

Environment and sustainability commission (ESC): Sustainable SLP

Minutes

Feb. 6, 2019

Community Room, St. Louis Park City Hall

Members present: Chair Bridget Rathsack, Shaina Ashare, Sue Bloyer, Katie Christiansen, Nicole Ciulla, Stefan Collinet-Adler, Zoe Frank, Ryan Griffin, Larry Kraft, Jim Leuthner, Claire Lukens

Excused absence: Hannah Ampe

Staff present: Meg McMonigal, ESC liaison, Lauren Michaels, intern

Guests: Kim Erickson, Nicole Serie

Guest speakers: Kala Fisher and Emily Barker, St. Louis Park Solid Waste Division; Dale Howey, Green Rock Apartments

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Rathsack.
2. The minutes of the January 2019 meeting were approved unanimously.
3. Business
 - A. Staff presentation on solid waste – Kala Fisher, residential solid waste program and yard waste coordinator; and Emily Barker, multifamily and commercial coordinator, presented

Ms. Fisher stated recycling is a 30-year-old program in the city. The organics program has existed for the past three years, and the city uses metrics to report information to the county and state, and the amount of garbage collected is going down by about 800 tons due to the organics program. Also, she noted every spring and fall the city coordinates two additional collection events for bulkier items. Organics and composting can be brought by residents to an area off Cedar Lake Road, and folks can then collect compost for their lawns and gardens from this site as well.

Ms. Fisher noted that presentations are made in the community and surveys are conducted in order to see if messages are understandable. They also conduct workshops on the solid waste program with residents. She added some pilot programs have also been conducted in the past few years with multifamily residences, along with every-other-week trash pickup for those with 30-gallon bins.

Ms. Barker works with multifamily and commercial entities within the city on recycling. She is working to enforce the ordinance, and making sure multifamily residents have adequate access to recycling within their buildings. She noted there are four drop-site locations for multifamily resident's organics recycling, and it has been a great program. Ms. Barker also works on the zero waste packaging ordinance that requires all to-go food and leftovers provide compostable packaging. She added that not all restaurants in the city are in compliance, and enforcement is complaint-based currently.

Ms. Barker also coordinates the recycling champion program, along with waste prevention education. She also noted building materials management is an area the city is involved in, where materials de-construction is an alternative to demolition of homes. She is working on doing an event around recycling these materials to help educate the public about this initiative.

Ms. Barker distributed upcoming events information including cleanup, recycling, gardening and re-use and swap events.

Larry Kraft asked what the goal is of the waste department. Ms. Barker stated the goal is to encourage and ensure waste management is conducted with thought to the environment. He asked what percent of waste has been reduced in St. Louis Park over time. Ms. Fisher stated she doesn't have exact percentages, but this is in part because more people recycle organics, and are recycling more and disposing of less garbage. Mr. Kraft asked if the data reflects residential and not commercial. Ms. Barker stated yes, but added it is difficult to differentiate between the two as the same trucks pick up both residential and commercial.

Ryan Griffin asked how the Climate Action Plan has affected Ms. Fisher and Ms. Barker's work, and how has it changed anything in their work. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Barker stated their work impacts goal 7 of the Climate Action Plan, which is to achieve a 50 percent reduction in waste by 2030, as compared to the business-as-usual forecast. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan is also considered in their work. The group agreed if further details were needed they would take the discussion off line and send an email to the group.

B. Feb. 25 board and commission meeting

Draft work plan for 2019 – the commission discussed various changes to the document, which were given to Ms. McMonigal and Ms. Michaels for changes.

Mr. Griffin made a motion and Ms. Lukens seconded, to have the first goal in the document be that the ESC advises the city council and staff on sustainability.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Kraft made a motion and Mr. Griffin seconded, to accept the noted changes discussed and to accept the draft work plan for 2019, with changes.

The motion passed unanimously.

