Environment and sustainability commission
Minutes
Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2019
Westwood Room, City Hall

Members present: Chair Claire Lukens, Thor Anderson, Sue Bloyer, Stefan Collinet-Adler, Zoe Frank, Abdi Ali, Shaina Ashare, Bridget Rathsack

Excused absence: Nicole Ciulla, Ryan Griffin, Larry Kraft, Jim Leuthner

Staff present: Emily Ziring, sustainability manager; Brian Hoffman, director of building and energy; Meg McMonigal, staff liaison; Lauren Michaels, intern

Guests: Jeremy Anderson, Dave Herrera, Daphne Orlando, Nick Kieser, Jane Fischer

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Lukens.

2. The minutes of the Nov. 6, 2019 meeting were approved. Commissioner Rathsack and commissioner Ali abstained.

3. Home Remodeling Fair participation

Emily Ziring explained that the Home Remodeling Fair will take place on Sunday, Feb 9, 2020 from 10:30 am – 3:00 pm. Emily asked the commission if they found this event productive while participating last year and if the commission would be interested in tabling at this event. The group agreed that they are interested in participating again.

Commissioner Bloyer stated they’d be interested in tabling. Chair Lukens asked if there was a way the commission could have a table in the main area of the fair. Brian Hoffman responded that the main area is usually for vendors. Commissioner Rathsack commented that they would be available to participate for an afternoon shift. Emily said an event signup sheet would be reviewed at the annual retreat and commissioners could sign up for shifts there.

4. Submitting comments to public utilities commission

Commissioner Rathsack explained that public comments on Xcel Energy’s Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) will be accepted by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) through Jan. 8, 2020 at 4:30 p.m., and the deadline may be pushed back further. Commissioner Rathsack explained that Xcel Energy’s Plan outlines how the company plans to reduce carbon emissions by more than 80 percent by 2030. The company plans
to be carbon neutral by 2050, which is outside of this IRP, but this will be the first piece of work that moves it towards carbon neutrality.

Commissioner Rathsack noted that the goals brought forth in Xcel’s Integrated Resource Plan help with the city’s climate action plan goals and the commission could submit comments showing support for the plan generally and encouraging Xcel to move faster to help St. Louis Park achieve carbon neutrality by 2040.

Commissioners asked what kinds of comments other groups have submitted. Some are not in favor of the plan because it may compromise jobs, and some will likely oppose it because it will hurt their businesses. The environment and sustainability commission could submit comments in support from the perspective that Xcel Energy’s Plan helps the city advance Climate Action Plan goals.

Brian Hoffman stated that the commission could submit comments in support of the plan on behalf of the city if the comments were reviewed by the city manager and city council at a study session or council meeting prior to submission.

Commissioner Rathsack made a motion for the environment and sustainability commission to submit comments to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission on behalf of the city of St. Louis Park in support of Xcel Energy’s proposed Integrated Resource Plan. Chair Lukens seconded the motion and the motion was passed.

Commissioner Rathsack agreed to draft a letter in support of the plan and will send to city staff in about a week.

5. Events recap and work group updates

a. Hennepin County Environment Commissioners gathering – prep call

Commissioner Collinet-Adler explained that meeting was held via phone call with Sean Gosiewski, executive director of the alliance for sustainability, and other commissioners to begin planning a gathering for sustainability commissions in the metro area, hosted by the city of St. Louis Park at city hall. It was decided that the gathering would be held on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2019 in council chambers at 6:30 p.m., and there is the possibility of a pre-meeting at 6 p.m. for youth.

Commissioner Collinet-Adler explained that the meeting would be used as a meet and greet and brainstorming with three topics to focus on: clean energy, efficient buildings and low carbon transportation.

Commissioner Anderson stated that the St. Louis Park High School’s Roots and Shoots group, as well as other youth in the community may be interested in attending. Commissioner Anderson asked if the meeting would be used for
commissions to synchronize their goals or to work on individual goals. Commissioner Collinet-Adler responded this has yet to be determined.

Additional comments: Three commissioners from the environment and sustainability commission would be requested to attend. It was suggested that Niki Ciulla and Emily Ziring explore invitations and outreach on the event. Brian Hoffman emphasized that these meeting place some focus on working on coordinated advocacy efforts at the state/legislative level.

6. Annual retreat agenda review –

Chair Lukens explained that this year’s environment and sustainability commission retreat would be held on Dec. 8, 2019 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at city hall in the council chambers. Chipotle would be served at 11:30 a.m. Commissioners should bring their own water bottles and lunch if they’d prefer. The earlier part of the retreat will focus on bigger environmental goals and the later half would be narrowed down to focus on specific work plan topics. There would also be time to discuss the commission sending another report to city council in January.

Emily Ziring explained that during the later half of the retreat, a discussion would be held on an implementation plan for the Climate Action Plan, planning for the next five to 10 years into the future. Brian Hoffman added that the city’s annual budget process begins each March, and that an implementation plan will be important to begin planning for 2021 needs now.

Emily Ziring also mentioned that a framework for the Climate Champions program would be presented at the retreat for commissioners to provide feedback to.

Chair Lukens requested that the role of the environment and sustainability commission be discussed as well.

Commissioner Anderson asked if there would be time to discuss how city staff will collaborate with the St. Louis Park School District, since the district recently adopted Climate Action Plan goals that are aligned with the city of St. Louis Park’s. Chair Lukens suggested this be discussed as part of the 2020 work plan agenda item.

Commissioner Ashare asked if the retreat could include a five to 10-minute overview of city council legislative processes. Emily Ziring offered to present on that topic.

7. City council report

Chair Lukens recommended that discussion about a need for a February report to council take place at the retreat.
8. Topics for January meeting

Comments: There should be time to discuss events for the upcoming year, an ongoing agenda item for discussion on what other cities are doing that St. Louis Park could emulate, along with the approval of the commissions 2019-2020 work plan. A request was made to discuss the all-commission gathering with city council in February, as well as how the commission might show public support to senators and representatives to raise the state building code to a higher standard.

9. Adjournment

Meg McMonigal informed the group that this would be her last meeting as staff liaison. She commented that the commission has come far in the last year, and she enjoyed working with everyone. Meg was thanked for her service.

Chair Lukens asked guests to introduce themselves and state their reasons for attending the meeting if they were comfortable doing so. After guests introduced themselves, the meeting was adjourned.

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.**