

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 12, 2022

MEETING CONVENED: 7:31 p.m. Council Chambers/Teams Meeting Hybrid

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Sheila Smith, Andrew O'Donnell, John Mateyko, Lauren O'Connor

ABSENT: Helga Huntley, Beth Chajes, Mikayla Rypkema

STAFF: Jeff Martindale, Chief Purchasing & Personnel Officer
Nichol Scheld, Deputy City Secretary
Philip Machado, Administrative Professional I

(Secretary's Note: An unexpected absence caused both a delayed start and a non-quorum meeting. The Commission was unable to vote on items.)

Sheila Smith called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 14, 2022:

Minutes could not be approved due to lack of quorum.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

3. FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE – ANDREW O'DONNELL

Mr. O'Donnell informed the Commission that they received the results from the City's Carbon Inventory and believed the numbers to be compelling; the emissions from vehicles was enormous. He continued that Scope One emissions, things within the City that directly emitted carbon pollution, were very easy to track and he believed the Commission should recommend to City Council that the City restrict future fossil fuel infrastructure, such as underground natural gas pipelines, sale or installation of natural gas furnaces water heaters, and fuel oil boilers, and new gasoline and diesel fueling stations, tanks, and pumps. He recommended the adoption of heat pumps and explained that heat pumps were much more efficient than traditional heating and cooling equipment. He understood the City had control over permits and wanted the City to refuse to issue permits for new fossil fuel infrastructure. He thought permits for existing infrastructure could be issued to avoid environmental damage, such as a leaking fuel tank, but wanted the infrastructure to be eliminated in favor of electric or more efficient alternatives.

Mr. Mateyko asked if Mr. O'Donnell was looking for a 30-day notice for the ban to go into effect after implementation and Mr. O'Donnell confirmed. Mr. Mateyko believed the timeline was short and could have more success if a six-to-twelve-month period was given. Mr. Mateyko believed if the Council was to pass such a ban, the Planning Department should no longer review plans that included fossil fuel infrastructure.

Mr. O'Donnell mentioned there were many cities that had already implemented similar restrictions and he wanted Newark to join them in becoming one of the early adopters.

Ms. Smith asked about The Railyard on Hillside Road and if the HVAC units they had outside were heat pumps and Mr. O'Donnell answered it was possible, but he was not sure because heat pumps could look like outdoor AC units.

Mr. O'Donnell clarified that he was not looking for people to rip out their existing units or fossil fuel infrastructure, but he thought it was time to stop developing more.

Mr. Mateyko believed Mr. O'Donnell should keep propane tanks on the recommended ban list because there were many private and commercial uses for the fuel. Mr. O'Donnell agreed and reiterated his idea for Council to restrict or ban new fossil fuel infrastructure permits. Mr. Mateyko explained that Delaware's Climate Action Plan did not have any climate action in it because the Governor wrote that he could not change anything without the legislature.

Mr. Martindale spoke about the City Building Code and wanted the Commission to investigate the Code because of the nature of their plans.

Ms. Smith asked who the Commission could call for information and Mr. Martindale suggested calling Renee Bensley, the Acting Planning Director. She reminded the Commission to think about things they would like to include on the recommendation for next meeting.

4. COMMUNITY DAY PREPARATIONS (SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 18, 2022)

Ms. Smith thought Community Day should be simple and streamlined while taking current projects into account; she mentioned the Greenhouse Gas emissions report (GHG report) and asked if it could be turned into a QR code for people to scan. She wanted to have a QR code and copies of the Comprehensive Development Plan V. She informed that the CAC would have a recycling activity set up for the day. She was dismayed that the City employee with the CAC did not seem familiar with the City's recycling program and was unsure if recycling was being handled properly; she wished to know more about the City's program. Ms. O'Connor asked if the recycling went through the City, and Ms. Smith confirmed. She told the Commission that shore birds were to start migrating in August and she had materials for The Newark Partnership's (TNP) Lights Out program which aimed to assist in successful bird migration; she believed it would be a tall order and was not sure if the streetlights were being dimmed. She mentioned that the City was now a Local Operating Partner which meant the City could have a Master Naturalist Team that could meet and create initiatives to improve the health of native plants within the City. Ms. Smith asked if anyone on the Commission had anything else for Community day and then displayed a reusable tote bag with the CAC's logo. She informed that the Commission had the bags for a couple years and had given them out during Community Day in the past. Mr. O'Donnell liked the idea of having a whiteboard with all the Commissions ideas on it, with ways to get the attendees involved if they saw something they were interested in.

