

City of Decorah  
Sustainability Commission  
November 18, 2020 – 5:00pm  
Meeting Minutes

Electronic meeting pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8 – In circumstances where such a meeting is impossible or impractical due to concerns about COVID-19 and social distancing for the safety of commission members and the public.

In support of Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds' proclamation declaring a State of Public Health Disaster Emergency in Iowa, the current COVID-19 situation makes it "impossible and impractical" to meet in one location. Due to this the Decorah City Hall was partially closed to the public for the November 18, 2020 Sustainability Commission meeting. Seating was limited to ensure distancing. The public was invited to participate via electronic means.

Members present included: Michelle Barness, Ben Grimstad, Molly McNicoll, Ann Mansfield, Jeremy Leitz, Brent Parker, and Jim Martin-Schramm.

Others present: Council Liaison Emily Neal and City Manager Chad Bird.  
There were 28 guests on the Zoom link.

Consider approval of minutes from the October 21, 2020 regular meeting

**Motion by Grimstad and second by Parker to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2020 Commission meeting.**

**Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.**

**Motion passed.**

Zoom Presentation on "Climate Change and Decorah Flood Resilience" by the Woodwell Climate Research Center; Dave McGlinchey and Dominick Dusseau.

*Martin-Schramm introduced McGlinchey and Dusseau and turned the rest of the meeting over to them to share their presentation.*

*The presentation was titled "Current and Future Flood Risk Under Climate Change in Decorah, IA".*

*In summary, the report stated:*

Inland floods are some of the most devastating natural disasters and are expected to worsen under climate change due to the intensification of extreme precipitation. In this study, present and future flood risk in Decorah, IA, is examined through changes in the 1-in-100 year and 1-in-500-year flood events.

The output of these simulations show that the historical 100-year rainfall event is 3.6x and 5.6x as likely in 2041-2060 and 2071-2090, respectively.

Using these estimates as inputs into a flood model reveal minimal changes in flood risk across Decorah due to the levee system reducing. The total inundated area for the 100-year event within the flood model domain changes by 0.87% and -0.25% by mid and late 21<sup>st</sup> century, respectively.

The main Decorah levee system along the Upper Iowa River is estimated to protect against the 500-year flood event. The area near the College Drive bridge is identified as a weak point with an elevation of only 0.12 feet above the 500-year water level. Additionally, an analysis of the federal flood maps reveal that the Luther College berm was not included in the modeling efforts to generate those federal maps which causes certain buildings on the Luther College campus to be incorrectly placed in the 100-year floodplain.

*The full report and slide presentation are available through the City Clerk's office.*

Other business

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:19pm by Parker / Leitz.

Respectfully submitted,



Chad A. Bird  
City Manager

Future meetings

~~August 19~~

~~September 23~~

~~October 24~~

~~November 18~~

December 16

**Purpose**

*The purpose of the Sustainability Commission shall be to advise the City Council and recommend action on policies and practices that relate to the sustainable use and management of our collective resources, including both human and environmental, as well as our economic resources. The Sustainability Commission will help to ensure that such resources will be sustained and continue to provide for a high quality of life for present and future generations of Decorah doing so by following the processes outlined in the Decorah Sustainability Plan and updating the plan accordingly every 5 years.*