

Sustainability Commission Meeting June 1, 2020

Meeting called to order at 5:30pm by Chairperson Nadine Gomez.

Roll Call: Renee Ruchotzke, Nadine Gomez, and Miriam Jackson

ABSENT: Wilder Hritz and Andrew Scholl

Staff: Harrison Wicks, Assistant to the City Manager

Ms. Gomez made a motion to excuse Mr. Hritz and Dr. Scholl. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Ruchotzke and was approved with a 3-0 vote.

Review of Meeting Summary Reports of February 3, 2020:
Minutes were unable to be approved due to lack of a majority and will be held as a public record.

Public Comment

None

OLD BUSINESS

Ad-hoc Committee Update- Mr. Wicks provided an update. Mr. Boateng has continued to assist the committee on completing a plan by the end of 2020. COVID-19 has delayed this process and the initial goal of completing a plan by the end of 2020 may not be accomplished.

Farmers' Market Update- Previously discussed attendance during the outdoor market but COVID-19 precautions have limited opportunities to attend. Ms. Gomez commented on attending the drive through market at the United Methodist Church in Kent. The current plan is to expand the outdoor market area on Franklin Avenue with COVID-19 health plan preparations. Attendance will be limited at the market for the foreseeable future. Mrs. Ruchotzke agreed we need to rethink our communication plan since we don't have face-to-face opportunities available. Mr. Wicks confirmed City Council will discuss this item on Wednesday, June 3rd to approve the layout. Currently the City Administration is not approving special event permits until August 1, 2020. The market will tentatively occupy Franklin Avenue from W. College Ave to the Haymaker Bridge. Food vendors only may be allowed at the outdoor market at this time. Ms. Gomez commented that the market is essential and having local meat vendors is crucial given shortages at nearby grocery stores.

Community Outreach Update-

- a. Kent Environmental Council (KEC)- Mrs. Ruchotzke confirmed KEC has continued to meet via ZOOM. KEC also hosted a ZOOM meet and greet event for reps of the new PORTAGER news outlet. KEC also organized a socially distanced trash pickup before Easter to do something out in the community. Mrs. Ruchotzke is still working on developing the mailing list for the Crooked River Environmental

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Network. There is a google group now but still need a couple more events to bring people together again. Mrs. Ruchotzke spoke on the World Café event hosted by KEC to promote the network. There is potential to have a World Café format hosted on ZOOM but that is still being researched.

- b. KSU Office of Sustainability- Mr. Wicks confirmed speaking to Mrs. Knowles about particular campaigns however the KSU campus is closed and so their office would be closed as well. Ms. Jackson spoke to a few KSU faculty members and confirmed work on the KSU campus to resume in-person classes in Fall 2020 while a majority of classes may be remote. Ms. Jackson spoke on concerns of students not adhering to safety guidelines, particularly during protests over the past week.
- c. Family & Community Services (F&CS)- Mr. Wicks spoke on the hard work of Kent Social Services during COVID-19 stay at home orders and the installation of their new refrigerator. F&CS has partnered with Portage County on temporary housing for emergency responders in self-isolation. Mrs. Ruchotzke commented on the increased number of meals in March 2020 was exponential compared to 2019.

Tree City Bulletin- Mr. Wicks confirmed the Summer 2020 bulletin was mailed the last week of May 2020. A Sustainability Commission article was not included. An article can be submitted for the Fall with an article due date of July 10th. Article ideas include environmental friendly fall cleanup or winterizing residents' yards. Portage County Master Gardeners have written on pollinators and method of sustainable winterization. Mrs. Ruchotzke also commented on a Yard Waste Transfer Site article on why we have the site and what it's for and how it helps with sustainability. Ms. Gomez agreed and commented that more people have gardens now given the stay at home order and may not know how to winterize their garden. Mrs. Ruchotzke agreed to work on a draft and have it for the next meeting on July 6th. The article could highlight work of other individuals such as the Portage County Master Gardeners. Mr. Wicks confirmed the Service Department recently offered deliveries from the transfer site for residents that requested mulch online on the City website. A total of 60 requests were received before running out of mulch. Mrs. Ruchotzke agreed to create a first draft and review at the next meeting on July 6th with due date of July 10th.

NEW BUSINESS

Waste Stream Reform- Judy Nelson was previously working on the Portage County ad-hoc committee to assist Executive Director Bill Steiner with the Portage County Solid Waste Management District. There has been no update on this effort so far. Mrs. Ruchotzke commented on takeout boxes used by local restaurants. There is support for local businesses but we also don't like the disposable plastic containers. What about reusable takeout containers? Mrs. Ruchotzke referenced a business model in Ithaca, NY of a reusable dish and silverware service for local restaurants. They could be ordered for a potluck, wedding, special event, etc. Could this model fit plastic reusable containers for takeout? Kent City Health

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Department (KCHD) restrictions require limitations on reusable items, especially during COVID-19. Ms. Gomez agreed the increase in takeout has led to more waste. Paper take out boxes are beneficial and can be composted but not recycled. A potential job opportunity would be to create a service for reusable takeout containers for restaurants to use. This idea could be presented to the KSU Office of Sustainability. The KCHD would also need to identify the regulations and identify what could be allowable. KCHD is active in working with restaurants and there was a consensus to request a KCHD staff member attend to describe the new regulations and how it could be altered to allow for reusable dishware and other items if possible. Mr. Wicks agreed to speak to KCHD about attending our next meeting in July. Other stakeholders include businesses and KSS to potentially attend a meeting. Mrs. Ruchotzke agreed to reach out to other stakeholders as well.

Bicycle Friendly Community- Mr. Wicks confirmed the application was submitted to the League of American Bicyclists. The City of Kent received the honorable mention designation and a report card will be received highlighting recommendations to improve and reapply for the Bronze Level designation. The League report is impartial and able to present facts clearly. The application team included Melanie Knowles and Leah Graham from the KSU Office of Sustainability. Melanie agreed that KSU and City can work together to accomplish mutual requirements. For instance the formation of a Bicycle Advisory Committee for KSU and the City of Kent.

OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING

July 6, 2020

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Ruchotzke made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jackson and was approved with a 3-0 vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.