

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: Tuesday May 2, 2017

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Hans Madland, Fran Goodin, Chris Meyer, Lynette Power, Liz Reach, Dan Hall and Bruno Borsari (late)

GUESTS: Paul Schollmeier

STAFF: City Manager Steve Sarvi, Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator John Howard

1. Meeting Called to Order at 4:30 pm by John Howard, interim chair

The City Staff present at the meeting introduced themselves. John Howard is the liaison to the CEQC and the Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator for the City. Steve Sarvi, the City Manager, introduced himself and welcomed and thanked the CEQC members for coming to the meeting.

2. Introduction of Committee Members: All members except Bruno answered roll call. Citizen members introduced themselves by giving their name, occupation and interest within the CEQC.

3. Discussion of Committee Structure Rules of Procedure

John asked that the group discuss the Rules of Procedure document. In the absence of a Chair, John will serve as the interim Chair. Before discussing the Rules, Hans stated that he is concerned about the lack of direct connection to Council, and believes it is important to determine the overall purpose of the Committee. Presently the CEQC is an advisory committee to the Planning Commission. Hans wants to be sure committee work has value. Hans has other projects like the National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer committee that he knows has value, so wants to put his time where it will matter. John stated that the fully intends for the Committee to be productive and have a real role in City policy.

Chris and Fran brought up challenge of meeting on third Tuesday of the month at 4 pm as described in Rules of Procedure.

Hans wondered about CEQC becoming independent of the Planning Commission, and the future status of the CEQC. John and Steve stated there was discussion about the CEQC serving as an independent commission but that the CEQC still is an advisory committee to the Planning Commission. Steve reiterated his commitment to the CEQC having purpose and doing valuable work. Steve suggested that getting off to a good start and showing progress would help the case to being a standalone Commission.

Dan and Chris were not aware the CEQC had Rules of Procedure.

General agreement amongst attendees, but no official vote, that a work plan or set of goals would help CEQC be productive and become its own Commission. Undertaking these steps would clarify CEQC role and purpose. Hans believes 2 meetings would be needed to get the work plan ready. The earliest the Planning Commission would likely be able to discuss the matter is in June, as they are busy with the Unified Development Code update. CEQC would also not be ready until June to describe the need to be a standalone commission.

John and Steve stated that there are rules and laws about public meetings, which the CEQC will need to follow. For example, John talked about how CEQC members should not conduct committee business via email or over the phone – it should be saved for the meeting. The meetings and notes are available to the public.

4. Current City Initiatives

John provided an overview of current City initiatives and projects that he is working on.

4. i. Partners in Energy

Partners in Energy (PiE) is an Xcel program that works with communities to develop an energy action plan. Xcel provides free facilitation services and gives their expertise to help the community as part of PiE. The City of Winona was accepted in 2016, and formally joined in December 2016. Work began on the project this spring and is expected to last two years. A group of institutional representatives serves as the Winona Energy Action Team and has held two workshops.

John stated that the work products of the workshops will be shared with the CEQC and that CEQC input on the process is welcome.

Fran inquired why Xcel offers this program. John responded that the program builds goodwill between the community and Xcel, and helps Xcel meet their Conservation improvement program (CIP) goals mandated by state law. Chris confirmed the CIP is a requirement for Xcel. Dan stated that controlling energy use at peak times can save utilities significant amounts of money.

Liz asked if the 6 month clock on completing the energy action plan started when the City joined PiE in December. John replied that the timeline starts after the first workshop, which was April 3, so the plan will be ready toward the end of the summer.

4. ii EPA Building Blocks Workshop

In January 2017, the EPA's Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program held a workshop in Winona. The workshop included approximately 30 residents who worked in small groups to develop strategies for 4 goals: Thriving downtown, walkable safe streets, improve air

and water quality, and a reduced carbon footprint. The results and conclusions of the workshop are summarized in the Next Steps Memo, which was included in the agenda packet.

John noted that some steps/actions listed in the report have been or are being implemented.

Last week, a group of attendees reconvened to discuss next steps. Enhancing and publicizing transit will be the main focus. Air and water quality monitoring is also a priority of the group. CEQC members are welcome to participate in this group.

Fran asked if the City had a transit system, and how it operates. John answered that the City contracts with Three Rivers Transportation to run bus routes. Hans stated WSU has their own buses. Discussion about limited transit hours, and goals of EPA workshop attendees to make transit fun and schedules more obvious.

John pointed out that transit information is on the City website at the bottom of the homepage, about 2/3 of the way over from the left. A transit map and schedule was shown on the projector.

Chris asked about the next meeting of the EPA workshop group, and John replied that he would send out a meeting invitation in the next few days for a meeting sometime in the middle of May.

John stated he would be happy to individually discuss any of the EPA items or other initiatives listed in part 4 of the agenda outside of the meeting. All are public initiatives.

Bruno arrived at 5:35 pm, and was given a brief summary by Dan of the previous discussion. Bruno then gave his introduction.

