Environment and sustainability commission
Minutes
Sept. 4, 2019
Community Room, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Thor Anderson, Abdi Ali, Shaina Ashare, Nicole Ciulla, Stefan Collinet-Adler, Zoe Frank, Ryan Griffin, Larry Kraft,

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Bridget Rathsack, Claire Lukens, Jim Leuthner, Susan Bloyer

STAFF PRESENT: Brian Hoffman, Building and Energy Director; Meg McMonigal, ESC Liaison, Lauren Michaels, Intern.

GUESTS: None

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Collinet-Adler.

2. The minutes of the Aug. 7, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously with several minor changes. (Commissioner Ashare abstained).

3. Efficient building program update – Mr. Hoffman stated they are recruiting for Sustainability Manager currently and after a supervisor has also been hired, two more staff members will be hired, to be fully staffed. Mr. Hoffman stated he is working on learning as much as possible about the ESC, and this will continue as the new support staff is hired. He added the concept of building and energy will be added into everything related to sustainability efforts in St. Louis Park. Mr. Hoffman stated the efficient building program will begin soon, and ESC members are welcome to attend. He stated this is about community engagement and the ESC involvement will help to set the tone and move businesses forward.

Mr. Hoffman stated the meeting dates are Sept. 10 at 4 p.m. and Sept. 12 at 7:30 a.m. and added each meeting will last approximately 1 hour, in city council chambers. He will make introductions and then have an ESC commissioner discuss sustainability and goals of the program, while a power point will be shown.

Commissioner Kraft asked if a Roots and Shoots member might be able to speak as well. Mr. Hoffman stated yes. Commissioners will let Lauren know which meeting they will attend.
Commissioner Kraft stated he could help come up with a script for the meeting and explain how the CAP came to be. He will note how the city wants to set an example for others and how we want to partner with businesses and include them in the process.

Mr. Hoffman stated a first reading of the ordinance will be presented to the council in October, and then a second reading will be presented in November, and the ordinance finalized. If adopted, action can begin then in January 2020 on the efficient building program.

Mr. Kraft asked if any Minneapolis businesses, that have had a good experience, could be contacted and then attend one of the meetings also, to explain their experience.

4. City council report – Commissioner Kraft attended the city council study session. He noted Councilmember Rog raised a question about the ESC report and how it can get visibility. The reorganization and emergency declaration were discussed by the council, and these items may be put on a future study session agenda. Commissioner Kraft added in the report, the ESC needs to be clear on which items in the report are for council’s attention, and which are for staff’s attention.

Commissioner Griffin added it was helpful that Commissioner Kraft was there, so council could discuss the report and ask questions if needed. Regarding the emergency declaration, Commissioner Kraft noted there was interest by the council, but it was not an actionable item. Ms. McMonigal stated there would be more strength doing this within Metro Cities, League of MN Cities, or other Hennepin County government bodies.

Vice Chair Collinet-Adler stated this will be a standing item to report to the council each quarter.

Mr. Hoffman noted there is a problem with low-energy construction in Minnesota. He stated this is being worked on at the legislative level, to get builders and construction companies to build more efficient buildings and carry out a state plan to create more renewables, which is supported by the governor. Mr. Hoffman stated staff is hoping this will be worked on by the council and perhaps Ron Latz, the St. Louis Park legislative representative would sponsor this bill.

Commissioner Griffin asked if any other cities are working on climate action. Commissioner Kraft noted both Minneapolis and St. Paul are working on this, along with Bloomington. Edina is working on some emission goals.

Lauren asked if the ESC would like to work with other city commissions on these goals. Several members agreed collaboration would be helpful.

Commissioner Kraft stated the Environment Commission Conference would be a good group to collaborate with as well.
Vice Chair Collinet-Adler stated the climate action plan is already in fact a climate emergency declaration, adding he prefer the ESC work on implementing this versus declaring a climate emergency that adds nothing new, and could be construed as vapid posturing. Other commissioners agreed.

Commissioner Griffin stated the ESC should work on both the CAP and the climate emergency declaration, and he would like to bring this to the attention of the community.

Commissioner Kraft stated the CAP will cause other cities to come to action.

Commissioner Ciulla stated this is an emergency, but how do we balance people living their daily lives vs. taking action.

Commissioner Kraft stated declaring a climate emergency with a consortium might be more valuable, than just doing this alone as a city. Commissioner Ciulla added it might actually be detrimental to St. Louis Park to declare the emergency and be the lone city to do so.

Mr. Hoffman stated the more commissioners from various cities, who contact legislators, and build a coalition to do this might be the most effective way to pursue this.

Engage commissions across the twin cities to engage and implement the CAP

Vice Chair Collinet-Adler made a motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Griffin, to reach out to other commissions across the Twin Cities to create coordinated pressure to pursue common environmentally-friendly actions, which passed unanimously.

The commissioners agreed to add this item to next month’s meeting agenda also.

5. Events recap and work group updates

Lauren noted the 3rd Solar Power Event held on Aug. 20, which was the biggest and most popular so far, and went well. She noted folks signed up for solar programs and she will have numbers of folks who signed up available at the next meeting.

Lauren added the Community Link event was held and lightbulbs were handed out, which were a positive, as noted by residents.

6. Upcoming events:
a. Twin Cities Film Fest – Oct. 16-26 – Mr. Hoffman stated the city is a sponsor of the festival, specifically for ESC and the Climate Action Plan, and the city is sponsoring a film called *The Sustainable Nation*, which will be shown Oct. 23. The film trailer was shown to the commissioners. Commissioners were encouraged to attend and speak to the public about the CAP and St. Louis Park’s involvement in sustainability. Many of the films shown will be about environment responsibility.

Michaels noted that 5 or 6 films will be related to environment and sustainability. She asked if anyone would be willing to staff the table on Oct. 23. Collinet asked what do we want to share at a table? It was noted this needs to be developed further and could be discussed at the next meeting. The city will also have various tickets for the films.

b. Annual retreat – the ESC discussed past retreats, and what they expect to accomplish with the retreat. It typically involves work on the ESC goals and work plans for the year, along with strategic discussion.

Vice Chair Collinet-Adler made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, to conduct an ESC retreat on or about Dec. 8 to focus on work plans and goals for 2020, and discuss what worked and didn’t work in 2019. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Topics for October meeting

- Letter to council
- Motion made to engage other commissions around city
- Efficient building ordinance
- Staff Speaker Debra Heiser, City Engineering Director, to discuss mobility

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.