

Minutes
Portage Environmental Board
March 11, 2009

7:02 Meeting call to order by Denise Clegg, Chair

Attendance: Marty Sepanik, Dan VanPeenen, Denise Clegg, Sara Wick, Jason Howard, Bill Schwartz, Audrey Wierenga
Staff Present: Chris Barnes
Excused: Bruce Alden, Andrew Cone

Approval of Minutes: February minutes approved as submitted.

Scheduled Secretary: Daniel VanPeenen

Announcements from Board Members:

Sara - Charley Fosters is a great spot for Green Drinks. Dual flush toilet kit available online to convert any toilet to dual flush. 3-12-09 speaker Vandana Shiva will be at Bernhard Center to speak on globalization and small farms.

Audrey – Green Drink March 24th 5:30pm at Charley Fosters, Home Builders Association speaking on their green building guidelines.

Marty – Purple Loosestrife project to be added to April agenda.

Bill – EHAC added to April agenda.

Old Business

- Library Program “Proximity Matters: Why Eat Local?” May 7, 6:30-8 p.m. – finalized refreshments for the program. An article regarding a local grower will be presented. Local cheese samples will be available as well as bakery items. It will be an interactive session with question and answer session regarding local foods. 20 – 50 attendees expected.
- Topic decision for the fall program would be made by June. Discussion of ideas for topics to be added to the April agenda. Sara suggests having the program on the second Wednesday and having a short board meeting at the library.
- The display for the Lake View park sign was presented to the board. The main content gives the public information about rain gardens and native plants for home gardens. Some topics “why rain gardens”, “Native Plant producers”, “native mulch”, etc.
- Environmental Board process for public hearings accepted by the board. These rules are used for disputed naturalized lawn permits and sewer deferment hearings.

Committee Participation Reports

- Kalamazoo Environmental Concerns Committee report: Bill Hughes from KECC was in attendance and reported on their discussion of by-laws. The reason for the discussion is centered around an issue with member participation.
- Bill Hughes also mentioned Plainwell superfund site. River cleanup is funded through the calendar year. Future funding is unclear. Full report available through www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject. Sara presented a brochure Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition.
- KEC Breakfast: Sara and Jason attended. Legislators present Larry Deshazor, Tom George, Ed Sackley (for Fred Upton). Breakfast had the most citizens and fewest legislators present in its history. Topics: Turning wetland control to Army Corp of Engineers from the DEQ. Art Toy (Van Buren County) discussed how some townships are adding tax value to properties with solar and wind improvements and noted the conflicting message from different levels of government. Proposal presented to combine DEQ, DNR, and Dept. of Agriculture into one agency. Michigan Constitutional Convention

will be on the ballot for 2010. Dale Harrison spoke on the Kalamazoo River superfund site. Stimulus funds coming to Michigan for river cleanup. Bill Rose questioned Ed Sackley regarding Fred Upton's support of the No Child Left Inside initiative for K – 8 Phys Ed.

- Community Sustainability Partnership: Audrey attended meeting at WMU. In attendance Portage Mayor - Pete Strazdas, Kalamazoo Mayor - Maurice Evens, Mayor of Battle Creek, President of Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce, President of K-College. Also representatives from WMU, Kalamazoo County, various non-profits and student groups. City of Kalamazoo presented a draft covenant. Comments from participants are due by 3-20-09. The draft will be revised per comments and another meeting will be scheduled. WMU also present its accomplishments and savings from sustainability projects. The board will have this on the agenda whenever there is further news.
- Kalamazoo EHAC: Bill Schwartz was unable to attend the meeting due to a schedule error on their web site.

New Business

- Environmental Summary Activity Report – Chris Barnes advised that the current report is on the EB web site. Chris advised the board that the City Council will be reviewing the sustainability covenant mention above as well as an ordinance regarding outdoor wood boilers. Portage continues to have issues due to the rising water table. Some retention basins are at flood level with no precipitation. Also several home owners are struggling with basements built below the current water table. Chris is studying the history of the water table for the area. He will be representing Portage at the builders show.
- Mustard pull in 2009 –Jan Ryan informed Denise that the mustard infestation at West Lake Preserve can only be dealt with using a multidisciplinary approach. The board is not likely to schedule a pull there in the future. Jan will determine if pulling could be effective at the Bog or Trail head (off Lover Lane). Since the time to pull is April it is too late for the board to schedule anything this year.
- Fall event city wide: Discussion deferred.
- Youth Advisory Committee's Earth Day Celebration: April 25th 9:00 – Noon "Greenathon": Nature walk and presentations at Celery flats. Presentation by Non-Profits and what they are doing to be green. Flyers will be sent to the board. The board will attempt to make connections with groups and businesses. Portager will have further information.
- Bi-annual report to city council due April 24, 2009. Update on board goals and objectives. Denise will send out a rough draft for approval at the April meeting.

Comments:

- Citizens: Bill Hughes, KECC President (see above regarding KECC activities.)
- Denise Clegg: Presented electric bills for the city detailing use/cost for holiday displays. For 2007 the usage was 799KWH and for 2008 it was 675KWH. Suggestions to further decrease electrical usage were LED replacement bulbs, and a wind turbine for the lights.
- Sara: Kudos to the individual maintaining the EB web site. Added links are great for the public.
- Jason: A solar manufacturer will be going into Battle Creek Business Park.

Adjourn: 8:35 PM

Next Meeting April 8th, 7:00pm Portage City Hall