

Washtenaw County Environmental Council

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Chair Olsson at 5:02 PM.

2. Attendance

Andrew DeLeeuw indicated that this meeting was able to occur remotely on advice of Counsel, who cited a resolution adopted by the Board of Commissioners allowing for remote meetings of advisory bodies which voluntarily comply with the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

Councilmembers Present: Kris Olsson (Ann Arbor Township), Gay MacGregor (City of Dexter), Jason Morgan (City of Ann Arbor), Sue Shink (Northfield Township), Theresa Tupacz (Pittsfield Township), Hallie Fox (City of Ann Arbor), Lisa Wozniak (City of Ypsilanti). Michelle Deatrick (Superior Township) joined at 5:07 PM. Andrew Comai (City of Southfield) joined at 5:10 PM. Tim Redmond (Scio Township) joined at 5:12 PM.

Councilmembers Absent: Anne Brown

Staff Present: Jason Fee, Andrew DeLeeuw

Others Present: Matt Naud, Resource Recycling Systems

3. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Wozniak, seconded by Shink. Approved unanimously by roll call vote.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A. November 23, 2022

Andrew DeLeeuw indicated that he had misspelled the first name of Councilmember Theresa Tupacz, and asked that the minutes reflect the correct spelling of her name.

Moved by Shink, seconded by Wozniak. Approved unanimously by roll call vote.

5. Citizen Participation:

None.

6. Council Responses to Citizen Participation

None.

7. Special Presentations

None.

8. Regular Business

A. Climate Action Plan – Project Update

Matt Naud of Resource Recycling Systems provided an update on the Climate Action Plan project, called “Resilient Washtenaw”. He reported that since the last meeting an email address has been set up, the public engagement website, resilientwashtenaw.org, has been tested and launched, that students from the University of Michigan were looking at renewable energy potential and farmland preservation, that listening sessions for initial district engagement had been set up, that data collection from DTE and Consumers Energy was underway and there was hope that this information could be provided at a municipal level, that the ambassador program is underway, and that a advertising campaign had been started.

He then spoke to the administrative capabilities of the website, with the ability to understand where comments are coming from, the reach and popularity of different ideas, and the ability to export information from the website so that it can be used elsewhere.

Councilmember Tupacz asked who would be following and responding to replies on the website. Mr. Naud indicated that there was staffing in place to monitor and respond to replies, but that engagement between users on the site to encourage discussion and interaction was desired.

Councilmember Fox asked if responses from members of the Environmental Council would be counted as the public or otherwise. Mr. Naud indicated that he was unsure, but that they could test to understand the functionality.

Chair Olsson asked if councilmembers were expected to moderate and participate in the discussion on the site. Mr. DeLeeuw responded that councilmembers were encouraged to participate in the discussion, but that staff

were ready to ensure that the discussion and ideas from the website were incorporated in the plan development.

Councilmember Redmond asked if the input and discussion of members of the Environmental Council and other staff would negatively influence the site metrics. Mr. Naud indicated that he didn't believe so, and that generally the more substantive, good comments the better.

Mr. Naud then summarized the content to be covered in the upcoming listening sessions, shared that Omar Gates of GLISA was recording a Climate 101 video to be posted on the website, and that work was continuing to engage with the community and interest groups on plan development. He shared that there have been initial discussions with the Washtenaw County Food Policy Council, the directors of library systems operating within the county, and that our outreach efforts are snowballing.

Chair Olsson asked how the members of the environmental council can help to promote the planning efforts and involve the public, and if information to be shared through social media would be provided. Mr. Naud indicated that our strategy is to drive people to the website and engage them through the site, and that social media materials would be coming. Chair Olsson then asked for more information about the possible student project. Mr. Naud indicated that discussions were preliminary, but the idea is to understand the potential for renewable energy within the County on agricultural land.

Councilmember Deatrick asked about the status of outreach to the Huron Valley Labor Federation and offered to assist with a meeting if needed. Mr. DeLeeuw indicated that the initial meeting had happened earlier in January. Mr. Naud then indicated that the discussion turned towards understanding the workforce and training needed to do the electrification work anticipated within the climate action plan.

