austin has. While Austin is much larger in terms of fleet and budget, Newark has kept at the same pace with it.

For this item, he began by explaining the City is replacing a fence line around its Field Operations complex. Multiple trees needed to be cleared alongside the fence close to the Newark Center for Creative Learning (NCCL) to access the fence line. The contractor, however, cut more than necessary due to a miscommunication. He showed a diagram, noting that neither the City nor NCCL are pleased with the job. The CAC and NCCL have an existing partnership for the Greenfest event and the CAC has made similar allocations in the past. He felt it was right to help mitigate and make up for this mistake.

The CAC have until next month to allocate their remaining funding. There is \$8K left in the budget if \$12.5K for the Newark Housing Authority is kept to the side. However, there has been no traction with that project yet, so that money could still potentially be allocated towards something else. This request, however, asks for \$3K to implement potentially educational landscaping to fix the eyesore the mistake has made.

Dr. Huntley asked if the path towards the southern end of NCCL's property belongs to the City or NCCL.

Mr. Martindale stated it is currently the property of the City. However, they are currently in the process of transferring its deed to NCCL. This is one of the reasons they are upset with the tree cutting.

Ms. Smith pointed out these are not native trees.

Dr. Huntley stated this is an opportunity to plant native trees.

Mr. O'Donnell stated there are trees in golf courses that are planted so tightly together they can almost be used as fences.

Ms. Smith stated these are Arborvitae trees. They are commonly used for screening.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if this fence is needed for security purposes.

Mr. Martindale explained a physical fence will be built and these trees will block the fence.

Ms. Smith assumed the NCCL would both like their greenery back along with a blocked view of the maintenance yard.

Mr. Martindale pointed out the new fence will have privacy slats for additional screening.

Ms. Sipes asked for the height of the fence.

Mr. Martindale stated the current fence is six feet. The new fence will be eight feet.

Ms. Smith asked if the current contractor will continue to remove these trees.

Mr. Martindale confirmed the current state is where the contractor paused when he and the school discovered the issue. If funding is approved to relandscape, they will continue with the removal to allow for a nicer alternative to be implemented.

Ms. Smith stated she knows an NCCL parent who is very involved with native plant education. She likes working with the school and supports improving them more if they use mostly native plants.

Dr. Huntley asked if the City or the NCCL would use the money and decide what to plant.

Mr. Martindale stated the Parks & Recreation Department will use the money and expedite the process. Herb White, Parks Superintendent, will coordinate with the school. He has extensive knowledge of what would be best to plant in the area and fit the project's intent.

Ms. Smith wondered if tall shrubs could suit the project's needs.

Mr. Martindale noted the intent of the project was to use plants adjacent to shrubs.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if their allocation would fund the fence, plantings, or both.

Mr. Martindale clarified this allocation would only fund the landscaping.

Ms. Palanisami asked if there is a way to monitor the project and how their money is being used.

Mr. Martindale stated coordinating with Mr. White would be the best way to do so. He could also provide a list once this project's details are worked out.

Dr. Huntley asked if Ms. Smith or Ms. Palanisami felt they needed to be involved in the choosing of the plants.

Ms. Smith stated it is the decision of the school. She stated there is someone on-site who is informed in this topic.

Dr. Huntley wondered if it would be best to specify the landscaping consists of native plants.

Ms. Smith agreed if whichever is planted is not invasive.

Dr. Huntley asked if she wished to specify non-invasive plants or only native plants.

Ms. Smith wished to specify no invasives and mostly native plants.

Mr. Mateyko asked if this problem was avoidable.

Mr. Martindale stated he envisioned the tree cutting would be vertical when the project began. The trees would be untangled from the fence, which would mean no planting would be needed. However, the contractor cut horizontally. This was miscommunication that they are working to rectify.

Mr. Mateyko suggested adding a feature to liquidate damages to prevent further mistakes.

Ms. Smith specified the contractors will remove the trees. Mr. White will work with the school to choose the new plants. The Parks & Recreation Department will plant them.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: TO AUTHORIZE THE NEWARK PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT TO UTILIZE UP TO \$3,000 OF THE CAC'S 2023 BUDGET FOR THE PURPOSES OF RELANDSCAPING A STRIP OF LAND BETWEEN THE NCCL SCHOOL AND CITY FIELD OPERATIONS COMPLEX. THE NEW PLANTINGS SHALL CONSIST OF NO INVASIVES AND MOSTLY NATIVE PLANTS AND SHALL BE CHOSEN IN COORDINATION BETWEEN THE PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND NCCL.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, MATEYKO, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SIPES, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

Ms. Palanisami asked if Mr. Martindale knew the schedule for this project.

Mr. Martindale stated now is the optimal planting season. Staff hope to begin as soon as possible.

Ms. Smith asked if this project could be modified in the future.

Mr. Martindale clarified this is so.

8. COMMUNITY DAY REPORT (10 MINUTES)

Ms. Smith believed the CAC was successful and thanked all who assisted. There were in-depth interactions with approximately 20 people before it rained out. There was a winner for the tree raffle.

Dr. Huntley thanked her for taking the lead on their Community Day efforts.

9. URBAN COOLING – SHEILA SMITH (20 MINUTES)

Ms. Smith believed there is still an urgent need to discuss urban cooling. She felt it is not being considered by current planners in Newark. She has had three conversations. She has a list of the items included in the green building point system, as explained to her by Renee Bensley, Planning & Development Director. She wanted to make the CAC's ideas for urban cooling known.

10. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST

- October – Mikayla Rypkema
- November – Savannah Sipes
- December – John Mateyko

Ms. Smith stated she had not yet heard from Ms. Rypkema about her article.

Ms. Sipes asked when she would need to have her article submitted by.

Ms. Smith stated it will need to be submitted by the last Friday of October if possible. It will be submitted first to Ms. Smith or another member of the CAC for feedback. However, they do not have control of when the article is placed in The Newark Post.

11. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

None.

12. NEXT MEETING – NOVEMBER 14, 2023

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Jordan Herring
Administrative Professional I

/jh