

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 14, 2025

MEETING CONVENED: 7:04 p.m. Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Cambron, George Irvine, Helga Huntley, Andrew O'Donnell (*virtual*), John Mateyko, Sheila Smith

STAFF: Jordan Herring, Administrative Professional I
Jeff Martindale, Chief Procurement & Projects Officer
Tara Schiano, City Secretary/Director of Legislative Services

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 10, 2024:

Dr. Irvine proposed correcting a redundant typo on Page 2 of the December meeting minutes.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MS. SMITH: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 10, 2025 MEETING AS AMENDED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, IRVINE, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

3. 2025 PROCEDURAL REFRESHERS – TARA SCHIANO (5 MINUTES)

Tara Schiano, City Secretary, updated the CAC on best practices and procedures for agendas, meetings, and correspondence. This included:

- FOIA provisions and regulations.
- Send any documents to the City Secretary's Office (Ms. Herring, and another staff member copied in case of her absence) to disseminate if they desire to go out to the rest of the commission. These are to be titled "CAC items for distribution."
- Include documents in the CAC's agenda packet 7 days before the meeting, as agendas will be posted 7 days in advance.
- Remain realistic about agenda item times and only place items on the agenda they know they can get through. Time-sensitive items can also be briefly discussed under Old & New Business prior to the next meeting.

- Assist the Chair whenever possible in adhering to the timeline of each agenda item.
- Call on all participants to provide comments, in person and virtually, and gently notify any speaker if they exceed their dedicated time limit or stray off-topic.
- Notify the City Secretary's Office staff member (Ms. Herring) as soon as possible if the CAC wants to invite any staff member to a future meeting so their attendance can be coordinated appropriately.
- Identify themselves by name before speaking on the record.

Dr. Huntley asked how the CAC can more effectively get their recommendations on Council agendas for discussion.

Ms. Schiano explained that when a recommendation is made, formalized, and sent to the Council, it is at the Council's discretion whether to proceed with it.

Dr. Huntley noted that when she spoke directly to the Council about the CAC's recommendation to acknowledge climate change as a health hazard, multiple Councilmembers voiced their desire to discuss the topic on a future Council agenda. She asked if she could be informed if it would be placed on an agenda.

Ms. Schiano responded in the affirmative. She stated she would follow up with the Council about that specific recommendation. She noted that due to the budget season, agenda formats/scheduling, and holidays, it often takes significant time for even Council-backed items to be placed on a meeting agenda.

Mr. Mateyko asked if any of the current FOIA guidelines have been recently added.

Ms. Schiano stated that these guidelines have long existed. She could forward a brief description of FOIA and reference links to the CAC.

Dr. Huntley suggested adding this information from Ms. Schiano to the CAC Welcome Packet, which can then be distributed to the entire group to remain updated and informed.

The Chair opened the floor to public comment.

There was no public comment, and the Chair proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

4. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN REVISIONS – JEFF MARTINDALE (20 MINUTES)

Jeff Martindale, Chief Procurement & Projects Officer, opened the floor to comments and suggestions from the CAC about the revised Sustainability Plan draft.

Dr. Huntley stated she was impressed with the revisions as she read them in more detail. She commended Mr. Martindale for framing these revisions with the CAC's vision.

The CAC offered their comments and suggestions to Mr. Martindale:

- **Page 2, Enhanced Bike Infrastructure:** Remove the mention of a bike-sharing program and add that Newark considers the need of bike traffic by default in all road decisions.
- **Page 2, Urban Greening Initiatives:** Note that the Tree Giveaway program began in 2022 as a

response to the Sustainability Plan.

- **Page 2, Introductory Paragraph:** Edit the wording to read, “Newark can expect to continue to face challenges...”
- **Page 2, Financial and Resource Constraints:** Reword “setbacks” to “limitations.”
- **Page 2, Public Engagement Limitations:** Note how it is still difficult to encourage the public to attend meetings or events due to the prior pandemic.
- **Page 2, Climate Resilience Needs:** Reword the mention of climate risks becoming more frequent to state how climate impacts are becoming more frequent, such as extreme weather events, and add, “Newark will incorporate future climate risks into its planning processes.”
- **Page 3, Infrastructure and Energy Transition:** Add previous energy storage solutions to this paragraph and reword a portion of this paragraph to read, “Newark will continue to steer the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation (DEMEC),” instead of stating it will continue to partner with DEMEC. Dr. Huntley supported the note regarding enhancing partnerships with the University of Delaware (UD).

Mr. Martindale noted that DEMEC’s counterargument to this is that renewables are significantly expensive, and adding 1% of a renewable energy source may impact emissions less than adding a source such as natural gas.

Mr. Cambron noted that his company uses 100% renewable energy through renewable energy credits (RECs), which represents a 4% increase over what is paid for in electricity otherwise. He wanted to know the incremental cost of going from low-emissions to zero-emissions.

Mr. Martindale believed the City was at 38.5% with the inclusion of the renewable energy program. However, while the City can switch to renewable energy sources, its electric service agreement with UD does not obligate it to do so. UD represents 25% of the City’s total emissions. The City pays between \$80 - \$90 million annually in electric costs.