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

- June – Hillside Park and its Plantings – Sheila Smith
- July – Renewable Energy Program/City Solar Update – Andrew O'Donnell
- August – Reservoir Plantings/Clover Lawns

Mr. O'Donnell explained that he had ideas for the Renewable Energy Program topic but decided to change after he spoke with Mr. Coleman and learned the City website had a description of the program and there was an article published recently as well. He informed that the Indian River Coal Plant which was scheduled to be shut down but was recently given instructions to keep running to provide power while PJM added more power lines to better provide power to the area. He stated that the surrounding area would be required to pay for the operation of the plant and the average resident would receive a price hike to keep the power plant running. Mr. O'Donnell reached out to PJM but the representative did not provide much information. He recommended the City instead use the money to build a battery plant where power could be stored. He believed it would be of similar cost and it would not be as harmful to the environment.

Mr. Mateyko thought there was an issue with equity because he stated that 10% of the population in the United States created 50% of the crisis and he wanted that 10% of the population to adopt a middle-class European lifestyle. Mr. O'Donnell agreed that inequality was an issue but thought that if the problem of high demand could be fixed, the inequality would also lessen.

Ms. Smith informed Ms. O'Connor of the articles that the Commission tried to write for the Newark Post and noted that her article on Hillside Park was going to change because the development was not what she believed it would be. She spoke on the bans on the sale of invasive species and was going to write on that topic.

Ms. O'Connor would work on an article on a species of tick, the Lone Star Tick, that was recently found to have made its way to Delaware.

6. **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT REPORTS:** None

7. **SUSTAINABILITY PLAN AND COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN INTEGRATION:** None

8. **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. O'Donnell commented on the plan for the new Paper Mill Park and mentioned the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) area that was included on the map; he wanted the City to utilize the area to plant trees, believing the mowing of the area to just be an expense.

Mr. Mateyko believed there was no awareness of how hot it would be in the coming years and that there were not enough trees included on the plan.

Mr. Martindale informed the Commission that the SHPO area was an archaeological site and that the ground was not to be disturbed. Mr. O'Donnell reiterated that planting trees would be a better use of the area because the City was paying for the area, and it was not benefiting anyone.

Ms. O'Connor suggested that the City plant water retaining plants in the flood plain area of the plan to help mitigate the effects of heavy rains and the Commission agreed.

Ms. Smith believed there should be many more trees on the plan near the parking lot and stated the new The Grove development did not have enough trees either. Ms. O'Connor suggested that the hill near the road could be the reason there were not many trees on the plan.

Mr. Mateyko reiterated that there were no trees in the parking lot and the plan for this park was not being built for the coming years. He wanted to see water fountains built into the plan; Ms. Smith commented that most people may bring their own water and Mr. O'Donnell believed the plumbing would add a lot of cost to the project as well.

9. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION NEXT STEPS: None

10. BUDGET DISCUSSION FOLLOW-UP – JEFF MARTINDALE

Mr. Martindale informed the Commission that there was \$90,000 of the \$100,000 budget still available and reminded that the year was closing up so the Commission should consider how to use the funds. Mr. O'Donnell suggested some of the funds be given to Energize Delaware because of the Commission's past interest and Mr. Martindale was supportive of the idea. Ms. Smith did not believe the City had enough places to park and secure bicycles and wished to use the funds towards purchasing and installing more but Mr. Martindale believed the City would be a more appropriate entity to pay for such a project due to the City-wide nature.

11. NEXT MEETING – AUGUST 9, 2022

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Philip Machado
Administrative Professional I

/pm