

Sustainability Commission Meeting May 3, 2021

Meeting called to order at 5:33 pm by Renee Ruchotzke

Roll Call: Rick Hawksley, Maryjayne Stone, Renee Ruchotzke, Wilder Hritz (late)

ABSENT: Andrew Scholl

Staff: Patti Long, Assistant to the City Manager

Approval of the Meeting Summary Minutes:

Feb 1, 2021 - Mr. Hawksley moved to approve, Ms. Stone seconded, approved with a 3-0 vote.

Mar 29, 2021 - Mr. Hawksley moved to approve, Ms. Stone seconded, approved with a 3-0 vote.

Old Business

Ad hoc Committee update – none

Community Outreach Update

- a. Kent Environmental Council – Ms. Ruchotzke stated the KEC is moving forward with the Make Kent Wild Project, encouraging residents to garden with pollinators and edibles. KEC will have a table at the Farmer's Market May 23rd. KEC is also working on arranging garden tours as well as partnering with the South End on the community garden. Mr. Hawksley asked when the garden tours would occur and Ms. Ruchotzke stated no date has been set yet but there will be a South End Tour and a Crain to Main Tour
- b. KSU Office of Sustainability – Ms. Long has no update but asked members if they are on the mailing list and will send out the link to the group so they can be added to that mailing.
- c. Family and Community Services – The Haven is planning a food forest behind the facility on Rt 59 through a KEC grant.

Tree City Bulletin

Ms. Ruchotzke asked if we still have space in the TCB, and Ms. Long confirmed there is still space and that there was an article/advertisement for the KSU E-recycle program in the spring issue. Ms. Ruchotzke asked for ideas for the next article. Ms. Stone suggested a summary of Mr. Boateng's presentation. Ms. Long suggested an educational article on contamination in recycling. Ms. Stone suggested a recycling game at events to make it more hands on and fun. Maybe an idea for Farmer's Market since there is no Heritage Fest this year. Bill Steiner has asked for help with educating residents on proper recycling. Ms. Ruchotzke asked if we could host a zoom educational video for recycling. Ms. Long suggested setting up a table by the gazebo near the outside seating area for the recycling game. Mr. Hawksley suggested an article about carbon footprint issues and the planning process and to let residents know what is going on with the ad hoc committee. Ms. Ruchotzke asked if Mr. Hawksley was the member committed to reaching out to the ad hoc group. He agreed to write it after meeting with the ad hoc committee to learn more about it. Ms. Long will reach out to see how to have Mr. Hawksley invited to those meetings. Ms. Ruchotzke stated we could have a quarter of the page

for the ad hoc update and the rest of the page for recycling. Ms. Long suggested that articles could be posted on the webpage as a spotlight.

Pending Business

- a. Waste Stream Reform – during the pandemic plastic use increased so this isn't something to try to address at this time.
- b. Bicycle Friendly community – Ms. Long had no update on KSU and the bike share program. Ms. Ruchotzke asked about looking at the recommendations from the program that gave Kent the Bronze award. Ms. Long to bring that information back next meeting to update the current Commission.
- c. Farmer's Market – now accepting other booths besides food. Ms. Ruchotzky asked for staffing at tables. She also asked if we can use a scheduling program to coordinate staffing for at least twice this summer. Ms. Long confirmed that is allowable. Ms. Ruchotzke will send out the invites to the group. Ms. Long can print fliers to hand out. Mr. Hawksley stated we want to have information about the big plan with ad hoc, recycling information and the recycling game. Mr. Hritz suggested having information about plastics in the household. Ms. Stone agrees to have recycling education as a focus. Ms. Ruchotzky asked Ms. Stone and Mr. Hritz to brainstorm and bring the ideas back to the next meeting.

Other Business

- a. Post-pandemic: What does sustainability look like? – Not only surrounding climate change but other sustainability issues. Mr. Hawksley stated that mental health issues have become a great concern as folks are just focusing on surviving and learning how to deal with a new normal. This is a long term agenda item as we move forward out of the pandemic. Ms. Stone stated that she'd rather see more action to help others. She asked about a tree planting policy in the City. Many large trees have come down and she's not seeing any replanted. Ms. Long stated that when the City needs to take a tree down, it is replaced and the arborist, Brad McKay, had 400 saplings that he was distributing last month for people to plant. It is a priority for the City to have trees. Ms. Ruchotzky asked if there was a TCB article written about the replacement program. Ms. Long was not aware of an article but Ms. Ruchotzky thought residents would like to know this information. Ms. Long will find the ordinance and share it with the group. Mr. Hawksley brought up concerns of light pollution and would like to see ordinance changes about that. Ms. Stone added that lights along the river should be reduced due to the negative effects on wildlife. Mr. Hawksley would like light pollution to be added to the agenda so research the topic. It will be added.
- b. Changes to City of Kent/Portage County Recycling policy – Ms. Long stated this was a discussion was had during the 11/4/20 Council meeting regarding the 40% contamination rate in the multi-family complexes and businesses and the resolution was to agree to allow the contract to expire for those complexes and business. Curbside recycling has a much higher rate of compliance. It is much more expensive to take contaminated recycling to be sorted and that rate was going to double so rather than increase those rate for the non-compliant residents the decision was made to stop service on something that the residents were not doing correctly. The county extended the service for three months to allow those customers to find another

company to contract with. Ms. Ruchotzky stated that KEC started the recycling in Kent and then it went to the county level and it feels like we've lost control over it. Ms. Long stated it has become so expensive to recycle that the county is going backwards financially. Our ordinance states that we must still recycle but it's been suggested that the ordinance needs to be amended to give it more teeth on the enforcement side. Ms. Stone asked if this included student houses as well. Ms. Long confirmed that it included the larger student houses.

- c. Community Gardens (CAC property in the South End) – Ms. Long explained that the Funds that come from the federal program, via Community Development Block Grants must be processed through a 501(c)3. It cannot be paid to an individual. The Grant is filed in March each year and since the relationship with the non-profit and the south end group fell through, those funds were moved to other areas of the grant. The funds could be available next year if a non-profit and the residents can get together with a plan. Mr. Hawksley asked if CAC was no longer involved. Ms. Long was not sure about that and asked if CAC is a qualified non-profit. Mr. Hawksley suggested Green Sprout might be interested in being the 501(c)3 sponsor. Ms. Ruchotzky added that the relationship between the church that was involved with the residents was marred by a lack of confidence in the church by the local residents. Ms. Long will check on the requirements are needed for the non-profit.
- d. Promoting Pollinator Pockets – Ms. Ruckotzky said there is a difference between pollinator gardens and noxious weeds. She asked Ms. Long if there is a way to find out how the city views pollinators vs high weeds. Ms. Long to research and report back. Perhaps signage could help. KEC has them already for Make Kent Wild and that could be a good tool to help differentiate weeds vs pollinator

Good of the Order

Ms. Ruchotzky stated that if anyone has an agenda item to add that they could email Ms. Long. Mr. Hawksley clarified that in order to follow Roberts rules we should discuss items to add at the end of meetings. We have a more relaxed view but we ought to try to follow sunshine laws. Ms. Ruchotzky asked if anyone has an item to add or would like to remove any items. No changes were suggested.

Next Meeting

June 7, 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Stone made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hawksley, with no discussion. No discussion. The meeting was adjourned by a vote of 4-0 at 6:30 pm.