Mr. Naud then reviewed the work planned for the coming months, including the engagement meetings, development of preliminary recommendations, data gathering, and the development of the vulnerability assessment.

Councilmember Wozniak shared her thanks for the quality of the report, indicated that that the State of Michigan had released a draft climate plan which was currently open for comment, and that student groups at the University of Michigan were interested in helping to shape the plan.

Chair Olsson then stated that the top priority of the Council regarding support of the plan between this and the next meeting should be to support and promote the knowledge of the plan, and that any inquiries into engagement or inquiry should be directed to the project team.

9. New Business

A. Official Comment on MI Healthy Michigan Draft Plan

Mr. DeLeeuw indicated that the State of Michigan had released a draft version of their climate action plan, called the MI Healthy Climate Plan, and that the January 25 meeting was the single scheduled meeting of the environmental council available to consider comment from the Environmental Council on the draft plan prior to the comment closure date on February 14. He indicated that this was of interest to the council given the charge of the group to consider climate impacts within the County, and also as it pertains to how it may impact the Climate Action Plan under development within the County. He stated that he could review the recommendations in the plan, review the recommendations prepared by the workgroups convened by the State to develop recommendations, and that a draft resolution providing comment had been prepared, and could be considered by the Environmental Council.

Chair Olsson indicated that she believed it important to submit comment, but that the window to comment is brief, and that there has not been much time to review the draft and prepare comment.

Councilmembers Fox and Wozniak indicated that they were very interested in sharing comment, and that they had been following the issue closely through their work at the League of Conservation Voters, and have comments which they would like to see incorporated into a response from the Council.

Councilmember Shink indicated that the Council could empower a subset of the group to do this work on behalf of the full council and submit comment prior to the deadline.

Councilmember Deatrick indicated that she believed it important to provide comment, and that she would prefer to have the opportunity to discuss with others involved in land use and agriculture to ensure that any comment reflected their concerns.

Councilmember Morgan indicated that he was supportive of the resolution as drafted, that it seems to address the priorities and projects of the County, and that barring any major omission would be comfortable with the resolution as drafted.

Councilmember MacGregor shared that she only had time to review the transportation section, and that she had desired to see more on involving multiple jurisdictions and transportation planning.

Councilmember Shink indicated that she believed the Council should submit comment, and that the Environmental Council and perhaps the Board of Commissioners should submit official comment on the plan and that such comment could influence the final plan to be adopted by the State.

Chair Olsson indicated that the options seemed to be either adopting the resolution as is, or to continue the work to receive comment and call a special meeting to consider a revised resolution. Given the feedback, she indicated that she would like to include Councilmembers Fox, Wozniak, Shink and herself to continue the revisions on the comment, that a special meeting should be set to consider this resolution, and that staff assist with the coordination of this item.

The tentative date for a special meeting was Tuesday, February 8 at 5 PM through zoom, but the council would be surveyed, and a special meeting would be called thereafter.

10. Communications and Reports

B. Councilmembers

a. Upcoming reappointment of members

Mr. DeLeeuw provided an update on the reappointment process, and that all members would be up for reappointment in March. He also shared that the reappointment process would be different than in past years, with half of the seats being recommended for a 9 month term and the other half for a 21 month term, and that these lengths would stagger the terms of the council to align with bylaws and with the appointment process of other subcommittees of the Board of Commissioners.

b. Upcoming election of officers

Mr. DeLeeuw also indicated that the bylaws required that officers be elected at an upcoming meeting and that the members should look to the bylaws for more information on that process.

C. Staff

a. NOAA Annual Summary

Mr. DeLeeuw indicated that Evan Pratt, the Water Resources Commissioner, had shared a helpful and informative report from NOAA indicating national climate trends and asked it to be shared with the environmental council.

b. SEAS Wege Lecture Invitation

Mr. DeLeeuw shared that Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson would be speaking at an upcoming lecture at the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability, and would be addressing climate action and social justice.

D. Committees

None.

11. Tasks:

None.

12. Adjourn

Meeting Adjourned at 6:11 PM

Approved by the Environmental Council on February 22, 2022

Minutes prepared by Andrew DeLeeuw,
Staff to the Environmental Council