Members present: Chair Claire Lukens, Stefan Collinet-Adler, Thor Anderson, Marisa Bayer, Paige Kane, Bridget Rathsack, McKenna Taylor, Eric Zweber.

Excused absence: Ali Abdi, Shaina Ashare, Zoe Frank, Ryan Griffin

Staff present: Emily Ziring, Sustainability Manager; Annie Pottorff, Sustainability Specialist

Guests: None

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

2. Roll call and check-in

3. Business

   • Approve August 2020 minutes – the minutes were approved unanimously.

   • Staff updates –
     • Ms. Ziring noted work on Conservation in the Park. She added work on the Home Energy Squad challenge continues, with St. Louis Park in the lead currently. Additional outreach is being conducted and the council may present a proclamation soon on this initiative.
     • Ms. Ziring added staff is working on the advanced building energy standard and is hoping legislation will be passed in this regard.
     • Work on a cohort with cities that are in the Green Steps City’s program continues, with data and best practices being shared.
     • Extensions to the Efficient Building Benchmarking ordinance compliance period will expire at the end of September. Scorecards will being sent out to property owners in the fall.
     • Electric car charger sites are being worked on as well as exploring funding sources.
     • A solar project is being investigated at the Rec Center, but it depends on what funds are available to do this.
     • Looking at purchasing a gas boiler for the pool at the Rec Center and finding out about available rebates from CenterPoint.
     • A lighting retrofit may be completed at the police station to save energy while Xcel rebates are increased.
     • Xcel Energy also has a promotion for Home Energy Squad visits which are 50% off until September 15th and the city will cover the other costs. Staff will begin heavily promoting this, and media kits are available.
Work group and/or project updates –
  o Chair Lukens noted that new ESC commissioner Spencer Schaber has moved out of St. Louis Park, so had to resign his position on the ESC.

City Council written report –
  o Commissioner Bayer noted that October is Energy Efficiency month and asked if this could go to council. She noted a tool kit for cities that includes a proclamation that can be used to put out a call to action, and tie into the Home Energy Squad program. She will forward this kit to Ms. Ziring. Ms. Ziring stated this could go to council as part of the proclamation planned for end of September. Ms. Pottorff will include this information in the newsletter about doing home energy checks in the fall.

Debrief March 4 “Racial Equity and Inclusion 101” presentation and discuss environmental justice readings
  o The commission reviewed the slides from the March 4, 2020 presentation and discussion. The commission discussed how to bring this work into the commission and normalize the conversations about racial equity. Members discussed what is the commission’s role here.

Takeaways from commissioners:
  o Commissioner Rathsack noted that the history of racial inequities within the city and in government was interesting, including the history of the boards and commissions, adding she has done some research on this. She recommended watching the “Jim Crow of the North” documentary.
  o Chair Lukens encouraged the commission to take in city programs on racial equity and any presentations by Ms. Sojourner. She added if commissioners want further discussions with Ms. Sojourner to please contact Ms. Ziring to schedule this.
  o Commissioner Kane asked how the city is doing within the racial equity work being done.
  o Commissioner Collinet-Adler stated for the climate action plan, the onus is on those polluting the most. He stated that the city should not be asking folks who don’t have enough money to heat their homes, or who use public transportation, to work on climate action. He stated this is not a criticism of this work by the city, but he is not sure how this fits into the work of the ESC.

Chair Lukens stated that the Climate Action Plan is not about equity when we are asking people in the city to buy an electric car. Need to consider a dual approach and look at how to engage with low-income groups related to sustainability.

Commissioner Rathsack stated one-way equity can filter in can relate to rebates and who they are going to, such as to low income groups, and those who need them most.
Commissioner Anderson stated tree planting initiatives could be a helpful program for those in all neighborhoods, and from all income levels, to benefit all.

Commissioner Zweber added government should have a role in policies and equal distribution of resources such as EV chargers might not be appropriate if groups do not have access to electric vehicles.

