

Environmental Board Meeting on September 12th, 2012

Members Present: Ruth, Martha, Catherine, Bill, Arnett, Chris, Tim, Luis

Excuseable Absences: Marty, Spencer

Meeting commenced at 7:05pm.

New high school member has been assigned and should be here. Chris will send Ruth the high school member's contact information.

Minutes from last month approved. Martha made the motion, seconded by Catherine.

Ruth would like to add September 29th vine pull to the agenda.

City's 50th year Celebration

Any other ideas?

Spruce up the city somehow. Pick up litter, plant trees, flowers, move vehicles off your lawn, cut your grass, etc.

Celebrate the city's environmental history. Recycling, water treatment, parks, etc.

Series of events over the year. Maybe an event each month.

Maybe a contest that neighborhoods or individuals can compete in.

Idea: Neighborhood contest involving many events over the entire year (invasive plant pull, use of native species, number of individuals biking to work, adopting/cleaning up a park, eradicating all the purple loosestrife on a lake, etc.

Fracking

City council wanted us to look at this information. They did not specifically ask for any type of recommendation regarding fracking though.

Is this a state or local issue? No clear idea right now.

Not clear from the evidence whether fracking is bad or good really. Evidence to support both sides.

There is some evidence that fracking has contaminated drinking water, caused earthquakes possibly, etc. But there is evidence to support that natural gas as an energy source is good for the environment as well.

Establish fracking as an issue to be on our goals and objectives for 2012/2013.

Who owns the mineral rights under a piece of property? Michigan is a heaven-to-hell state as far as Chris knows.

Water Treatment Landscape

City is ready to go ahead with the project. Looking at starting the first week of October.

At some point in the future, we should discuss maintenance of that piece of property in terms of costs, etc.

We should ask them for a quote regarding maintenance of the piece of property including what a proper maintenance plan for it. Martha will ask them.

Parks have a contract with the Michigan Wildflower Farm regarding the weeding of Liberty Park.

Board at Lakeview Park

Still in good shape. Materials on Purple Loosestrife are there right now. Probably just put fall cleanup information up regarding leaf pickup, etc. Garlic mustard information can go back up in the spring. Solicit ideas for the City's 50th year celebration.

City Budget

Possible budget items need to be sent to Chris by November. Possible budget items are: Lakeview display board (~\$250), fishing fair, Purple Loosestrife, etc.

Cooperation with Park Board

Parks Board is unsure of what we expect them to do with this.

Have a Parks Board member attend the Environmental Board meetings and vice versa.

Started this in the past year when most of the current environmental board wasn't on the environmental board.

Martha suggests supplying invasive species books to the Parks Board members so they can let us know about any problems. Serving as a support group for the Parks Board members and park rangers.

Attending the meetings might be the most effective thing to do. Rotating who attends the meetings, etc.

Maybe we should just abandon the relationship altogether and just work with the park rangers.

We might need to spray for some of the invasive species in order to control them. We probably need to work on a protocol with the parks department on how to do this. We don't want to micromanage them but rather work with them on the best way to pull these invasive species.

New Park on Shaver Rd. (Eliason Park Nature Reserve): major issue is working on access to the park. Possibility of needing a new traffic signal in order to get access because of the railroad tracks. Possibly working on access from Portage Industrial Drive. Chris will provide an update next month on it.

September 29th, Vine Pull

Ruth will get in touch with John Mylo regarding it but hopefully we'll still do it. Maybe we can publicize it on the Portage Access cable channel.

Miscellaneous

Maybe put a few lines into the Portager regarding environmental issues in the city and have people send those issues to the Environmental Board's email address.

Put a short blurb together to go into the Portager. Luis will work on this.

Tim will write a resolution regarding the support of single-stream recycling and possibly expanding recycling into the apartment complexes at some point in the future.

Martha would like the board to look into possibly reducing the number of trash haulers at some point in the future and maybe the city should look into this issue. Chris will send the report to everyone.

Discussion of Environmental Goals Next Month

Make sure our goals are in line with the city council's goals.

Analyze our parking lot issues at next month's meeting.

We can also bring up new issues next month as well.

2025 Vision is on Portage website. Good starting point for our goals.

Bill thinks the goals of the Environmental Board should be specific.

Ruth will work on the November update of the Environmental Board's progress.

November will also be our election of new officers for the Environmental Board.

Announcements

SW Michigan Small Business Forum is having a Consumers Energy program on wind, solar, and hydro on Thursday, September 20th from 12pm to 1:30pm at the Kalamazoo Public Library. \$25 to nonmembers. www.swmsbf.org.

Luis sent the Purple Loosestrife presentation to Chris to put up on the Portage website.

Luis had Consumers Energy to an energy audit of his house and he thought it was in general a very good idea. Thought the board should possibly promote this idea more in the future.

Arnett brought up his usage of buying a block of energy with other people/companies instead of buying through Consumers Energy. Have to be careful if you go this route.

Chris will be bringing in Judy Graham to supplement his attendance at the environmental board meetings. She is a utility specialist for the city.

Ruth attended the transportation forum yesterday evening at the chamber of commerce and thought it was moderately interesting. Well attended by the special interest groups.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.