



CITY OF NOVI
Environmental Sustainability Committee
July 22, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Council Members Heintz, Gurumurthy, and Smith

PRESENT: Council Members Heintz, Gurumurthy, and Smith

STAFF LIAISON: Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Katherine Oppermann, Recording Secretary
Ezekiel Chojnacki, Graduate Management Analyst

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Committee noted that the presentation will come after their other discussion to allow time for Ms. Fox prior to her zoom call. Additionally, they noted that they would discuss quick wins and the SSLI flyer as part of their roundtable.

Motion: Heintz, Seconded: Gurumurthy, Approved as Amended 3:0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 8, 2024

Motion: Heintz, Seconded: Gurumurthy, Minutes approved 3:0

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Smith recounted that he spoken with Mr. Jim Nash of the Oakland Country Water Resources Commission and that they will be working towards arranging a community presentation, potentially at the Novi Public Library, in the near future.

MATTERS FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Ann Arbor Solarize Program

Graduate Management Analyst Ezekiel Chojnacki shared that he had attended a recent Ann Arbor Solarize meeting and noted that the host was someone who already had solar installed so that they could speak directly to their own experience, cost savings, etc. He is eager to start working on the brand identity for Novi's own proposed program. Chairperson Smith stated that he also attended the meeting and was impressed by the

synergy displayed between the City and the Hosts. He appreciated that by using such a model most questions residents might have could be answered up front. Councilmember Gurumurthy spoke on the importance of having a full framework in place as well as being sure it clearly reflects Novi's "brand".

Councilmember Heintz asked if there is a best time of year to move forward with the program? Chairperson Smith thinks that they can get started whenever they like and should start moving forward with the initial steps immediately. Mr. Chojnacki stated that Ann Arbor holds meetings year-round, whenever there is interest, though there are certainly optimal times for installation and solar collection.

Councilmember Gurumurthy emphasized that marketing and spreading word regarding the new program will be very important. She thinks that having one kickoff meeting to inform the public would be ideal.

Chairperson Smith asked that a plan for a pilot program implementation be created so that it could be presented to the entire City Council. Assistant City Manager Danielle Mahoney agreed that staff will work on putting a base plan together for said purpose and that they can then proceed further.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

1. Ideas for Quick Wins

Chairperson Smith started by talking about ideas for the reduction of plastic grocery bags and promotion of paper bags and reusable bags. He suggested a City of Novi branded reusable bag, the banning of plastic bags, and the importance of the placement of "better bags" so that they are easier to remember and use. Councilmember Gurumurthy noted that it is important how the City approaches such a process, and that we will need to look into what we can do as well as the guidelines for implementation.

2. SSLI Flyer

Ms. Mahoney shared that she had met with Vishal from the SSLI group and that the group had proposed a flyer as the first educational piece to out to the community regarding recycling and conserving waste. She suggested that the flyer could be distributed as a lead up to a community clean-up event. Councilmember Gurumurthy suggested that we could also educate the public on hazardous waste disposal.

3. Utility Usage Sustainability Memo

Chairperson Smith stated that he appreciates the memo being written up for the committee's review.

Councilmember Gurumurthy thinks that it is clear that two approaches are available to the City from the memo and that they are both good potential "quick wins"/short-term goals.

Chairperson Smith asked if there was a breakdown available regarding general water usage and irrigation water usage? Mr. Chojnacki stated that no, there was not at this time but that he could look further into the matter to see if such numbers were readily available. Councilmember Heintz agreed that those numbers could be useful, and that the City could also consider other options for irrigation (such as pond-fed).

The committee also discussed putting together an informational piece regarding water usage that could show various options and potential cost savings for residents as well as small habits/tips such as the efficiency of new dishwashers in utilizing less water, even on partial loads versus handwashing. Chairperson Smith noted how even small leaks can cause water usage and expenses to skyrocket.

It was suggested that the Friends of the Rouge could be tapped to give a presentation about rain gardens and other topics, ideally as a community program and not just a presentation to the Committee. Ideally, they would like such a presentation to take place in a community space that allows for easy recording.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Angela Fox, Royal Oak Sustainability Manager

Councilmember Gurumurthy thanked Ms. Fox for being present and noted that the two of them had previously spoken the week prior, she has been inspired by her work that she saw on LinkedIn and thinks Ms. Fox can be a valuable resource on the process of creating an Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

Ms. Fox introduced herself to the Committee and noted that was recently hired by the City of Royal Oak to implement the six-part Climate Action Plan the City had put together in 2022. She shared that the Michigan Department of Health and Human services "Healthy Michigan Plan" is a wonderful resource and said she will be sharing the template with the Committee.

Chairperson asked what some simple things to start with for the Community would be? Ms. Fox suggested 1. A greenhouse gas emissions inventory, to allow us to know where emissions come from and to build a campaign to educate the community on the topic. 2. That a Food Waste education program was her own 1st initiative in Royal Oak and that it had been widely accepted given that it impacts everyone. 3. Electrifying the City's fleet. 4. Utilizing Solar. She noted that sustainability is a diverse topic, and that community engagement helps drive education.

Chairperson Smith asked for Ms. Fox to share some of her resources that she has used in her Food Waste initiative. He also asked if she had tips on how to engage the public and get them excited about sustainability topics. Ms. Fox said that she has found simply being present to talk to the public can really help, she often attends local events in Royal Oak such as the Farmers Market to do so. She also suggested that community workshops can help. She feels that overall, the residents have been very welcoming of her efforts and that sometimes that more difficulty people to get onboard are the City Commissioners.

Councilmember Heintz noted his own mission of eliminating single-use plastics and pesticides and some of the pushback he has received, especially in regard to the potential of setting limits. Ms. Fox said that she has been careful to be slow about any kind of policy implementation, that a focus on education and meeting people where they are her first priorities.

The Committee and Ms. Fox then discussed some of the details of her Food Waste program. She shared that it is a multifaceted program that includes restaurants, businesses, and schools. The schools especially have been very interested and are implementing composting programs this coming Fall 2024 in the "front" and "back" of the house. Importantly, efforts like this encourage students to bring information about composting back home to their parents/family. The City of Royal Oak currently offered weekly yard waste pickup with limited raw fruit/vegetable matter. The program she offers through the farmers market accepts much more composting materials but because a composting blend is a delicate balance she is careful about education on the topic and hasn't expanded beyond the farmers market yet. Her partnership with a composting company has allowed them to start selling compost at the farmers market as well. While a viable curbside composting option does not yet exist, she encourages composting at individual homes or even on whole neighborhood blocks.

Councilmember Gurumurthy thanked Ms. Fox once more for her presence and stated that we may reach out to her again in the future, this is a "comma" in a conversation she expects to continue.

Chairperson Smith and Councilmember Heintz echoed the thanks to Ms. Fox and the information she has provided.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS –

Mr. and Mrs. Halvangis noted that they would be interested in a Solarize program being implemented in the City of Novi and that spreading the word on such a program would be important for wider spread buy-in.

Mr. Duchesneau noted that Walled Lake had recently gotten about two inches of rainwater which cause the bank to overflow. He is concerned that the lake levels are too high for the current dam that controls the flow of water between the lake and middle river rouge. He also spoke on his interest in the matter of food waste and that he was a friend of a pig farmer who partnered with local restaurants to repurpose their food waste into pig feed.

Mr. Afzal noted his concerns about people idling in their cars during lunch breaks or for naps and phone calls.

ADJOURNMENT – 6:50 p.m.

Motion: Gurumurthy, Seconded: Heintz, approved 3:0