

Sustainability & Energy Commission Minutes 6/13/24

A regular meeting of the Sustainability & Energy Commission was called to order by Dan Small at 6:03 PM Thursday, June 13, 2024, in the City Council Chambers.

Present: Ryan Cotton, Brittany Goode, Jean Madden, Jim Mathews, Patti Nelsen, Dan Small,

Absent: Pamela Blough, Jim Hagen, John Kinch, David Mann, Nancy O'Neill, Andrei Skelly, Joe Wallace.

Also present: Eric Law (Administrative Liaison)

1. Call to audience. In attendance: Jim Verduin and James Reichardt. No public comment.
2. Previous Meeting Minutes unanimously approved.

AGENDA

1. Community Energy Plan (CEP) update: Cotton reports that the results of the CEP survey were presented to the Ferrysburg City Council and the Grand Haven Township Council. Next step is to present to the Grand Haven Board of Light & Power (BLP) and to the Grand Haven City Council. The mechanics of the plan include "good, better, best" scenarios. Each municipality can decide the parts of the CEP they want to implement to achieve good, better or best. Cotton described the plan that Holland implemented that included an energy advisor who could help homeowners improve the efficiency of their homes. Initially, Holland's plan helped home owners reduce their energy by up to 50% through "deep retrofits". Homeowners could make major improvements by utilizing on-bill financing. Currently, Holland has a program called Home Energy 101 which reaches more homeowners, but has less energy savings. The average energy reduction is now 15% per home. There was discussion regarding the City of Grand Haven and other BLP service area municipalities potentially sharing a home energy advisor to assist homeowners with implementing strategies for energy savings. Currently, the City of Grand Haven hasn't been able to access State or Federal money for implementing sustainability practices because we don't have a plan in place. Goode reports that Michigan Energy Options (MEO) is currently working on a draft of the Community Energy Plan, and will be presenting it to a joint meeting of the Sustainability & Energy Commission and the Community Energy Plan task force. This is tentatively scheduled for August 8th.
2. Forest Management (FM) Taskforce Update: Madden provided updates on the FM plan. (a.) Regarding the Mulligan's Hollow Sustainable Trail System, there will be a final walk through with Curt Terhaar who will draft his recommendations with associated costs. There is a grant through the Michigan Department of Natural

Resources that the City of Grand Haven could apply for. that is due in 2025. (b.) The West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (WMCISMA) provides assistance identifying, surveying, and treating populations of invasive species across 7 counties (Allegan, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Ottawa). WMCISMA has offered to do an informal assessment of of invasive species in Lake Forest Cemetery, Mulligan's Hollow, and Duncan Woods. The assessment would be a general walkthrough, identifying invasive species and then following up with information on best management practices. (c.) The Ottawa Conservation District was awarded a grant by WMCISMA for a Landscape Scale Restoration Project that included a treatment plan for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) in the Grand Haven forests. (d.) The Duncan Parks Commission has written a letter in support of the deer management plan that was submitted to the Grand Haven City Council by the SEC. (e.) Madden and Larry Burns have met with a filmmaker, Chelsea Stavis, about her plans to make a documentary about the Grand Haven forests and the plan to save them.

3. Mathews spoke with a specialist from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about the use of a drone to obtain a deer count. There are drawbacks to using a drone, but it could be used as one piece of evidence to establish whether the deer population is increasing over multiple years. The specialist recommended using a strategy to bait the deer, and then use trail cameras to record the number of deer at a specific time in multiple locations on the same day. It's not possible to get a 100% accurate deer count, but the results could establish if there are too many deer in the area for the health of the forest.

Other:

- There is a Beach Cleanup sponsored by the SEC scheduled for July 2, 2024.
- The Sustainability and Energy Commission held it's first meeting on July 27, 2022. Goode is in the process of creating a list of SEC achievements.
- Madden provided information about 4 small pocket gardens (with native plants) that have been planted in the City of Grand Haven on Franklin Avenue. Two on the boulevard adjacent to the public parking lot across from the courthouse. The other two are on the same side of the street but across the street from "The Elks"
- Nelsen has served as the minute-taker for two years and has requested that a new minute-taker be designated.

Final Call to Audience

Small made a motion to adjourn at 7:59. Mathews supported. Unanimous approval.