

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM COMMITTEE (CSPC) MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 1, 2020
5:00 PM
VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

Committee Members Present: Rajesh Kapileshwari, Dane Kuppinger, Leah Lavin, Denise Terry, Lee Stackhouse, Amber Baker

Committee Members Absent: Chair Sara Pesek, Angela Young, Keyra Williams, Stephanie Friede, Allison Bowling

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

Meeting called to order at 5:05 by Helen Peplowski, staff support, filling in for Chair Sara Pesek.

Roll Call.

Helen reviews for the official record the results of the last vote on the Resolution that happened during the last week of August via email. For the record, after the Resolution was passed during the August meeting, changes were made which required another vote. Due to the short timeframe between when the changes were made and the deadline to submit the Resolution, the vote took place electronically and was unanimous.

Helen moved on to review the September 15 presentation Rajesh Kapileshwari gave to the Community Development/Housing/General Government (CDHGG) Council Committee. Rajesh presented some background on the general topic of climate change as well as the resolution and then opened it up to questions from the Council Committee members and the other Council Members present. Council Member Clark asked about the differences between this resolution and the Forsyth County resolution. Council Member Scippio asked about why Sustainability Staff didn't support the resolution which Helen spoke to. Council Member Besse wasn't comfortable passing the resolution as presented and asked for further changes. Council Member Larson was happy the Sustainability Committee was presenting something and agreed that Utilities needed to be consulted if they were to be included and that further changes were needed.

Certain specific changes that Council Member Besse asked to see were more realistic percentage goals and timelines, and commitments, removing the support for the federal legislation, and paring down the details.

Leah asked what the next steps should be. Helen informs the committee that they should now make changes to the resolution and aim to resubmit to the CDHGG Committee meeting in November.

Rajesh thinks they can't go back to the committee with discord between the CSPC and sustainability staff. He wants the committee to be able to push the city beyond business as usual while the staff is meant to figure out how to implement those goals. His thoughts are that they need to address whether or not we plan to meet the Paris Climate Agreement goals that the mayor signed on to support or strike it. Second, whether or not we plan to meet the Governor's Executive Order 80 goals and how we plan to do so if yes.

Helen says in reference to finding common ground, she supports the Council's comments and concerns around the resolution, and throughout the entire process of amending the resolution, recommendations were made that were not used which is why staff had hesitations in supporting the resolution as presented. It will be up to the CSPC as to whether or not they include specific actions on how to reach the [Paris Climate Agreement and Executive Order 80] specific goals, but to keep in mind that Council Member Besse still wants a pared down version of what was already presented. Helen suggests if they leave those bigger goals in the resolution, then present the specific actions as separate items in the future as to how to achieve those goals.

Dane Kuppinger asks for clarification around what the recommendation around 'paring it down' is referring to. Do they want the resolution to avoid language around specific goals or be less detailed in the resolution as to how and then provide supplementary notes as to how. Helen says that her interpretation of what Council Member Besse was referring to as 'paring down' was the length of the resolution, but that the Council Member's comment around more realistic percentages and timelines is more related to Dane's first point. As an example, Helen explains that the 80% renewable energy by 2030 goal was ambitious and where a more realistic percentage goal or timeline would come into play.

Dane asks for further clarification that in 'paring down' they are going to be removing specific targets but are still asking to reaffirm the city's commitment to the Mayor Climate Agreement. Helen says it is up to the CSPC to what to change as she has only interpreted Council comments and reactions. She says that by having seven specific goals that takes up two pages, it is a longer resolution than what is usually presented and that's what she is assuming needs to be changed.

Dane is getting at that he wants everyone on the same page like what Rajesh said. Their concern is that the specific goals are how to accomplish the goals they are recommitting to. He doesn't see how you can have one without the other. He isn't sure how to get approval of staff.

Helen says that maybe the solution is not holding ourselves to the 80% goal by 2030 since we are starting from zero, or maximum of 6% if Duke Energy generation counts. Considering where we are starting from, there needs to be some give. For the Office of Sustainability, some of the previous commitments were made under a different director. There is still support for the idea of this resolution, but the details were a little unreasonable or too difficult to achieve in the proposed timelines. Additionally, she suggests adding an amendment excluding Utilities. They use a large portion of the total

city's energy, but they need to be consulted before including them due to that being a city/county department. It would be more reasonable for the sustainability staff to consider an 80% reduction for operations excluding Utilities.