Mr. O’Donnell noted that natural gas and coal have about the same total emissions from extracting and using the energy. He believed the City should do everything possible to eliminate the percentage of natural gas that makes up its power sources.

- **Page 3, Coordination With Partners:** Add the word “including” to indicate there are joint initiatives other than those listed in the paragraph that may be coming.
- **Page 3, closing paragraph:** Dr. Huntley suggested eliminating the word “perceived” from the sentence, “Despite these perceived challenges...” as they are real challenges not subject to perception.
- **Page 12, highlighted portion:** Mr. Martindale noted this was in the previous draft but highlighted it upon request to draw more attention to this section. Dr. Irvine suggested putting these dollar figures on the opening page of the Sustainability Plan to appeal to Council.
- **Page 18, top paragraph:** Take out the sentence reading, “While arguments have been made that low-to-no emissions resources are less environmentally friendly than renewable resources, these energy sources remain much cleaner than coal, fossil fuels, and other “dirty” energy generators.” Dr. Huntley believed a sentence needed to be added to note that there is still work to get to renewable energy sources. Mr. Mateyko wanted to explore demand reduction as part of this effort. Mr. Martindale and Dr. Huntley noted that demand reduction is mentioned elsewhere within the Sustainability Plan revisions.

- **Page 20, the mention of the \$590,949.02 grant from the Federal Highway Administration:** Dr. Huntley noted she was pleased to see this included in the document. When Mr. Cambron asked if this money would be utilized to purchase fast chargers, Mr. Martindale noted this is the cost of the infrastructure to install Level 2 chargers, such as the transformer, hiring, trenching, and additional work to make them compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) per legal requirement. These EV charging stations will be issued in Municipal Lots 3 and 4, the George Wilson Center (GWC), Phillips Park, Curtis Mill Park, and Preston's Playground at the reservoir as a backup location. Installing one fast charger costs between \$750,000 - \$1 million.
- **Page 31, Solutions to Community Engagement & Participation:** Correct a typo reading, "...rebates and grants eligible to residents..." to instead read, "rebates and grants *available* to residents."
- **Page 32, 3.7 Indian River Power Plant:** Delete the entire section or move it to Past Challenges, as the Indian River Power Plan will close on February 28th.
- **Page 32, Climate Change and Resilience:** Once again, reword "growing risks of climate change" to "growing impacts or effects of climate change;" add heat to the list of climate change impacts the City is facing, and remove "emissions" following the mention of wildfire smoke.
- **Page 33, 3.8 Open Space Preservation, Encourage developers to integrate preservation strategies in development decisions:** Change "preservation" to "conservation;" only refer to conservation rather than both topics.
- **Page 53, In Progress Goals:** Dr. Huntley noted the addition of Goal 1.1. Mr. Martindale stated that this goal has been debated as to whether it is in progress or has been achieved. The City is generally slightly behind this baseline but is ahead of schedule when including the 100% renewable program. This is now considered an aspirational, in-progress goal. Mr. Cambron suggested adding further elaboration on how Newark has reached 38.5% and how bilateral contracts account for this item.
- **Page 66, Path Forward: Action Item A:** Change this goal to "modified" instead of "canceled" as a portion of it has been accomplished but not through the original method proposed.
- **Page 69, Goal 2.2.J:** Dr. Huntley noted this is a replacement for Goal 2.2.A, which was to achieve a Silver Bicycle Friendly Community rating. She suggested mentioning the Wilmington Area Planning Council's (WILMAPCO) upcoming bicycle plan update in this goal. Mr. Martindale noted he did not want to modify a goal that has already been achieved, so this goal will remain new and will not replace the previous goal.
- **Page 69, 4.4.G:** Make the recommendation stronger to state, "*Move toward regulations for responsible outdoor lighting* in residential areas...." instead of, "*Advocate for reduced lighting* in residential areas;" strike "...incrementally implement responsible outdoor lighting principles."
- **Page 69, 4.4.F:** Strike, "Investigate methods to..." as the goal is solely to reduce light pollution and not to investigate.
- **Opening Memo, paragraph regarding naturalized landscaping:** Add this under Goal 4.5 and simplify it to read, "...encourage the use of naturalized landscapes and hydrology wherever possible," to make it more concise. After Mr. Mateyko insisted on specifically naming "leave the leaves," Dr. Huntley proposed including this in Goal 4.1.E-R, adding the items regarding naturalized landscapes and hydrology to sustain the landscaping, as leaves are explicitly mentioned in that goal.

Mr. Martindale asked if a fourth draft is necessary or if the CAC is comfortable approving the Sustainability Plan revisions with the changes dictated this evening.

MOTION BY DR. IRVINE, SECONDED BY DR. HUNTLEY: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) SUBMIT THE DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOLLOWING THE SUGGESTED EDITS AT TONIGHT'S MEETING TO CITY COUNCIL TO DEMONSTRATE THE GOOD WORK THE DEPARTMENT,

CAC, AND PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY HAVE DONE IN IMPLEMENTING THIS PLAN.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, IRVINE, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

5. UPDATES FROM THE CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE – JEFF MARTINDALE (5 MINUTES)

Dr. Huntley asked if the Electric Rate Study has been published.

