

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM COMMITTEE (CSPC) MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 6, 2020
5:00 PM
VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

Committee Members Present: Chair Sara Pesek, Rajesh Kapileshwari, Dane Kuppinger, Stephanie Friede, Leah Lavin, Amber Baker

Committee Members Absent: Angela Young, Denise Terry, Keyra Williams, Lee Stackhouse

Attendance of City Staff: Helen Peplowski, Director of Operations Johnnie Taylor

Meeting called to order at 5:04 by Chair Sara Pesek.

Roll Call.

Rajesh Kapileshwari moves to adopt May meeting minutes, seconded by Dane Kuppinger. Adopted.

Helen Peplowski, Staff Support, shares Office of Sustainability updates. This year Community Roots Day won't be happening. A blue bag program began last week through the SOAR (successful outcomes after release) program to assist with litter pickup in targeted areas. It was an initiative of Council Member Taylor. Bee City doesn't have any updates but reminder that there are a series of videos that were created for National Pollinator Week. As an update for the recycling form, it will be online on our website through the recycle pages. It will be a questionnaire with conditional questions, but due to the technical nature of this form being somewhat complicated we are still working on it.

Sara had asked Helen to talk about the form on the Sustainability webpages. It is a questionnaire about six general sustainability topics. It was initially meant to potentially inform a sustainability plan before it was decided that the plan was going to be an internal facing plan. After looking back at data, there were around 87 responses that included comments around efforts that have since happened, such as increased focus on pollinators, native vegetation and green space preservation all through Bee City efforts. There were other comments around litter that are now related to Keep Winston-Salem Beautiful programming. Over the past few years, a lot of the comments from the form have naturally been addressed, so it was good to have those interactions. The future of the survey is unknown since there have been lower levels of activity with that form.

Sara confirmed that was what she was curious about and wanted to know how many people were still responding. Helen said that when she first put it up there, she included efforts to market the form such as through social media posts, but recently hasn't done anything particular around it.

Rajesh asks if he thinks the committee should do anything to reinvigorate that campaign or figure out a way to get more responses. Helen adds that maybe including some groups in that campaign that aren't necessarily labeled as environmental should be considered. Rajesh thinks it would be a good way to help the committee push the interests of the community members.

Helen added that she would also welcome any changes or suggestions to update the form. She also added that as a reminder the city social media is still mostly geared toward COVID-related updates and we may not have full access to post freely, as is the case for all departments in the city.

Sara asks with regards to the survey, how often people included comments. Helen responded that more often than not comments were included, which is how the information around green space, recycling, single-use [plastics] and other topics was gathered. Around 60% of responses included comments.

Dane says that maybe, while it may be more complicated to create the form, similar to the recycling form when people indicate the importance of different topics you could then include some information around who is working on what in the city already or what they are doing, the groups working on it, and here are some steps you can take in your own life to make it more of a digital dialogue and could maybe encourage them to get more involved. Dane clarifies that rather than having people who take the survey email someone directly, that information is offered to them up front, conditionally. It gives them information about what is going on in the city and can provide more information if they want to get involved.

Rajesh asks if he could take this form to his other board with Piedmont Environmental Alliance (PEA). Helen explains that she originally coordinated with a member of PEA staff at the time to create the form. PEA liked the idea and tweaked it a little so they could also use it for their own purposes. The responses PEA got were shared with Helen which turned out to be over 500 responses. The same topics still rose to the top that were already established by the folks who responded directly to the city form. Helen said she thinks PEA was able to possibly use that data to inform some of their own programming. However, since they were part of this process in the past, there may not be as much of a use for it now for them. Helen also would want to avoid having the same people who participated in the first survey to submit again whereas now we are trying to get to a broader audience this time. If they could reach more or new people, that may be helpful to give us a better idea of what the entire community wants to bring the equity component into this effort.