Lee Stackhouse comments that the conversation seems to be around simplifying the resolution, so maybe they should pick one or two things to do rather than a broad resolution that covers a lot. They should simplify that goal, pick one thing, and then provide details to that one thing.

Leah thinks they can simplify a lot out of the resolution. She asks for clarification around what Duke Energy has promised. Rajesh clarifies that they are committed to carbon neutral by 2050 and by 2030 are set to have 20-30% clean renewable energy.

Lee asks for the definition of carbon neutral. Rajesh says it means that the fuel comes from non-fossil fuel sources.

Rajesh reiterates that nothing in the resolution is new and reviews where they got the goals that were included.

Lee says that if you take one of the things Rajesh reviewed and put details and actions to that one thing, would that be sufficient. If they do that and do it well, then you can do that again one a second item and so on. Lee asks if that is the idea or are they trying to do ten things at once. He is still torn between what their strategy is as a group.

Dane sees that Rajesh and Lee have laid out different approaches. One is an overall approach that lays out the full picture and the arc of what needs to happen, or do we take the small pieces and move forward from there. Dane thinks they should do a bit of both. He wants to know where Helen would start with the resolution.

Helen responds that she has presented suggestions to the CSPC since February that had been dismissed as too vague. She thinks there is some middle ground. The title of the Resolution focuses on a goal of 100% clean renewable energy and green jobs. Excluding goals that don't relate to the title could be a good place to start, such as the goal about encouraging the utility (Duke Energy) and the community to also meet those goals. She thinks Lee has a strong suggestion as a way to focus on a couple of things rather than including all the ways the community could be involved. She reiterates that she has already shared many ways she would change the resolution, and number seven is one of those things. That goal was about the Office of Sustainability creating a strategic plan which has already been done.

Dane asks how they can succeed if they go in front of City Council with disagreement from the sustainability staff around an item, and that means city council won't pass that item, but staff won't bend.

Helen states that the information she and her staff provide doesn't always mean it will sway the City Council. In this case, they wanted more information so that's what they were given. We saw their interest in certain specific aspects, and even though she shared her comments with them they still had their own independent reservations. She felt it was her job to make sure the Council had all the information they needed to make a decision.

Rajesh said they changed some of the language related to the community aspects of the resolution due to some feedback from Council Member Scippio. That's where item four of the resolution came from. If the CSPC committee members agree that there is another place for that item, he is comfortable striking it from the resolution. Same goes for the next point in the resolution which is more green job related. He believes the point of the resolution was to take a holistic approach to solve several problems, but if that keeps them from accomplishing any goals then he moves those points be taken out.

Rajesh explains the purpose of including the point of the strategic action plan in the resolution was to be able to review it every year or so to see what progress had been made and adjust certain requests to make sure those actions are getting accomplished.

Rajesh argues in favor of number three from the Governor's executive order - 40% by 2025. He thinks challenging aspirational goals are necessary. He thinks energy efficiency is important as that is what can save the city money to be used in other ways. He says this point in the resolution is most important to do first if they are to take the approach that Lee is suggesting.

Leah says it is difficult to get stuff done in one hour and being restricted to not communicating via email according to the legal presentation from the city.

Dane also says he thinks the way the committee is run is screwy and his college committees don't run like that because otherwise they wouldn't get anything done.

Helen reminds members that the only restriction specifically mentioned is that meetings and communications among members can't have more than six members before breaking open meeting rules.

Leah says then that their committee should focus on making a community-level difference in the city and make that clear. They should also begin more group work to get to know each other to use each other's strengths to move the work along.

Amber Baker asks a question about what the request to shorten the resolution was based on. Helen clarifies that the length itself was one thing they wanted pared down since again, two pages worth of points is not usually how long resolutions are. Helen says Council Member Besse spoke directly with Rajesh and invited Rajesh to share if there was another impression he got from that conversation with the Council Member. Rajesh shares that he knew there was too much

detail in the first version with thirteen points in the resolution and that got shortened, so he thought they had already addressed that in the revote in August.

