

## **Environmental Board Minutes on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

Meeting called to order at 7:03pm

Members Present: Chair Ruth Caputo, Vice-Chair Martha Dahlinger, Catherine Niessink, Christin DeJong, David Mayfield, Spencer Welling, Tim Winslow, Judy Graham in place of Director of Transportation & Utilities Christopher Barnes.

Excused Members: Jamie McCarthy, Henry Zou, student advisory committee representative

Martha made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Catherine. Motion passes.

Spencer, Catherine, and Tim were reappointed at last night's city council meeting.

### **Election of Officers**

Election of Chair

Martha nominated Ruth to serve as chair. Ruth accepts. Everyone voted to approve Ruth as Chair.

Election of Vice-Chair

Tim nominated Martha to serve as vice-chair. Martha accepts. Everyone voted to approve Martha as Vice-Chair.

Election of Secretary

Christin nominated Tim to serve as Secretary. Tim accepts. Everyone voted to approve Tim as Secretary.

### **Comprehensive Plan Goals**

Catherine brings up that identity seems to be lacking from the comprehensive plan. Catherine's husband has been a lifetime resident and thought Portage was okay but that it probably should have just been part of Kalamazoo. The only thing that Catherine thought gives Portage an identity is that it is a natural place to live.

Martha thinks that we need to tie into the concept of Kalamazoo's go-to places with regard to its downtown development, expansion of bike trails, and our mutual connection with Portage Creek, etc.

Catherine also brings up that Portage does not have the big issues that Kalamazoo has with regard to the Allied Paper/Portage Creek Superfund site, etc.

Tim brought up possibly looking at site plans for the planning commission and zoning variances/exceptions and pointing out environmental issues with regard to these each time one goes for review before the planning commission and the zoning board.

Spencer brought up single-stream recycling and encouraging more recycling at the schools as well as the parks. Right now the schools don't seem to recycle and the city parks don't really have any recycling bins except for a few. So, this is something we could encourage the schools to do and the city could add some bins to the parks as well.

Jamie would like the city to adopt some standards with regard to green building, energy efficiency, water usage, etc. These standards would help the city become more sustainable. Other cities such as Battle Creek have recently adopted such standards. We would need the city council creating a letter of support to start this.

Christin thought maybe the city could work on a native landscaping plan for its facilities, parks, etc. The plan would consist of mainly using native plants to landscape so the City of Portage could better develop a connection to nature and save money in the long run. Then the maintenance the city does they are already doing as well and wouldn't have to do any additional maintenance.

Bill is worried that the city in general may not be very willing to follow through with the comprehensive plan and that the residents probably don't care too much either. So, our suggestions/recommendations may fall on deaf ears. Bill would like for people to just pick up their trash and care more about how their property and city looks. The younger generation as environmentally conscious as they are still don't necessarily seem to care that much either.

Catherine brings up that many people just don't think much of property that is not theirs, which is why they just litter and don't care.

Bill thinks education may be a primary component that the board can address. It always costs less to prevent a problem than to solve it later. Thus, educating people to prevent problems would in the end save money.

Spencer brings up educating the schools more and trying to get kids to change their opinions and thoughts.

Bill thinks we could educate more at city events such as the summer concerts/plays, greenathon, fishing fair, etc.

Ruth thinks that we could talk to schools about altering their hourly requirements to require some of the community service hours to be spent on schoolyard cleanups, neighborhood cleanups, etc.

Martha brings up maintaining the native plantings at the water treatment center and Liberty Park. We should do so since both locations are in highly visible locations and to help protect the investment the city made in both locations. Martha further brings up pages 65 and 75 of the comprehensive plan in support of this goal. She brings up a disconnect in terms of not understanding that native plantings will save money in the long run but do cost money to maintain the first three years after the initial planting.

Ruth brings up riparian buffers and the lack of anything in the zoning ordinance regarding them and the fact that the planning commission doesn't even really know about these. Ruth would like the city to offer incentives to homeowners, industries, commercial entities to maintain their riparian buffers. We are unsure what this incentive would be at this point.

Martha brings up a possible ban on certain fertilizers for those living in Portage or those who live around the lakes and rivers at least.

Ruth brings up how we are deciding these goals/issues. There were multiple discussions on how best to do this. The board decided to go with one idea that we would present to the city council to implement in the next year. We then voted.

Recycling at the schools/parks won. So, we want a proposal at next month's meeting with regard to how to move forward with this topic.

### **New Business**

None at this time

### **Announcements**

Martha brings up an article in the Christian Science Monitor on the front page that is worth reading regarding reality television. The article can be read here:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2014/1005/The-rise-of-redneck-TV>

Jamie talked to someone at a school with regard to students being interested in environmental projects.

For 2016, Dave brings up river cleanup sites and potentially organizing something in the future with regard to cleaning up a site along the Kalamazoo River watershed.

Michigan Botanical will have its monthly meeting on Monday, October, 20<sup>th</sup> at the People's Church on 10<sup>th</sup> street starting at 6:30pm. The Kalamazoo chapter of Wild Ones will have its next meeting on Wednesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm at the First United Methodist Church in downtown Kalamazoo. The meeting will feature a talk from Tom Small, co-founder of KAWO (Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones) regarding "Using Nature's Methods." The Kalamazoo chapter of Audobon is having its next meeting on Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup> titled, "Northern Wildlife, Culture, and Geography" at 7:30pm at the People's Church.

Tim made a motion made to adjourn at 8:27pm, seconded by Spencer. Meeting adjourned at 8:27pm.