

City of Decorah
Sustainability Commission
October 21, 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 October 21, 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 (at 5:15pm), Ann Mansfield, Jeremy Leitz, Brent Parker, and Jim Martin-Schramm.

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

Consider approval of minutes from the September 23, 2020 regular meeting

Motion by Parker and second by Leitz to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2020 Commission meeting.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Update from groups that have conducted further research about various action items:

- a. Jim: Action item ED1, which is about the city hosting quarterly visioning sessions
 - i. The Mayor and the Sustainability Commission will co-host a meeting via Zoom for local leaders on November 17 from 5-6 pm about Covid-19 response and the impact of the epidemic on economic development.

Martin-Schramm noted he and Mayor Lorraine Borowski are working to coordinate these meetings. There was general discussion about which groups or individuals were being asked to attend these meetings.

Bird shared context between a "community" planning oriented group meeting and Mayor Borowski's community meeting with Luther College President Jenifer Ward.

There was discussion about future meeting topics and discussion points.

- b. Jim and Ben: Action item E8, which is about Installing EV charging stations in city parking lots and on streets in the commercial district.

Martin-Schramm reviewed possible power purchase agreement (PPA) locations and several members of the commission discussed the recent visit to West Union to tour their PPE installations. There were several city locations discussed as options for Decorah including North Alley, the Farmer's Market area, camp ground, etc.

- c. Jeremy and Brent: Action item W3, which is about installing public recycling facilities in downtown business areas

Parker and Leitz provided an update on their recent meeting with the Decorah Downtown Betterment Association board (the morning of October 21, 2020). They noted the Board received the message about downtown recycling very well and encouraged Parker and Leitz to continue to move forward.

Bird shared the DDBA did approve contributing \$1,000 to the program once the Commission determines the parameters.

Parker discussed various locations in the Downtown that might be best suited for receptacles.

Parker also noted there is concern about who would maintain and empty the bins.

Neal also commented on the pick-up and maintenance of the bins and there followed general discussion on the types and styles of bins and containers available.

Leitz noted he and Parker were also going to meet with the SSMID board and city officials from Northfield MN about options.

There was also general discussion about how Hy Vee and Kwik Star are handling operations of their collections. Parker and Leitz agreed to reach out and make inquiry with those businesses.

- d. Ann, Molly, and Brent: Action item S2, which is about housing issues

Mansfield, McNicoll, and Parker met to discuss housing issues with Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission housing coordinator Sarah Snitker. Mansfield noted she had also called and spoke with Bird about the current housing programs and what he believed to be areas for improvement in the existing programs.

Bird reiterated he believed the existing programs are well run and sufficiently funded. He noted the issues seemed to be about education and communication of the programs.

There was also discussion about the Northeast Iowa Community Action Corp's housing programs. There was general discussion about how these programs are funded and it was noted for the Northeast Iowa Housing Trust Fund program, there are Federal, State, and local monies in the fund.

Martin-Schramm asked what the next steps are in this discussion and action item process. He asked about sharing the programs more broadly.

All agreed there needs to be more discussion and conversation about a program communication / education plan.

- e. Ann (and others): Action item CO1, which is about developing a comprehensive communication plan for the City of Decorah

Mansfield reviewed her research with various websites and communication tools. She noted the City's website is in good shape but could use more outside organizations information / links. It needs a broader community resource feel.

Mansfield noted, generally, the community relies heavily on Facebook for communication.

There was general discussion about a community newsletter. There was conversation about adding a newsletter with the city's utility billing. Bird noted the current utility bills are sent only quarterly and via a postcard, both issues in sending newsletters.

There was general discussion about a community wide survey. Discussion focused on how it would be developed and how broadly it would be disseminated.

Consider for Action:

- a. A draft resolution to the City Council regarding Action item E3, which is about establishing a task force to study establishing a municipal electric utility.

There was discussion about the development of the task force and Martin-Schramm reviewed a couple of lists of names for the commission to consider.

Given the lateness of the hour, Martin-Schramm recommended a special meeting or a sub-group meet and begin to work with the list of names compiled.

Other business

- a. Wednesday, November 18, 5:00 – 6:30 pm, [Woodwell Climate Research Center](#) (formerly Woods Hole Research Center) presentation via Zoom: Tentative title: "Climate Change and Flood Resilience in Decorah." Sole focus of the commission meeting scheduled for that day; City Council and other city leaders/staff invited to attend.

Martin-Schramm reminded the commission to be sure to attend the November meeting as the discussion promised to be educational.

Other business

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:26pm by McNicoll / Parker.

Respectfully submitted,



Chad A. Bird
City Manager

Future meetings

~~August 19~~
~~September 23~~
~~October 21~~
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.