



CITY OF NOVI
Environmental Sustainability Committee
June 17, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Council Conference | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Council Members Heintz, Gurumurthy, and Smith

PRESENT: Council Members Heintz, Gurumurthy, and Smith

STAFF LIAISON: Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Katherine Oppermann, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Heintz, Seconded: Gurumurthy, Minutes approved 3:0

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Smith stated that he was excited to start the work of this committee and that his intention is to hold meetings roughly every two to three weeks. Additionally, he noted that he has a bias to action and plans to have action items for follow up at the end of each meeting. He looks forward to bringing in community residents at the appropriate time.

MATTERS FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

1. Roundtable Discussion: Outside Resources

Chairperson Smith started the discussion by noting the local organization Friends of the Rouge and by noting that he was impressed by Ann Arbor's presentation of their Environmental materials.

Councilmember Gurumurthy agreed that she was impressed by the resources and materials presented by other cities and that such presentations will assist the Committee in setting benchmarks. She would like to better understand Novi's current standing in regard to sustainability and education. She would also like to establish a clear framework and goals for both the Committee and City as a whole.

Chairperson Smith noted that he envisions the initial Committee deliverable as short-term environmental sustainability goals with the eventual presentation of more formal goals and budget items to pass onto Council and City Staff.

Staff Liaison Mahoney pointed out that many comparable cities and organizations have a dedicated sustainability office and moving into the future we may also need to examine that.

Councilmember Heintz asked if there was one City office that handles sustainability matters more than others. Ms. Mahoney indicated that it would probably fall primarily under Integrated Solutions and the Department of Public Works. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS) also has some programming in place related to sustainability.

Councilmember Gurumurthy noted the importance of "quick wins" alongside short- and long-term goals. She wants what is best for the internal city operations as well as the community overall.

Chairperson Smith noted that in crafting new frameworks we should consider the value of the carrot vs. stick approach (IE incentives vs. enforcement) and the necessary balance that must be struck in the implementation.

Councilmember Heintz agrees that the reduction of "friction" is important. That making the process of sustainable practices should be made as easy as possible for businesses and residents.

Ms. Mahoney talked about the PRCS presentation at the recent Superhero Showcase event that allowed residents to vote on area of interest and suggested that a similar simple approach could be used to gauge resident interest in sustainability initiatives.

Councilmember Gurumurthy stated that at work she always starts with a problem statement. Here we don't have a problem but rather gaps that can be addressed. She would be interested in hearing from other cities that have an Environmental Action Plan in place to understand their process and how they got started. She wants to make sure that when the Committee reaches the stage of approaching residents that we are asking the right questions.

Chairperson Smith suggested starting with Royal Oak and Northville to understand their process as well as pain points in the Environmental Action Plan creation.

Councilmember Heintz agrees that, as an action item, the committee members should approach different cities to gather that information as a 1st step. It was determined by the committee that in undertaking meetings with other City representatives that having them during the course of regularly planned Environmental Sustainability Committee meetings and if necessary could hold the meetings during normal business hours.

Ms. Mahoney talked a bit about what she has learned about the process undertaken by Ann Arbor from their Sustainability Manager and how their City Council directive changed and grew over time.

Councilmember Gurumurthy suggests that the committee meet with the MSU Stewards/SSLI/4H Club at an upcoming meeting as she can easily arrange it with her preexisting contact. She also notes that she believes education is very important and that residents should be sent information to help with community input.

Councilmember Heintz expressed interest in having a committee trip to the RRRASOC Recycling Center to assist with their own understanding of the process but also to potentially put together a video or podcast with Studio VI to educate residents on the recycling center.

The group discussed the various avenues of community outreach available to reach residents such as video, YouTube, podcast, etc. Councilmember Gurumurthy thinks that the "story" of the committee: why it is needed/what they are doing should be clearly established and communicated to the public.

2. Roundtable Discussion: Long- and Short-term goals

Chairperson Smith distributed post it notes to the committee members to assist in their brainstorming. HE explained that he regarded short-term goals should be those that will be implementable in two years or less time and can encompass "easy wins". Long-term goals should be either ones that will take over two years to realize and/or those that will require more capital or effort to enact.

Ms. Mahoney suggested that, if it is easier, to just write down all their ideas and then the committee can discuss and determine when in the schedule of action they should fall.

The committee members then wrote down their ideas and each was read out by Chairperson Smith and grouped where appropriate. A typed list of all the presented goals will be made for future discussion and exploration.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Committee members should start thinking of ideas for questions to present to other cities and organizations.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS - none

ADJOURNMENT – 6:35 p.m.

Motion: Smith, Seconded: Heintz, approved 3:0