

## **Environmental Board Minutes April 8, 2015**

Meeting called to order at 7:03pm

Members Present: Vice-Chair Martha Dahlinger, Catherine Niessink, Christin DeJong, Jamie McCarthy, Bill Beck, Secretary Tim Winslow, student advisory member Henry Zhou, and Judy Graham representing Director of Transportation and Utilities Christopher Barnes

Excused Members: Chair Ruth Caputo, David Mayfield, Spencer Welling

Special Guests: Brett Simmering Scoutmaster of Troop 211, Chandler Simmering Eagle scout soon-to-be. For his eagle scout project, he built shelves for a Christian group that helps unexpected mothers-to-be.

The environmental board went around and introduced themselves starting with the City manager Larry Schaeffer.

Catherine made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion is seconded by Bill. The motion passes.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Jamie made a motion to approve the goals and objectives for the fiscal year 2015-16. The motion was seconded by Christin. Martha then read the letter into the minutes that we will send to city council. The letter reads as follows:

[Insert letter here]

Motion passes.

### **Single-Stream Recycling**

Bill gave a presentation to the city council at their March 24th meeting. David, Spencer, and Tim supported this presentation. Bill brought up that Michigan's recycling statistics are lacking in comparison to our surrounding states and that the presentation was given to build momentum towards our goal of single-stream recycling. Mr. Shaffer is in support of this objective. Bill and Tim met with him last week along with Mr. Bolas regarding further implementation of this goal as well.

Bill brings up that we really need to educate the people regarding single-stream recycling especially our younger folks who can help educate others. The city has put out a bid for recycling and asked for bids regarding single-stream recycling.

The bid has been put out for nine years (a five-year term with four one-year renewals). We're hoping that this entices some good bids from potential vendors since there is a longer term to get a return on their investment.

Mr. Shaffer brings up that it was great to meet with Bill and Tim. He mentions that we've put out bids for single-stream recycling and that the city charter limits the bids to ten years. The bid also requires the usage of 96-gallon carts or potentially 65-gallon cars if citizens choose to go with a smaller cart. The Moorsbridge study showed a 70% increase in recyclables with will help cause a significant reduction in the waste stream. Additionally, the recycling will be picked up bi-weekly rather than every single week. The city is very excited about this option.

Martha brings up potentially bringing in business into recycling as well. Bill mentions that this is part of our goal but is not within the city's scope regarding its bid. Martha and Catherine both bring up that reducing waste in general should also be part of our message. Bill brings up that education will be a key component of our message for the coming year.

Martha asks if we may possibly work with the City of Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo Township regarding single-stream recycling. Mr. Shaffer brings up that we might do that in the future but for now we'd like to move forward with our bidding process now and see where it goes.

Martha brings up that education will seem to be the board's major goal next year. Bill reinforces this thought. Jamie mentions waiting until the vendor is chosen and then working with them on the educational component.

Catherine asks Henry how he sees the schools implementing and helping with single-stream recycling. He will go back to his student advisory committee and his school regarding this issue.

### **Greenathon/Fishing Fair/Invasive Plant Pulls**

Christin has said she could help out with invasive plant pull on May 16<sup>th</sup> and Martha said she could help out with the Fishing Fair.

Judy mentions that we still have some brochures but that we might print more of those in the future. Judy will look into ordering more of those.

Judy has already put up information on the website regarding the invasive plant pulls.

Bill checked with Allegra regarding printing some signs for us and the quote was a little high. Bill says he is going to check with A1 Signs and get a quote from them regarding some signs for the pulls. The signs, as quoted, will be reusable for future pulls. Martha asks for a plan to pay for the signs in that the EB does not have funds of its own. and the price exceeds the amount that the Office of Transportation and Utilities has offered to share from its discretionary funds to help us with materials. Martha thinks we should work on getting some sort of small budget potentially in the future. Mr. Shaffer said he and the EB Chair can meet to discuss funding needs for EB projects.

### **Deer Predation**

Ruth wants to get some deer car/crash data from the Michigan DNR. Mr. Shaffer mentions that the city has some deer car/crash data and that we are currently on a downtrend in the number of accidents within the City of Portage. He mentions that they have done quite a bit of research regarding the number of deer and methods to help reduce the population. Martha brings up that the number of deer in her area seems to be down. Mr. Shaffer mentions that they use aerial pictography to figure out the number of deer and when it gets too high the City gets approval from the DNR and the DNR works with the City in reducing this population. Based on recent data, we do not seem to be at this threshold yet.

Christin brings up that the environmental board was asked to look into this issue by the city and if we aren't at this threshold then maybe we don't need a survey but instead an educational piece in The Portager.

Tim thinks that we probably just need the educational piece now and not a survey. Jamie agrees that an article with some baseline information regarding this topic would be good to include in the Portager. Bill mentions that this is a good educational opportunity. Jamie brings up having a person of authority in the article with some dos/don'ts regarding deer.

Tim will work on a different draft of the article. Mr. Shaffer will pass along the deer research to the environmental board that the city has put together.

### **City Manager, Mr. Shaffer**

Mr. Shaffer mentions that the City of Portage is purchasing two hybrid vehicles to add to its fleet. These hybrid vehicles will be used for non-public safety departments. He brings up that police vehicles are usually not well suited to be hybrid vehicles since those cars are idling so much.

He also brings up that the City is going to undertake an architectural review of all of its buildings to see if the buildings can accommodate solar panels. Not only would the city see if buildings can have the solar panels on its buildings but also see if they can use the panels to save on energy costs and put some power back into the grids. The study will focus on the economic feasibility of adding solar panels and ensure that the city can recapture these costs as well. He brings up that Michigan state law requires that a certain percentage of the state's power comes from renewable energy. Catherine asks about renting solar panels and Mr. Shaffer brings up that this really isn't a feasible because the tax credits don't really exist to make this feasible anymore for public entities. We'd need around \$0.24 per kilowatt or so to make the solar panels economically fiscal. Catherine asks about wind power and Mr. Shaffer brings up that he isn't a huge fan of wind power due to the size of these turbines, the flicker/shadows these cause, and how these decimate the bird population as well.

Martha brings up that the environmental board has a lot of talented people on the board with a wide variety of expertise in the environmental fields.

Bill brings up that the boards/commissions should cross-pollinate more. For example, it might make sense to have a planning commission member work with the environmental board potentially when they have environmental issues arise. Martha mentions the same with the parks board as well.

Catherine brings up working with the Boy Scouts more as well. Brett and Chandler agree that there are definitely opportunities to work more with them as well. Southwest Michigan Council is the area association for all the boy scouts in the area.

## **Announcements**

Michigan Botanical will be canceling its event on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Judy mentions that the signs at the water treatment plant are now ready. These signs are not installed yet.

There is an event at the Kalamazoo Public Library on Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup> in the Van Deusen Room. The event was on Naomi Kline's book *This Changes Everything*. The event is from 6pm to 8:30pm.

Henry brings up that each Portage student is required to take Earth Science class and through this class might be a way for the environmental board to introduce the single-stream recycling, hybrid vehicle projects. Henry mentions talking about invasive species with the International Baccalaurette program as this is already a current focus of theirs. He will provide contact information after the

meeting. Chandler Simmering also brings up that every student also takes a freshman focus class and that the environmental board could work with this class as well.

Mr. Shaffer mentions that he was glad to be invited to the meeting and wants to work more with the environmental board especially with sharing information between the two entities. Martha mentions that Mr. Shaffer is more than welcome to come back at any time.

Catherine makes a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Tim. The motion to adjourn passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16pm

/s/ Tim Winslow