4.iii. Pollinator Resolution

John described that the Winona Area Pollinators group advocated for a pollinator friendly city resolution, and one was developed in coordination with the city and passed at the first Council meeting in November 2016. The resolution was shown on the projector.

John stated the pollinator resolution has 5 parts:

1. Education of City staff about pollinators and pollinator friendly practices - Some work on this, but still much work to do.
2. Do a chemical inventory of the City's pesticides. City committed to moving away from neonicotinoids and other systemic pesticides, and moving toward integrated pest management and spot treatments. Work is ongoing.

Dan wondered if the City currently uses pesticides? John replied that the city treats the levee to keep down woody vegetation per US Army Corps of Engineer guidelines. The City also treated about 1,000 ash trees to ward off the emerald ash borer. In the past

the City treated cherry trees in Lake Park with insecticide. Bruno wondered what insecticide was used? John did not know specific pesticide.

3. Develop pollinator habitat, such as prairie land, on public land. The City has worked this winter to incorporate pollinator friendly species into planned landscape work and has been sure to include high value pollinator preferred trees in the City's boulevard tree program.

At this point in the meeting, discussion again turned to the need to develop a plan and vision for the CEQC. Dan mentioned that some of the pollinator items and PiE items did not seem to fit with planning. Hans again inquired about process for moving the CEQC out from the Planning Commission to be its own Commission. John stated that the CEQC could express their interest in being independent to the Planning Commission. An ordinance would need to be changed for the CEQC to be its own Commission.

Discussion turned to why the CEQC was made an advisory committee to the Planning Commission in the first place. John and guest Paul stated the 1995 comprehensive plan laid out the CEQC as an advisory committee rather than a commission.

4. Protect pollinator habitat - Training and work still needs to be done for this item.
5. Source nursery plants from vendors that do not use neonicotoids whenever possible - Work is ongoing.

Chris asked how the pollinator resolution and goals would fit with the work of the CEQC. John answered that the CEQC could help develop a staff manual or guide on pollinator friendly procedures, or educational events.

4. iv. Next Step Partners Grant

The Next Step Partners Grant funds a variety of sustainability initiatives in the City and County. The grant is sponsored by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and coordinated by the Jefferson Center. The City is involved through our relationship with Sustain Winona, which is a collaborative effort of the County, City and local educational institutions.

Grant activities include an energy contest, energy efficiency workshops, raingardens, rainbarrels, home energy audits and a future water conservation contest. Chris is presently an active participant with the grant. Fran may conduct a raingarden workshop as part of the grant.

John offered to connect CEQC member with this grant if there was interest.

4. v. GreenStep Cities

This spring, the City of Winona became a GreenStep City. The program is administered by the MPCA and provides a framework to advance sustainability via 29 best management practices (BMPs). At the present time, the only formal action by the City is a Council resolution joining

the program. The program requires a citizens committee to participate and advise the city, and John listed the CEQC as the citizens committee in the resolution passed by the City Council.

The City needs to prepare an inventory report on the Green Step best practices currently in place, and the CEQC could play a large role in this inventory report. The CEQC could also play a large role in determining what future best practices to pursue.

John was asked how many best practices are being fulfilled by the City? He replied that the City would likely get credit for 11 of the 29 best practices. Bruno asked if John could give specific examples, and his reply was urban forestry, comprehensive planning, historic preservation, stormwater controls, and local foods. Lynette inquired about what was meant by the comprehensive plan BMP, and John and Chris replied that it meant the City has a comprehensive plan – dating from 2007.

John noted he has a spreadsheet describing the various GreenStep actions, which he could share at a later date.

5. Other Business

Bruno voiced interest in continuing the efforts to promote City divestment from fossil fuels and specifically Wells Fargo as raised by the Human Rights Commission at the latest City Council meeting.

John noted members could comment as citizens on the unified development code that the Planning Commission is working on. There will not be an opportunity for the CEQC to weigh in on the code.

Chris wondered about next steps. It seems to her that a Pollinator practices manual, and work on GreenSteps are obvious next steps.

Bruno wondered about the history of CEQC decisions and past meetings. John stated the minutes from the recent past are on the City website. Bruno asked if John could make any conclusions from looking at the past minutes, or if anything stood out to him. John said that a number of the earlier members are still active in issues today, such as Pam Eyden. The CEQC seemed most active in the couple years after its founding in 1997.

Hans wants to make sure the CEQC does not put the “cart before the horse” and has direction going forward.

Bruno wants quantifiable steps, clear idea of what constitutes success. Education will likely be a piece. Bruno would like to see less lawn throughout the City, since lawns have little wildlife value. WSU and City connection should be valuable.

John asked about when the CEQC would like to meet next. The answer was next week, so John to schedule next meeting for May 9th, 4:30 pm in the Misato Room. John to report to Planning Commission at their next meeting about this CEQC meeting.

6. Motion to adjourn made by Bruno, seconded by Hans. Passed unanimously by all in attendance at 6:36 pm. (Chris left at 6:35pm).



John Howard
Staff Liaison to the CEQC