In revising the resolution, Rajesh is good to strike any points as long as the first three points remain with energy efficiency being the first priority. As for the 80% goal by 2030, he argues that with the possible 20% from Duke Energy and the implementation of more energy efficiency in city operations, that will be less of a demand to meet that goal. Rajesh asks if the sustainability staff has looked into doing a Purchase Power Agreement or Green Source Advantage through Duke Energy and what was the conclusion. Helen says that staff has looked into both and that the biggest barrier is the length of payback from these programs which is ultimately up to the city's financial team to agree to rather than for the Office of Sustainability to decide.

Amber asks again to try to get some clarity around what specifically City Council is looking for the CSPC to come back with. If their feedback was about the number of items, they need to identify the top two or three items. If it was about the length, could they take out some of the specifics to make it shorter. Helen says that they asked about both the number of items and length.

Amber follows-up about if they could pick the top two or three items and the other remaining items become an addendum piece to the original resolution for the record to clarify the conversations.

Lee supports this idea as he thinks keeping it to two or three items would be better suited to the City Council and the rest of the items could be part of a detailed action plan from the committee. He also says whichever items they pick should be supported by the sustainability staff. If what they choose doesn't get support from staff, he doesn't see why they would pursue it.

Amber asks if that should be the starting point then, where the staff and committee agreed on items.

Denise agrees, and the committee needs to work with that as a starting point.

Dane says he has picked out three goals that seem to have mutual support. The transition to clean energy by 2050 should still be there, but maybe taking out the 2030 goal would be more palatable. The second was around conservation methods and energy efficiency. The third encourages community providers to meet the same targets.

Helen fully agrees on the energy efficiency being important and a good place to start. The longer term goal is something she is also more comfortable with since there will be a better idea on how successful Duke Energy will be in achieving their targets since we will be heavily relying on their electricity generation to meet these goals. That also gives the committee time to come back with another resolution for another target before then. Helen doesn't disagree with the community goals, it is just harder for the city to control.

Rajesh requests a meeting with the city staff looking at these goals more in depth, so he doesn't bring the whole committee into the specific details. Helen says that the research done by her and her staff informed the sustainability plan she created, and the goal included in that plan of 15% energy use reduction by 2025. She asked if the committee would be open to including that goal in the resolution.

Lee comments on how different that goal is to the one originally proposed.

Rajesh says his problem with that goal is that it isn't meeting the Mayor's, Governor's or Paris Climate target.

Leah says she remembers Council Member Larson had mentioned he wanted the committee to weigh in on different matters, but she isn't sure how to go about doing that if they aren't asked or it isn't brought to the committee.

Helen tells them that this resolution was a good starting point since it was brought directly to them. She says if they come across an item that interests them or they would like to comment on, the committee can put together an information item for council to get them whatever information or recommendations are important. Helen uses Stephanie's suggestion from the last meeting as an example for providing information on energy efficiency in vulnerable communities and what that looks like for the city. This is a good way to use the time in between meetings to stay up-to-date on what is going on in the city and if they find a connection or come up with an idea to share that at CSPC meetings.

Rajesh reminds members that there is a working Google Doc where people can share these thoughts and ideas.

For the sake of time, Helen moves on to approval of minutes. Rajesh moves to approve, Leah seconds.

Helen says that to get approval of the amended Resolution in time for the November CDHGG meeting there will be a special meeting in October.

Rajesh asks if they should bump submittal of the Resolution due to the election. Helen says January would be the next best time to submit the resolution since December meetings are shorter. Johnnie asks if the committee is comfortable with waiting until January. He just wants to make sure there is a united front before it is presented again. Johnnie reminds members that we want to address this global crisis like they do, but we have the obligation to provide council our professional opinion and the CSPC can have a different opinion.

Helen says if the committee can reach a compromise in the October Special Meeting then we shouldn't postpone, but if we aren't all on the same page then it may be better to wait.

Amber says if we start with where we agree, it is more likely we will reach a conclusion. And if there is a way they can offer the other items as part of some type of addendum, then that is also a way they can go.

Johnnie says they will work under the assumption they will submit it again in November.

Rajesh again offers to meet with someone to discuss his ideas on meeting energy targets. Johnnie offers to meet with him to hear his ideas and extends that offer to all committee members.

Rajesh moves to adjourn, Lee seconds. Meeting adjourned at 6:23.