Environment and sustainability commission  
Minutes  
Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2019  
Community Room, City Hall

Members present: Chair Claire Lukens, Thor Anderson, Sue Bloyer, Nicole Ciulla, Stefan Collinet-Adler, Zoe Frank, Ryan Griffin, Larry Kraft, Jim Leuthner

Excused absence: Abdi Ali, Shaina Ashare, Bridget Rathsack

Staff present: Emily Ziring, Sustainability Manager; Brian Hoffman, Director of Building and Energy; Meg McMonigal, Staff Liaison; Lauren Michaels, Intern

Guests: Judy Voigt, Weed Inspector for the City of St. Louis Park, Jeremy Anderson

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Lukens.
   a. Introduction of Emily Ziring, new sustainability manager

   Ms. Ziring explained her background information to the commissioners. She stated she is excited about working in St. Louis Park and working on the details of the Climate Action Plan and the culture of sustainability within the city.

   Two new positions will be hired in January and June, and Ms. Ziring will be working to facilitate this also.

2. The minutes of the Oct. 2, 2019 meeting were approved with two abstentions (Leuthner and Griffin).

3. Efficient building program update – Mr. Hoffman stated the ordinance will be shared tonight with the commission, and it will be posted on the website for review before the first reading with council. He stated this ordinance will apply to buildings over 25,000 square feet that are commercial, industrial, or multifamily rentals. This will include apartments, city buildings, and the nature center among others. Excluded are large buildings with industrial processes such as Nordic Ware, and condominiums because they have multiple owners. After approved, the data will be available after September 2021 for building owners and the public, so folks can see how buildings are performing.

   Mr. Hoffman stated this is part of climate champions for businesses, and this benchmarking will be a tool for all to review and use. From this a tool kit will be developed, and the city will partner with other cities and the county. Once the first year’s data is available, scores will be online for building owners and the city to view. If the public would like to view, they can make a request.

   Mr. Hoffman stated the ESC members will be encouraged to be at the council meeting on Nov. 18, where this will be reviewed.
Mr. Anderson asked if the schools will be included. Mr. Hoffman stated the schools will be included in the ordinance as they are over 25,000 feet.

4. Arts and Culture Strategic Framework Focus Group - Ms. McMonigal explained the Friends of the Arts group. She stated staff was asked to attend a seminar over four weekends, after a grant was received by the Friends of the Arts, to put together a larger community group to work on art within the city. A survey is being conducted online now with residents in order to develop and arts and culture blueprint within St. Louis Park.

Mr. Kraft spoke about the overlap of arts and sustainability. He noted arts and culture is the way in the community a city displays their values. He stated arts and culture can display sustainability throughout the city. Mr. Collinet-Adler added artwork can be seen throughout the community also, while walking or biking within the community. Additionally, Ms. Bloyer pointed out plants and plantings can represent sustainability through artwork.

Mr. Kraft asked the commissioners what opportunities come to mind for the arts within the city.

Ideas that were proposed: Art that can be available throughout the city, art at the SWLRT stations and making sure people feel welcome and safe while riding, will increase ridership; the LED lights and visual patterns at Louisiana and Highway 7 are visually appealing; wire sculptures to put aluminum cans on; at-roosts and bird nests that can be done artistically; gardens with more native plants that are shorter; streetscaping similar to at the roundabout at Louisiana; linear plantings to allow access for deer, coyotes and foxes; farmers markets; trees when planned can have a variety of colors in the fall or a contrast in winter; artistically designed bike racks for businesses; “chunky people” statues along 36th Street – could also be used for protected bike lanes.

Mr. Kraft asked the commissioners which creative arts or cultural items they are most excited about:

Comments included: The oldest poured-in-place concrete grain structure; bee hives; the Lilac Park; Excelsior and Grand vs. old Excelsior Blvd; the amphitheater at Wolfe Park, including sculptures at the REC Center with garden; incorporating of the wetlands at Wolfe Park without necessitating drainage; telephones on Highway 100 sound barriers from Highway 7 to Highway 100; the nature center.

Mr. Kraft asked the commissioners in what ways has the city supported or made it easy to thrive as a creative enterprise in St. Louis Park:

Comments included: the art fair at the ROC which helps artists get exposure; folks live in a place that looks nice and art will be part of that; the Nest has events when musicians can perform or craft days are sponsored; more fairy gardens needed.

Negative aspects: the restrictions of 6-inch plants can be a deterrent to landscaping in a yard; lack of options to get around on foot or by bicycle although this is being worked on through Connect the Park; focus art development on Living Streets and bikeways; folks not cleaning sidewalks when it snows can be dangerous for walking and biking; lack of a clear city center so
more organization needed about how folks travel; need more organic art like old bikes welded together to become a bike rack.

Mr. Kraft stated he will send the commissioners the link to the survey also, so the commissioners can add further comments.

5. Events recap and work group updates

a. Twin Cities Film Fest recap – it was well attended. Mr. Collinet-Adler stated there were several good conversations, however there were not many. Council Member Rog was interviewed related to the Sustainable Nation film, and it was helpful to have a presence at the film fest. The interview was posted on Facebook.

b. Collaboration of Hennepin County E & S Commissioners - Ms. Ciulla asked if St. Louis Park can host this meeting between various city environmental sustainability commissioners in December or January. Mr. Hoffman stated the city can host this event within the city council chambers or at the municipal service center. Ms. McMonigal suggested hosting this in January. Ms. Ciulla added this meeting will be held either Jan. 20 or 22, and asked which date works best for space at city hall. Mr. Hoffman stated staff will check on these dates.

Ms. Ciulla also asked if any agenda items should be relayed to Hennepin County.

Mr. Kraft stated it’s important not to put too much on the agenda in the beginning.

Ms. Ciulla noted this first meeting will be introductory.

Mr. Griffin said the most important item should be the Climate Action Plan.

The following commissioners are interested in attending: Niki, Claire, Ryan, Stefan, Zoe.

6. Annual Retreat Discussion, Sunday Dec. 8, 10-2 p.m. – topics to include: continue discussion of the inter-city commission meeting; revisit city council reports and recommendations for the full year of reports; culture/team building; personality test; getting to know you slides; pie in the sky/big ideas for St. Louis Park; get staff or council feedback before retreat about their vision for the ESC and how they fit in; work on Climate Action Plan business report. Chair Lukens will put together the agenda and the retreat will be held in council chambers, for a change of venue.

7. City council report – the commissioners decided to send the next report to the council in January, and encourage the council to link the city’s climate action plan with others in the region. This will be worked on for submission after the retreat. Mr. Hoffman stated staff will send items to the commission that the council has on their long-range plan.
8. Topics for December agenda

   a. Business Climate Champions – will discuss at next ESC meeting, prior to the retreat.

   b. Submitting comments to public utilities commission – regarding Xcel’s resource plan for the next 30 years. It is on the December ESC agenda work on forming a consensus on what the comments should be.

9. Adjournment

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