Stephanie Friede is wondering if we are talking about the survey as a potential project or if it was more for clarity around what it was. Sara says she asked so she would know how it had been utilized to this point. Stephanie wanted to know if that curiosity was driven by whether she thought the committee should develop it further. Sara said she hadn't thought that far ahead since she wasn't sure how people had actually been using it. Stephanie just wanted to know since she was losing track of why they were having that discussion. She does think there is a lot there with the survey in terms of auditing whose voices are being heard and how to get to those voices. Certain communities may not be talking about environmental issues as top issues but are talking about the environment through other issues like health issues, justice issues, access to groceries, etc. So if the question is about whose voices are being heard, maybe a survey on a website is not the ideal way to do that.

Sara moves into talking about equity and outreach into the community. Sara asks Leah Lavin to talk about her thoughts around making sure their work is inclusive. Leah says that the committee needs to make sure they tie their work plan into public health, racial justice, climate justice, healthy neighborhoods, and needs to overlap other ideas like that. It's the right thing to do and more compelling to check more boxes rather than just looking at stand-alone metrics.

Sara adds that there was a recent news article talking about environmental justice in communities across the country. Committee needs to think broadly and holistically about what they are recommending to make sure it thinks about all the ways sustainability may be defined so we don't overlook opportunities to do it right.

Rajesh agrees, and has seen reports about how minorities and certain segments of the population are affected more than others, not just from COVID, but with asthma and other health concerns as well as economic downturn. While he understands that climate change and the carbon footprint can't be all they focus on, it does affect all segments and some disproportionately more. On the work plan, they are trying to come up with things that include justice, jobs, and training. He also believes there is council support around giving money to low-income housing and making energy efficiency a priority since energy-burden is difficult for low-income households. They need to include this in their action plan. He says that since jobs, justice and environment are so linked that whatever they do will impact the other areas.

Stephanie asks as a follow-up to Rajesh's point, if we are creating a work plan she wants to have more action. There had been talk about creating working groups, and Stephanie suggests they narrow a bit more. Giving Council Member's information that links social and economic inequalities in Winston-Salem in an easy way could be an easy project to create a one-pager based on some research. This could be something the committee does for two to three topics to

give council some overarching suggestions or recommendations or at the very least just more information, especially since this is an advisory board.

Amber Baker suggests that if we are trying to assess those areas affecting families who are already disproportionately impacted by issues, they connect with some sort of grassroots operation or a group already in the community doing some work so they don't make some assumptions about what needs to be in that community. Also, looking at low-income housing, a lot of times those occupants aren't homeowners, so there needs to be some recognition of working with landlords who are ultimately in charge of making sure rental properties are up to code or energy efficient. That's a different issue than trying to assist homeowners with limited funds. Both are necessary, but are two things that are important.

Sara thanks Amber for making that point and then moves into discussion around the work plan. The original document they had been working on had a few main topics: greenhouse gas emissions, the built environment, landscaping and native species, and waste reduction specifically composting and reducing recycling contamination. These topics will also tie into their report that introduce people to what the group is doing and incorporating the work plan as well as topics that have been discussed or touched on that is being done by city employees. For instance, Bee City USA is in the annual report, but isn't something they are responsible for, just overseeing. Sara asks what level of detail the City Council wants, and should auxiliary projects be included that relate to what the committee is doing.

Helen says the main focus needs to be advisory actions or what the committee has had a direct hand in. The annual report is more a document that summarizes what the committee has done.

Leah asks that if they are an advisory committee, how do they get an opportunity to advise. Helen says a good example is the Resolution. The committee was asked to give input and submit it to council with their recommendations. However, they don't have to wait for the requests, they can put together other resolutions, information items or updates, and that is how they would be able to directly advise council.

Rajesh says that he thinks the work plan is for the 2020-2021 year, and is what the committee will be focusing on in meetings and the report is a summary of the work plan and the discussions that relate.

Since the Resolution was mentioned, the plan is to get it on the September agenda for council. Helen needs the information and official resolution for Council by August 28. She lets the committee know that her own comments will not be in support of the resolution being submitted by the committee.

Sara asks if Helen will share with the committee prior to submission what her comments are. Helen says she can and also that most of her comments have already been verbally shared in previous meetings, so they shouldn't be a surprise.

