

Environmental Commission Meeting: June 7, 2023 (corrected)

Attending: Ned Jackson, Tom Frazier, Emma Andrecheck, Kendra Grasseschi, Bill McConnell, Anna Colby, John Sarver, Amelia Saffron, Graham Diedrich, LeRoy Harvey, Courtney Wisinski

Agenda: Jackson added an update about the water section of the Climate Sustainability Plan.

Healthy Food Systems: (Climate Sustainability Plan): Colby provided an overview of the latest updates section. She suggested adding a paragraph about current work (gleaning, food collection, etc.) and invited comments. Diedrich suggested promotion of options for lower income households such as WIC. Colby asked if food insecurity should go in a food security plan vs. a sustainability plan. McConnell mentioned the possibility of adding a diversity, equity, and inclusion in each section of the plan. Diedrich offered to brainstorm and potentially add some language related to DEI. Saffron suggested including community gardens and their impacts and benefits. Grasseschi mentioned defining gleaning. Jackson mentioned issues related to greenhouse gases and composting. Andrecheck suggested a QR code related to composting how-to information. There was also some discussion about raising chickens, rabbits, goats, turkeys, etc. Diedrich mentioned Ferndale's urban farming ordinance and potential synergy between this and composting opportunities. Frazier asked about the EPA goal and whether it's a Township or Environmental Commission goal. Colby clarified that it's more of model or template for action. Sarver asked what was the largest contributor to food waste and how success might be measured in reducing waste? Colby suggested that residential waste is one the largest contributors. McConnell mentioned exploring shuttle services to the Market such as the shopping shuttle. Meridian Cares is mentioned as a partner as well – McConnell will check on a contact [*note from staff: Katie Love is the new staff contact at 853-4204*]. He also suggested that the Committee might make specific recommendations to the planning commission (such as conservation of farmland). He also mentioned that there may be some issues related to full buildout of the township which may be of interest to the Township. McConnell has heard that full buildout may allow 2500 new homes (including 1000 already underway). Some of these may be outside the Urban Services Boundary.

Budget Conversation: McConnell asked if there were questions about the budget information provided in the packet. Sarver mentioned that the educational value of the Green Grants is a key part of the criteria for evaluation. The wetland budget update was noted in the packet. There is interest in expanding the Green Grant program. Colby mentioned that it might be desirable to promote funding for food audits in local schools. McConnell asked for more details about recycling revenues and expenses. Colby asked about ways we might expand funding for the food collection efforts. Frazier echoed this need. McConnell expressed appreciation for the level of grants coming in to the Township. Frazier asked about the number and location of signs. Grasseschi shared examples of the wetland-related signs, including properties around Lake Lansing where dumping has occurred. Emma and Planner Shorkey mentioned some areas along the trails and other wetlands. There are also vernal pools that are a priority for signage. McConnell also mentioned that signage has been a requirement with wetland permits. There are other signs for parks and buffer restoration educating about native plants. Feedback on the signs is welcome. Frazier asked about the recycling budget including the port-a-potty expense and costs related to recycling special events (such as electronics recycling pick-up). There is interest in seeing some more detail about costs and revenues related to special events.

- **Water Section of the Climate Plan:** The water section has evolved with input from multiple individuals, led by Grasseschi. Jackson recently reviewed some of the changes he made to streamline the section. (see edits at <https://sites.google.com/view/climate-sustainability-plan/home>). McConnell mentioned goals related to low-impact building and potential ordinance and policy changes. Grasseschi expressed appreciation to those who offered comments. She also suggested separating out infill development and asked about potential inclusion of tree canopy goals. McConnell mentioned possible highlighting of improvements underway at the Water Resource Recovery Facility. He and Grasseschi also expressed interest in updating wetland maps/inventories.

Updates:

- Staff update is located at <https://sites.google.com/view/staff-update/june-7-2023> Harvey mentioned progress on the natural shoreline demonstration, a work day in the roundabout, delivery of the MSU Energy audit, and a student's work on lake healthy landscaping.
- Grasseschi mentioned the purchase of a new preserve by Cornell Elementary School. It's been a while since a preserve has been purchased. Proximity to the school is appealing as well as opportunity for deer management.
- Sarver mentioned the next Solarize meeting coming on June 13 on Zoom.
- Colby offered a report prepared by Valery Lafferty. The Food Group is distributing compostable food bags and expansion of the food collection at the Meridian Market. The gleaning efforts continue. Plant starts will be donated by one vendor for use in community gardens. The GFSC team will be collaborating on a table at the market Green Fair. The team will meet at Wonch Park this month. There was a tour of the MSU Anaerobic Digester as well as John Biernbaum's organic farm.
- Frazier mentioned that the Green Team will meet tomorrow. The Green Fair will be June 17 and include bike recycling, electric bikes, composting options, sustainable fashion, and more.
- Winsinski reports that Celebrate Meridian is June 24. The Pride celebration will be held in July. Budgets are being discussed and proposed in August. The Master Plan is on the agenda to discuss. The Recreational Marijuana ordinance is done.
- Andrechek mentioned that the Earth Club activities have slowed down for the summer. They will have some sustainable fashion items at the Green Fair.
- Colby reports that the Capital Area Sustainability Partnership will meet tomorrow.
- Jackson mentioned that the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority has not met. He and Wisinski also mentioned that there is some discussion about improvements to the developer-owned downtown Okemos site.

Adjourned at 8:30pm.

Recording at <https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/videos/234400>