

Sustainability and Energy Commission (SEC) Meeting Minutes

Date: January 9, 2025

Time: 6:03 PM

Acting Secretary: Brittany Goode (substituting for Patti)

1. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order by Dan Small at 6:03 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present: Jean, Jim, Nancy, Jim, Andrei, John, Pam, Dan, Eric

Absent: Ryan, Patti

Guest: Sara Cooper (Sustainability Advisor for Muskegon County)

Representative: Jan O'Connell (Sierra Club)

3. Guest Presentation: Sara Cooper – Sustainability in Muskegon County

- Overview of her role and current projects:
 - Newly created position for sustainability.
 - Advisory board formation in progress.
 - Muskegon County Commissioners passed a resolution to establish the commission.
 - Position is initially part-time, funded by multiple municipalities.
 - Role split 50/50 between sustainability and community outreach.
 - EGLE and MSU Extension are involved.
 - Collaboration with all municipalities within the county.
 - City of Muskegon Climate Action Plan (developed by Foresight).
 - Commission will have seven total positions.
 - Working toward a county-wide sustainability plan.

4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (December 2024)

- Approved. John Kinch abstained.

5. Project Updates & Discussions

A. Forest Management (Jean Madden)

- GVSU student project provided a summary but did not fully address fundraising aspects.
- Identified potential grant opportunities.

- Forest Management Meetings to begin next month.
- Follow-up on Trail System Grant application.

B. Deer Count Update

- Need to conduct a second deer count.
- Drone flyover optimization—cold weather provides better visuals.
- DNR to visit a City Council work session.
- The initial count recorded 158 deer.

C. SEC Communication System

- Discussion on improving communication for SEC projects.
- Jean Madden volunteered to take the lead on organizing communication efforts.
- Planning strategies for next year, including the formation of a subcommittee.

D. Community Energy Plan (CEP) Updates

- Finalizing documents.
- Ferrysburg Planning Commission ready to approve.
- Grand Haven Township and City of Grand Haven also prepared for approval.
- Preference toward adopting the “**Best**” option for sustainability strategies.
- Emphasis on capacity building:
 - Establishing a grant writing team.
 - Identifying regional funding opportunities.
 - Considering the creation of an Energy Coordinator role.
- Acknowledgment: Thanks to Nancy O’Neill for her proofreading and editing of the CEP document.
- Garry Post provided updates on Ferrysburg’s progress toward solar energy.
- Suggested reviewing zoning ordinances to ensure compatibility across communities.

6. Strategic Planning Session (6:32 PM)

- **City of Grand Haven Department Heads:** Proposal to meet with them individually to align projects.
 - Eric Law supports the idea but suggests a gradual approach.
- **Ordinance Review:**
 - Team to systematically review ordinances and identify key opportunities.
 - Jim Hagen has started preliminary ordinance reviews.
 - Identify model ordinances for reference (e.g., Kinch).
 - Develop a formal report for the City Manager.
- **Additional Topics for Review:**

- Building codes.
- Meeting with Ann Arbor and other municipalities.
- Reviewing Michigan Healthy Climate Plan.
- Achieving **Michigan Green Communities (MGC) Platinum Status**.
- Establishing a list of sustainability objectives, including preservation and Harbor Island initiatives.

7. Sidebar Discussion with Sara Cooper

- **Public Act 233 – Renewable Energy Act**
- **EGLRE Renewable Energy Academy** (online workshops available).
- **Zoning Ordinances & Renewable Energy Regulations**

8. Additional Items Discussed

- **Waste Management Plan Development**
- **Native Plant Landscaping Ordinances**
- **MGC Action Items:**
 - Brittany Goode to meet with Brian Urquhart
 - Action items to be distributed to the group.
 - Simplify messaging for clarity.
- **Planning Commission & Master Plan:**
 - Identify high-priority issues.
 - Assess potential impacts and implementation timelines.
 - Develop a resolution for the City Manager and City Council.

9. Action Items & Next Steps

- **Ordinance Review Homework:**
 - Identify key ordinances to focus on before the next meeting.
 - Bring forward insights and suggestions for strategic direction.
- **Energy Consumption Analysis:**
 - Nancy to discuss key questions with John.
 - Identify **“low-hanging fruit”** for efficiency improvements.
 - Determine the highest-impact sustainability measures.
- **Michigan Green Communities (MGC):**
 - Review Platinum-level requirements.
 - Send findings to Nancy.
- **Follow-up with Franklin Energy** regarding ongoing projects.
- **Jan O’Connell’s Perspective:**
 - Emphasized the importance of working locally under the current administration.

10. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Prepared by: Brittany Goode

Next Meeting: February 13th, 2025