Rajesh was under the impression that unanimously approving the resolution was the green light to move it up the chain of command and getting it onto the agenda. Is there anything else that needs to be submitted with that, because there likely won't be time for slides so it will likely be him or Sara giving the presentation and answering questions. His thought was to tell a story and have a bunch of statistics in case certain questions come up, like around cost. He just wasn't aware of what needed to be submitted in terms of paperwork or presentation slides.

Helen was under the impression that someone had confirmed there would be slides, but she would work with Jennifer on completing the paperwork needed and the Resolution will be the only attachment. She will make sure the committee is aware there will still be a presentation though even if it doesn't include visuals.

Rajesh says if he does put some slides together he will send it by the August 28 deadline.

Rajesh also says that he has connected with some Council Members who have given comments on the resolution, such as making it shorter and direct. Since they already passed a document unanimously, but there were then changes made, would they have to vote on it again.

Helen clarifies that if any changes were made, it has to go to a vote again because it was originally voted on and passed as it was written at that moment.

Sara asks if there were any other questions about the resolution process. Sara is aware that there are some members who may not have seen a recent version and suggests sending around the resolution again for everyone.

Stephanie says that would be helpful, but also wants clarification on a timeline on what the next step is for the resolution.

Helen says that from this committee, it goes to the Community Development/Housing/General Government Council Committee with four council members sitting on that committee. From there they can ask questions and make comments. If they approve it, it then goes to the full City Council meeting.

Sara goes back to the report and asks for input around how to include information around topics that were explored or discussed even if they aren't 'done.' For instance, could she include that they explored a topic and through that exploration, here are things learned, so it could also be useful for future members of the committee.

Dane comments that he was more trying to include conversations that were had and where the committee was in the discussion, as opposed to focusing on what they

accomplished. He is talking more about what they were working on and the type of work happening. Helen and Sara seem to be talking about two different kinds of reports. He first thinks they need to figure out which direction to take with the report. Perhaps what Sara is talking about is a work plan and what Helen is talking about is what would go to City Council, but that it isn't one document.

Helen adds that there isn't just one way to write it, so it can't be wrong.

Rajesh agrees with Sara and Dane that including things talked about even if they didn't go anywhere is still important. The report should be more the narrative, and the work plan is the specific 'SMART' goals but they complement each other still.

Sara asks if anyone has questions about what they have been discussing or comments for the next period of time between calls.

Johnnie Taylor, Director of Operations, takes the opportunity to add that he had been trying to get the information from this committee to be presented in a face-to-face situation with council but it doesn't seem like that will happen in the foreseeable future. He takes the side of including information that was discussed even if it didn't go anywhere so Council Members are familiar with those conversations in case they become action items in 2021. Johnnie wants the City Council to have heard these items while the committee is able to keep discussing them if they do become action items in the future. For example, the conversation around contamination is important since contamination is an important topic and he wants the committee to help us tackle dealing with this problem. We will soon be moving into a new recycle contract in 2022, and the new contract will likely revolve around the cleanliness of the recycling stream. It's a big piece, and even though we didn't tackle it this year, we want the City Council Members to know we talked about it and can try to attack it in the next year.

Sara thanks Johnnie for his comments, especially since she is interested in MRFs (material recovery facilities) and was glad to hear he thinks it is important for council to hear what they discuss in their meetings. Maybe the presentation should be 1 slide with the key ideas on it that were discussed so they have seen it before if it is ever brought up again.

Rajesh clarifies that his presentation that was upcoming was really around the resolution, not the annual report, which would need to be a different presentation.

Helen agrees and says that annual report presentation would be more of an Information Item. It would need to be a separate agenda item than the resolution.

Helen also responds to Sara's comment around her interest in MRFs with letting her know that while they hit a dead end around the first recycling idea, it wasn't a dead end to the discussion completely and she is open to talking more with her about recycling and contamination.

Sara asks if anyone moves to end the meeting. Rajesh motions to end the meeting, Leah seconds.
Meeting adjourns at 6:00 pm.