The draft 2018 annual report will be presented to the council at the boards and commissions meeting on Feb. 25, 2019.

Ms. McMonigal noted one commissioner will be presenting, with slides, and all are welcome to attend the meeting on Feb. 25. She also distributed copies of the city's strategic priorities to the commission for discussion.

Mr. Griffin pointed out the 2018 accomplishments will need to be included in the report, while focusing them back on the goals for 2018. Ms. Michaels stated she did include this information. The commissioners will further review the draft annual report for 2018 and make comments.

Chair Rathsack made a motion, and Ms. Bloyer seconded, that the 2018 annual report of the commission be presented to the city council at the Feb. 25 meeting, with changes made over email by the commissioners by Friday, Feb. 8, 2019.

The motion passed with one abstention. (Larry Kraft abstained).

C. Dale Howey, Green Rock Apartments

Jim Leuthner introduced Mr. Howey, who owns apartment buildings that are environmentally-friendly. Mr. Howey began working on environmental issues in 1992, and then in 2001 he started studying climate and environmental issues.

Mr. Howey has buildings in both Minneapolis and St. Paul. He explained an example when he purchased a building and installed high-efficiency heat, air conditioning and appliances to upgrade. Along with this, Mr. Howey provides environmentally-friendly washers and dryers in his buildings, and has high-efficiency bathrooms, water, provides community gardens for tenants. He added they provide white reflective roofs on their buildings, and noted all income made from his tenants goes back into his buildings. Energy costs are low for his tenants, and energy-efficient windows are installed. He also has nine electrical charging stations that his tenants can use, and added they recycle everything, provide free Wi-Fi and also teach tenants about sustainability and the environment.

Mr. Howey stated he clears \$5,500 per month by using sustainable initiatives, and has a very lean staff. He does not raise rents dramatically each year but keeps increases to 2 percent. He stated he and his family live simply, so others can simply live.

Ms. Bloyer asked what Mr. Howey's tenant turnover rate is.

Mr. Howey stated he has about a 30 percent turnover rate, adding he is doing well, and keeps giving back, and keeps going.

Mr. Griffin asked what advice you would give to others about sustainability. Mr. Howey stated he is starting with himself, and works to think about others first, and spreading his message.

C. Staff updates

- Poll for city staff topics Ms. McMonigal distributed to the commission. She added the consultant will be in next month to present, and the resource hub demo will be on the agenda as well. Questions for the consultant can be sent in advance to Ms. McMonigal and Ms. Michaels also.
- City council report from Jan. 28, 2019 this was distributed to the commission as well.

D. Topics for next meeting/upcoming events

- Consultant Lotus Engineering and Sustainability
- Bike event - six people will be attending this, and the commission was encouraged to track any questions or comments.
- Electric car event will be June 8, from 11 - 2 p.m. at The Rec Center. More discussion at the next meeting about vendors. Chair Rathsack will share and cross promote the event with the city of Edina, and encouraged commissioners to share the event with other to increase attendance.
- Roots and Shoots – Katie Christiansen noted the group is working with the superintendent about a presentation to the St. Louis Park school board on Feb. 25. Also, she said they have been discussing how they will work with the Hennepin County grant and recruiting folks to assist. Mr. Kraft added there will be trainings for students on this project, and materials will be created for door knocking.
- 5th Annual Earth Day Dinner will be held on Wednesday, April 24. The commission will decide if there is need for an information table there also.

The commission discussed the resignation of Julie Rappaport. Commissioner Kraft noted he was very disappointed and noted Julie's passion around food and sustainability.

Chair Rathsack said this was a huge loss, but hopes the commission can partner with her on projects going forward. Ms. Bloyer stated she has concerns also about the commission having too much focus on Climate Action Plan, and said she is hopeful the commission can keep balance on topics.

Mr. Kraft stated he is excited about the sustainability champion's project, and the focus can be broader.

Chair Rathsack said if anyone has any other thoughts, they are free to email her.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.