**Environmental Justice topic discussion** –
Chair Lukens asked how this can be incorporated into the work of the ESC and stated her goal here is to educate the group on what this topic is and then brainstorm and imbed this into the work of ESC.

Commissioner Zweber added that the definition does not address distribution of resources to improve the environment and spreading this in an equitable manner. He noted it is important to distribute positive economic resources vs. negative.

Commissioner Bayer agreed and noted how families that are negatively impacted with energy bills be assisted and how can this gap be covered by the city.

Ms. Pottorff presented a document she prepared listing resources for the commission on a range of environmental justice topics. She noted the document is on the shared drive and the goal is to allow the commissioners to access the document, find information or add information and resources to the document.

Chair Lukens stated lower income groups are not the ones causing environmental problems, adding that a Ted talk she reviewed on equity and environmental justice stated these two go hand in hand and must be tackled together.

Commissioner Zweber noted an article regarding Minneapolis in National Geographic related to redlining and the lack of trees. He will add this to the shared document as another resource.

Commissioner Rathsack stated some of the communities impacted can be identified by a tool shared by Ms. Ziring, the CDC Social Vulnerability Index (https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html), and it would be helpful to work with leaders in the neighborhood groups on this topic. She added this might be a good next step, and asked if anyone has connections to ask questions.

Ms. Ziring added that at the December retreat, the ESC could consider adding a standing agenda item for 2021 on the topic of environmental justice.
Commissioner Collinet-Adler added achieving the climate action goals will be a large undertaking. Chair Lukens noted this and stated the commission’s goals will need to be balanced in order to impact the Climate Action Plan.

Chair Lukens noted an opportunity to serve on a racial equity learning lab. If interested the commissioners should email Ms. Ziring by Friday. Ms. Pottorff stated the lab will be an idea club to gather folks to collaborate on new projects for the community. Commissioner Rathsack expressed interest in serving on the lab.

- Provide feedback on revised letter to Public Utilities Commission re: Xcel IRP --
  - The letter was presented at the August 17th city council meeting and was pulled from the consent agenda by Councilmember Kraft for discussion of changes. The deadline is October 30, 2020 for the letter to go to Xcel.
  - Chair Lukens pointed out the changes recommended by Councilmember Kraft.
  - Chair Lukens stated Ms. Ziring and Commission Rathsack worked on the revisions.
  - Commissioner Collinet-Adler noted a disconnect related to the nuclear energy comment and suggested moving it elsewhere in the letter or leaving it out altogether.
  - Commissioner Zweber agreed and asked if the negative points about nuclear energy should be added, but also stated it will not make the letter more impactful.
  - Commissioner Bayer agreed the nuclear energy statement is orphaned in the letter. She pointed out how renewable natural gas is not a viable green fuel source and should be removed from the letter also.
  - Commissioner Collinet-Adler stated however if the letter does not give Xcel any choice – no nuclear and no gas – the letter will have no impact.
  - Commissioner Rathsack pointed out this letter is not for Xcel but for the utilities commission IRP, so it is not necessary to have this level of detail included.
  - Commissioner Zweber stated it is important to have nuclear energy and investing in new technology included in the letter.
  - Commissioner Collinet-Adler agreed.
  - Chair Lukens noted the final changes and the letter will be edited by staff and sent back to the council for final approval.

Commissioner Zweber made a motion and Commissioner Rathsack seconded, to approve the changes as noted along with edits to be incorporated, while Chair Lukens will review the final draft and staff will send to city council for final approval.

The motion passed unanimously.

- Reminder: October elections for Chair and Vice Chair – if commissioners are interested, they can nominate themselves or have others nominate them at the October meeting. Chair Lukens will work on transitioning the role to the new Chair and Vice Chair.

- Upcoming events:
Westwood Hills interpretive center ribbon cutting postponed to September 13, 2:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.