

## **CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES**

DATE: Thursday August 5, 2021  
TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm in the City Hall Misato Room  
PRESENT: Paul Schmitt, Dan Hall, Julie Fassbender, David Ruff and Niki Ciulla  
GUESTS:  
STAFF: John Howard, Katie Grannes (Community Forestry Corps)

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1. **Call to Order:** Call to order at 4:38 PM by Dan Hall (Chair)
2. **Review and Approval of July 2021 Meeting Minutes:** Motion by Julie, second by Niki. Approval unanimous without alteration. Paul provided a brief introduction as a new member.
3. **CEQC and Sustainability Plan Discussion:**

John described the request from staff before the CEQC:

- Does the CEQC desire to pursue commission status? A recommendation of the draft plan is to make the CEQC a commission.
- What role does the CEQC want to have in the Sustainability Plan implementation?

Dan provided a summary of the current Planning commission relationship with the CEQC.

Julie made a motion to strengthen the plan's language to change the CEQC's status to a commission and have it be voted on by the City Council. Seconded by Dan, and discussion ensued. Niki stated that the sustainability plan steering committee and staff support move of CEQC to a commission.

Julie asked if it would be necessary to petition the Planning Commission. Dan suggests getting planning commission support whether it is needed or not. Dan relayed a story about regulation, and value of having allies in the debate. Julie wondered if the Planning Commission would be unanimous in support? Dan discussed past issues that were seen as controversial by the CEQC.

Dan suggested he bring it up during the other business section of the Planning Commission. Julie would still like the decision to be made by the Council about the CEQC becoming a commission. David sees the value in getting Planning approval. Niki brought up the point of that if the Sustainability Plan calls for the CEQC to be a commission, does it still need to be discussed as an item? John suggested that having the plan be approved with the recommendation for the CEQC to be a commission would be the best option. Council would still likely need to vote to make the CEQC a commission even if called out in the plan.

Julie revised her motion to drop the clause requesting Council action on the CEQC status to simply read "strengthen the plan's language to change the CEQC's status to a commission". Amended motion seconded by Dan, all in favor.

Dan relayed the previous experience in trying to have the CEQC be converted to a Commission.

John asked if there was a preference for a name for the new commission. Sustainability Commission seems like a better title than CEQC.

Dan felt “supervise” was too strong for the role of the CEQC in plan implementation. Advise or consultative or outreach on plan would be better. Niki discussed her past experience in St. Louis Park and how the language of what their commission would do was a major discussion point. Julie looked up the language used for other existing commissions.

John shared that the general concept of the CEQC becoming a commission and their role in the sustainability plan would be shared with the City Council at a precouncil meeting on the overall sustainability plan. John will share a link to view/attend the meeting.

David asked how broad or narrow should the scope of the sustainability commission be? Just the sustainability plan, or other topics? Seems sustainability would cover a pretty broad range of topics. Julie suggests the CEQC be involved in the comp plan. The more integrated the various plans are, the better.

Niki asked if the Sustainability Plan calls for integration of sustainability into City decision making. John said that was the intent.

#### 4. **Tree Planting Grant Update:**

John gave an update that the City will be applying for a grant to have contractor led boulevard planting. Getting this grant would increase the yearly planting by about 50%. Dan asked what types of places get trees. John said the trees can go to any public area – such as parks and street boulevards. Dan asked how trees are distributed. John answered that trees go to folks who request them, with emphasis on replacing trees lost to road or utility projects.

Niki asked if the City is planting on a sustainable level. John and Katie said more trees are being removed than are being planted.

David said his Norway Maple needed to be removed. Norway maples in general are not doing well – John and Katie concurred, with Katie adding that tar spot disease is rampant. Dan asked for clarification on how to identify a Norway maple from other maples. David said the wavier sinus spacing, smoother bark and milky sap are all indicative of Norway maples compared to native silver maples.

Dan asked about the watering bag at the base of some trees – are they privately owned, or species dependent. John said that the boulevard trees did not get one this year, so new trees with bags are likely privately owned bags. John said that tree watering is a challenge to greater tree planting.

#### 5. **Water Related Grant Proposals:**

John gave an update that the City is applying for two water related grants. One is the We Are Water exhibit to be housed at the Winona County History Center. The other is a Clean Water Fund request for large rain gardens in west lake park, and carp management. This request is for over \$500,000. Dan asked what an infiltration basin is. John described it as a pond that receives stormwater prior to it being discharged directly to the lake via the stormsewer. Dan asked if bluff sedimentation was a major driver of lake sediment. John said the majority of the pollutants are from the island part of the city because other basins catch the bluff sediment prior to Lake Winona.

Paul asked if the CEQC should attend the County meeting? John said he expected questions but feels confident the proposal will be approved.

Niki asked whether Anne Morse, the County's sustainability coordinator, had retired? She has, and her position may be replaced with a recycling coordinator type position.

6. **Other Business:** Paul asked about the green highlighted draft language at the bottom of the strategies document. John said these were recommendations that they were unsure what to do with, so for the time being are not in the plan. Julie asked if recycling was controversial. John said the most controversial items was a bag fee. Julie likes how the plan is coming together. John invited the committee to send in further ideas or suggestions for the plan. Dan asked about the inter city transit connection, and what that all meant. John said the intent is to have more regular service between other nearby cities like Rochester and La Crosse.
7. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn made by David, seconded by Julie. 5:47 pm. Approval unanimous.

Notes prepared by John Howard.