

Decorah Sustainability Commission Minutes

Wednesday, February 16th, 2022

5:30 - 6:45 pm, In person and via Zoom

Members present: Jeremy Leitz, Jim Martin-Schramm, Aaron Detter, Ann Mansfield (Zoom), Michelle Barnes (Zoom), Molly McNicoll, Ben Grimstad

Not present: Travis Goedken

Others: Lorraine Borowski, Emily Neal (Zoom), Mike Wagner/Alliant (Zoom), Janelle Pavlovec, John Nielsen/Novak Electric (Zoom)

AGENDA

1. Call to order
 - a. Meeting called to order by Jim Martin-Schramm at 5:30 pm.
2. Approval of Minutes for January 2022. See attachment.
 - a. Minutes reviewed and approved. Motion made by Jeremy Leitz. Second by Ben Grimstad.
3. Updates:
 - a. Future meetings in person with Zoom option (Jim Martin-Schramm)
 - i. Governor has rescinded state-wide emergency rules for Covid. Zoom will remain an option.
 - b. Sustainability Commission expansion (Mayor Borowski)
 - i. Two applications for Sustainability Commission pending. Mayor will bring names to the next City Council meeting. We currently have 7 members; this will bring us up to 9 members.
 - c. Scheduling of City Council work session with Sustainability Commission on goal prioritization (Mayor Borowski, Travis Goedken, Emily Neal)
 - i. Council had a productive work session in January. The work session on February 28 will focus on the rest of the Sustainability plan.
 - ii. Next DSC meeting; possibly have council update/review. Council is supportive of developing a climate action plan.
 - iii. DSC is in a holding pattern waiting for prioritization from the Council. We need to know where we should be focusing our energy/efforts this year. Storm water issues? Tax abatements/building code enforcement?
 - iv. The 2 baseline greenhouse gas studies will be ready for review at the March DSC meeting.
 - v. Priorities from Council. Emily Neal reported that the Council wants a more complete tax abatement program linked to goals of DSC plan.
 - vi. Clarification needed -- city has adopted a building code but not an energy code? Emily thinks local electricians are in compliance with the Iowa building code which include energy; she will check.
 - vii. Suggest - have council (Emily and Mayor Borowski at least) meet with DSC on March 16th; bring clear consensus for priorities from city council work session on Feb. 28th to direct the DSC.

- viii. Update: Iowa legislature pending – prevention of storm water fee? Decorah may not be able to collect the fee.
- d. L4: Ad hoc group on affordable housing (Mayor Borowski)
 - i. Council approved the formation of an ad hoc commission; Mayor Borowski has a list of 14 people who are interested/or she plans to approach for participation. Will be convening the group soon, will determine focus. Iowa Economic Development has a housing initiative that might be a good resource.
- e. W4: Household composting group purchase (Jeremy Leitz)
 - i. Things are going better than expected! As of yesterday, 220 have been purchased. They've ordered 270 to allow for additional purchases. Delivery should be early May. These orders are for Winneshiek County residents.
- f. W3: Recycling in the business district (Travis Goedken)
 - i. Travis not present. Mayor Borowski says he's working/in conversations with Jeremy Brill and Malcom Enterprises. Look for update at March meeting.
- g. E4: Solar PV projects proposed by Novak Electric (Travis Goedken and Molly McNicoll)
 - i. John Nielsen/Novak Electric – Reviewed of electricity usage at “permanent campground” west of US-52. Electricity provided by MiEnergy, not Alliant; rates are lower. Doesn't make sense to provide solar this site. Best to focus on systems proposed for Pulpit Rock Campground and the Streets Dept. building.
 - ii. John met with Park & Rec board since last meeting; they are not opposed to this idea. Met with Travis and Jeremy – it is city owned property, access is not an issue. Talked about potential changed uses for the building in the future; solar project can be moved to another city-owned building later, if necessary. Travis asked that this project be brought to the city council next meeting. Emily Neal will follow up re what council meeting it will be presented.
 - iii. DSC is recommending that these two projects move forward for city council consideration. Members present agree that these projects are a fit for the Pulpit Rock Campground and Street Dept. locations. Motion made by Ben Grimstad. Second by Aaron Detter. Discussion: Molly McNicholl more comfortable hearing from Park & Rec board, Travis Goedken and Jeremy Brill; want to make sure that this is a partnership. Emily Neal said the Council would like to receive a recommendation from DSC. Motion: passed with 6 votes, 1 abstained.
- h. E8: EV Charging Locations (Travis Goedken)
 - i. Recent letter from Jeremy Brill to Jim Martin Schramm – asking to present an update at the March DSC meeting regarding locations and proposed fee structure.
- i. CO1: City Communications (Ann Mansfield, Jeremy Leitz, and Travis Goedken)
 - i. Meeting planned for Feb. 22nd at 4:30pm
 - ii. Aaron Detter – interested in a mechanism where citizens can submit questions/suggestions; promote an interactive, transparent relationship between city and community. Aaron invited to attend the meeting on February 22.
- j. ED1: Quarterly meeting with community leaders in April will focus on workforce development (Jim Martin-Schramm and Mayor Borowski)
 - i. Thinking ahead for the summer quarterly meeting – presentation by and discussion with affordable housing ad hoc group
- k. AW20: Update on “Beyond Pesticides” program available through Resilient Iowa Communities (Molly McNicoll)
 - i. Beyond Pesticides is a non-profit that's developed training sessions for transition to non-pesticide use. Molly has talked with Luther stakeholders re some larger turf

areas to try. (City does not use the amount of pesticides that Luther does.) Molly will follow up and bring to March DSC meeting for possible recommendation to city council. Note: there is no fee but donation recommended. Both Luther and City seemed receptive to this idea.

- ii. There is a state pesticide pre-emption law to be aware of but it would not impact this proposal.

4. AW13: Presentation on NRCS funding for watershed projects (Michelle Barness)

- a. Grant Watershed and Flood prevention program. Consider flood mitigation actions in the DSC plan. Michelle and Molly McNicoll had a meeting with NRCS staff and Ross Evelsizer; it's a great grant, can cover costs for feasibility study to planning/design and some construction. Down sides; a long process of 4-5 years. In question, who would apply... Freeport (county) or Decorah (city)?
- b. Proposed ideas for actions
 - i. Air and Water – Dry Run Creek
 - ii. Freeport – other watersheds including Trout Run
 - iii. Watershed projects that might mitigate flooding in Freeport?
 1. Hazard mitigation efforts – reviewed with Ross Evelsizer; he said many things are already in the works by the city and county
 2. Research potential of impact of the detention pool
- c. Take-aways from discussions re this opportunity
 - i. Watershed efforts are being addressed/worked on
 - ii. Is there anything that needs to be done for Dry Run Creek?
 1. Daylighting Dry Run Creek
 2. Rebuilding of retaining walls
 3. Painting storm water drains
 - iii. Application process – 1 pg. letter from taxing authority and then a number of steps (feasibility study, etc.)
- d. Next steps: Need to discuss with Jeremy Bril and Travis Goedken and follow up with NRCS to let them know some of the projects that are being considered. Michelle Barness and Molly McNicoll will follow up and will bring a recommendation to the March meeting.

5. Other Business.

6. Adjourn.

- Motion to adjourn by Ben Grimstad, seconded by Molly McNichol.
- Motion passed unanimously; meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

Minutes drafted by Ann Mansfield.