**Environment and sustainability commission retreat**

**Minutes**

**December 6, 2020**

**Members present:** Chair Marisa Bayer, Shaina Ashare, Stefan Collinet-Adler, Bridget Rathsack, Paige Kane, Eric Zweber, McKenna Taylor, Zoe Frank, Ryan Griffin, Andy Willette, Claire Lukens, Lillian Hertel

**Absent:** Abdi Ali

**Staff present:** Emily Ziring, Sustainability Manager; Annie Pottorff, Sustainability Specialist; Brian Hoffman, Director Building and Energy.

The retreat began at 12:00 noon.

The ESC introduced themselves to each other and discussed their thoughts on the role of the commission.

**Thoughts on the Role of the ESC**

- To provide direction, feedback and endorsement.
- Prioritize plans and policies to the council.
- An incubator of new ideas, and a place to research ideas and bring those forward to the council.
- The liaison between city hall, businesses and residences to engage and advocate.
- Advocacy role and bridging gap between council, the city, businesses and residences. Role should become more technical in the future and should gain some education on this.
- Would like to help with resident engagement and allow them to have a voice and become involved in sustainability.
- Provide advocacy and residential perspective and bring background and knowledge to council.
- Can influence where changes to policy should be made and be helpful in engaging community.
- Incubator of ideas, creating new ideas to bring to the city and those who live in the city.
- Bridge between residents and city council, and it’s valuable that commissioners come from different areas to allow for different perspectives within sustainability.
- Influencing council and bringing different perspectives, sharing and partnering with staff.
- Help guide strategies for the city and events to get CAP implemented and other environmentally related issues.
- Addressing environmental issues in a way that benefits all within St. Louis Park.
- Think about how to motivate people and get them involved.
Breakout Session 1

**Presentation:** Ms. Ziring presented a Climate Action Plan (CAP) overview, explaining the history, current focus, and future plans.

She stated the CAP is working toward carbon neutrality in St. Louis Park by 2040, and how environmental stewardship is a part of the city’s strategic priorities. She noted events held over the past few years related to the CAP, three kick start projects, and the CAP initiatives planned for 2021, and advanced strategies post 2030. She also noted resources and information for residents and businesses, and policies such as the electric vehicle supply equipment ordinance, building benchmarking ordinance and the sustainability division focused on implementation of the CAP.

Ms. Ziring stated over the next quarter staff will work on tracking progress toward the CAP goals.

Commissioner Griffin noted that 70% of emissions come from commercial buildings in the city including the schools and hospital. This will still be a lever to use with these businesses regarding the CAP.

Commissioner Zweber asked if there is any tracking going on at this time. Ms. Ziring stated there is an internal tracking tool staff uses, but it’s not very user friendly. She added staff is working on a better system to document tracking and will be coming to the ESC for feedback going forward.

Breakout Session 2

**Presentation:** Conservation in the Park results – Ms. Pottorff presented the report. She noted the outreach strategies including social media, emails, physical media, in-person events, city council energy efficiency day proclamation and city publications. She pointed out the top clicked links from the newsletter and also noted subscription increases of 28%. A testimonial by Councilmember Kraft and webinars were also offered. Ms. Pottorff noted key insights for the sustainability division and said she will send out the slides to the commissioners.

Ms. Pottorff also presented mapping data for sustainability projects.

Planning for 2021

2021 staff project overview – Ms. Ziring reported on the proposed Solar Sundown program. The city is only 3% of the way to its 37-megawatt goal for in-boundary solar. St. Louis Park has no current rebate or incentive programs for solar and the federal investment tax credit for solar is nearing expiration. Xcel solar rewards solar program ends in 2022.

Ms. Ziring proposed a 1-year program to bridge the gap between the shrinking investment tax credit levels and encourage rooftop solar investment. She stated the goal is to double rooftop solar by year-end 2021. She stated this would offset 3 million kilowatts per year in the city. She stated that this would call for a $120,000 investment from the city for the program. Additionally, solar contractors in the area could be involved as well, and installations could be financed for qualified customers.

Commissioner Zweber asked if the city could focus on commercial and residential properties that have older roofs, and then could include solar when changing out their roofs.
Commissioner Collinet-Adler asked if there would be a way to free up more funds for environmental justice areas by checking with businesses beforehand, to see if additional incentives would apply. Ms. Ziring stated she will discuss the criteria with Mr. Hoffman.

Commissioner Ashare asked if there are ways to help those that cannot afford installing solar even with the rebates offered. Ms. Ziring added she discussed this issue with Ms. Sojourner as well and noted there are only a few BIPOC business owners in St. Louis Park.

Commissioner Griffin stated this would be a very small marginal improvement and could this work in conjunction with a larger strategy. Ms. Ziring stated this could be marketed with other renewable programs.

Commissioner Griffin added if there were a way to tie this into roof replacement permits, or tie this into roof contractors, or teardowns, this would be a good time to do so. Ms. Ziring agreed and will discuss this with Mr. Hoffman as well.

**Commissioner Rathsack made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Collinet-Adler to move forward with the program and present it to council for approval. The motion passed unanimously.**

### 2021 Initiatives

Ms. Ziring noted the Climate Champions large commercial business incentive program, two grants being applied for related to electric vehicle chargers in the Aquila and Walker Lake areas, Climate Action Plan tracking, green building policy work, benchmarking year two, and the trillion trees initiative to ramp up tree planting, initially focused on equity. Additionally, travel strategies and solid waste strategies will be included in 2021 work.

### Breakout Session 3

#### Meeting planning and agenda

Ms. Ziring will send out the meeting schedule for 2021 and the agenda can be discussed at the December 9, 2020 ESC meeting.

**What is one word to describe the ESC work for 2021: aspirational, hopeful, optimistic, energized, connected/connection, striving for more effective strategies, encouraged, transformative.**

**The retreat was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.**