

Sustainability & Energy Commission Minutes 10/10/24

A regular meeting of the Sustainability & Energy Commission (SEC) was called to order by Dan Small at 6:04 on Thursday, October 10th, 2024, in the Council Chambers of Grand Haven City Hall.

Present: Pamela Blough, Ryan Cotton, Brittany Goode, James Hagen, John Kinch, Jean Madden, Patti Nelsen, Dan Small,

Absent: Jim Mathews, Nancy O'Neill, Andrei Skelly

Also present: Eric Law (Administrative Liaison)

1. Call to audience. No public comment. Jan O'Connell present.

2. Previous Meeting Minutes unanimously approved.

AGENDA

1. Community Energy Plan (CEP) Draft review. – John Kinch & Ryan Cotton.

There are three draft versions of the CEP: A 2 page overview, an 8 page Summary, and the full plan which includes comprehensive in-depth analysis. There was discussion among the SEC about best ways to present the plan to City and Township Councils. There was discussion about each Council choosing which parts of the plan (good, better, best scenarios) will work for their municipality. Blough suggested that we start moving it through council approval process by presenting an introduction to the plan (2 page overview) and answering initial questions at a Special Work Session. The councils of each municipality may want some time to look at the full plan before making a decision about which strategies in the plan they want to adopt. Therefore, there will likely be more than one presentation to Councils before decisions are made. Blough made a motion that the SEC support the submittal of the draft "Overview" of the Northwest Ottawa County Community Energy Plan (NWOCEP) for further review and comment of the City Manager and City Council. Small supported the motion. The motion passed on a 6-1 vote with one abstention. Tentatively Kinch and/or Goode will plan to attend the Oct. 21 Grand Haven City Council meeting pending the City Manager's discretion to add a Special Work Session.

2. Forest Management Update – Jean Madden

Trail System Grant Update: Madden met with the City Manager regarding the submission of a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Grant to fund a sustainable trail system in Mulligan's Hollow. The grant requires a "Five Year Recreation Plan" which the city is working to update. City Staff will submit an application for the grant next Spring. Treatment of Tree of Heaven in Mulligan's

Hollow: The Ottawa Conservation District has sprayed herbicide on invasive Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) found in Mulligan's Hollow. Tree of Heaven is a quick-growing invasive species that crowds out native plants for water, sunlight, space, and nutrients. It also releases chemicals into the soil that inhibits the growth of other plants. Madden submitted a list of native trees to the Department of Public Works for their consideration. Non-native trees and invasive trees will be removed from the list of approved trees that are planted by the DPW. Update on the search for a drone pilot and wildlife biologist: A Scope of Work document has been submitted to three pilots. The Save Our Forest (SOF) committee is waiting to hear back. The SOF is looking for wildlife biologist who can interpret the data and give a report on Deer Management to the SEC. Wild Type Natives completed an assessment of the level of infestation and impact of invasive plant species and deer over-browsing on three sites: Lake Forest Cemetery, Mulligan's Hollow and Duncan Park. The SOF subcommittee has submitted the report to the SEC for review and discussion. Key takeaways are:

- Reforestation is futile until a deer management program is implemented
- Woody invasives were not as bad as expected but we should act quickly to eliminate "Tree of Heaven".
- Once the deer are managed, and the canopy is opened up due to the loss of trees to disease and/or removal of invasive tree species, native and invasive plants will likely make a strong comeback. Invasive plants will need to be managed to make space for the natives to thrive
- If deer have decimated the seed bank over the years to the point that native plants never emerge (it takes 5 years to make that determination) we should use native phenotypes of plants, grown in a nursery, to reforest our dune ecosystem.

Other Business:

Goode provided an update regarding the use of native plants in the planter boxes on Washington Ave. She spoke with Chandi Pape, Director of Grand Haven Main Street, and was referred to the "Place Committee".

Goode provided an Earth Day Celebration 2025 Update. She is the chairperson of the committee. There are younger people joining the committee. They have changed the logo, and are coming up with new ideas for next year's Earth Day celebration.

Final Call to Audience: No public comments.

Adjourn: Small made a motion to adjourn at 7:18PM. Blough supported. Unanimous approval.