Mr. Martindale responded in the negative. The discussion with Council is still forthcoming. The City had their first meeting about it in over a month on Monday, January 13th.

6. NCCL GREENFEST SPONSORSHIP – HELGA HUNTLEY (10 MINUTES)

Dr. Huntley suggested once again allocating \$1,000 of their 2025 budget to sponsor Greenfest should the Newark Center for Creative Learning (NCCL) host the event again this year.

Dr. Irvine suggested making this a challenge grant, with a portion of the funding released only if NCCL receives sponsorship from another organization equal to that amount.

Dr. Huntley believed the CAC could allocate \$1,000 but choose to withhold \$500 unless NCCL receives a matching grant.

MOTION BY MS. SMITH, SECONDED BY MR. CAMBRON: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) ALLOCATE \$1,000 OF ITS BUDGET TO NCCL FOR THEIR GREENFEST SHOULD THEY PUT IT ON.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 6 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, IRVINE, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

7. NATURALIZED LANDSCAPING – JOHN MATEYKO (30 MINUTES)

Mr. Mateyko noted the paragraph on naturalized landscaping included in the Sustainability Plan revisions. He stated that the mention of fire and keeping vegetation moist was added in response to the ongoing wildfires in California. He explained for each 1% carbon content increase in soil; the soil will hold 10,000 – 30,000 gallons of water. This is the idea behind naturalized landscaping, as natural landscapes are a part of climate mitigation. Naturalized landscaping serves as a fire prevention and firefighting method by ensuring water sinks into the soil. He believed it is the public body's duty to protect the public health, safety and welfare through methods of this type. He presented a draft concept proposal on naturalized landscaping to the CAC.

(Proposal: Attached [here.](#))

Dr. Huntley believed it would be best to consider what small steps can be taken in this direction. She believed the entirety of this idea and document would be challenging for Council to digest all at once. She noted the mention of chemicals and suggested the CAC could recommend looking into the use of chemicals within the City's Parks & Recreation Department.

Mr. Mateyko stated transformation is the solution to many of these issues instead of sustainability, as all these factors are connected. He believed it is very important to address chemical use in discussing these issues as the general public still constantly uses chemicals.

Mr. O'Donnell believed a potential step would be for the City to adopt New Castle County's existing standard, as it has lifted many of its mowing restrictions.

Mr. Cambron suggested recommending to Council that the City stop its free leaf collection program in the fall.

Mr. Mateyko noted that many of these steps need to be taken simultaneously because all of these factors are connected.

Dr. Irvine noted that the Sustainability Plan contains a number of goals related to this. He did not believe this was unfamiliar to the CAC, as they have successfully traveled down this path before. This is a slightly different approach. He believed this is a matter of repackaging an existing idea and educating citizens with proper incentives.

8. ANNUAL REPORT – HELGA HUNTLEY (10 MINUTES)

Dr. Huntley noted she had drafted the 2024 annual report and received some more details from Mr. Martindale to include the CAC's spending of their budget. She planned to have the draft ready for the CAC's review within the coming week, which will be disseminated among the CAC for their edits and suggestions. She aimed to be able to send Ms. Herring an edited draft a week prior to the CAC's February meeting so they could vote on it in February and send it to City Council.

9. 2025 CAC GOALS/FOCUS TOPICS (15 MINUTES)

Postponed until February.

Ms. Smith suggested sending the CAC the list of goals to prepare them for this conversation.

10. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST – HELGA HUNTLEY (5 MINUTES)

Ms. Smith noted that there are two articles pending.

Mr. Cambron stated he could get his draft article on refrigerants to Ms. Smith by the end of January for a February publication.

Mr. Mateyko would write an article on naturalized landscaping for a March publication.

Ms. Smith suggested including an action item in Mr. Mateyko's article to introduce the public to ideas such as not raking or blowing their leaves to the curb.

Dr. Huntley believed it would be beneficial to write an article for April on the Sustainability Plan updates once the revised Sustainability Plan is approved by Council.

11. OLD/NEW BUSINESS (5 MINUTES)

Mr. O'Donnell suggested pursuing a recommendation to use the subsidy money going toward the Indian River Power Plant to purchase RECs instead now that the power plant is closing. Additionally, he noted he contacted D3 Energy (the world's largest production of floating PV solar), who just got approved for a 3-megawatt or greater project in Middletown, Delaware. He believed adding a floating PV on the Newark Reservoir was possible.

Mr. Martindale believed it would be best to notify Public Works & Water Resources (PWWR) Director Tim Filasky about a feasibility study for this idea before inviting a representative from D3 Energy to speak with the CAC.

Ms. Smith would like to pursue an initiative with the City Council to recommend that landowners in the City remove English Ivy from their trees and properties, as this is part of the effort to protect the City's tree canopy.

12. NEXT MEETING – FEBRUARY 11, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Jordan Herring
Administrative Professional I

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