

Decorah Sustainability Commission Minutes

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

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

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

Others: Emily Neal, Lorraine Borowski, Travis Goedken, Jeremy Brill (Zoom)

AGENDA

1. Call to order
 - a. Meeting called to order by Jim Martin-Schramm at 5:32pm.
2. Approval of Minutes for April 2022.
 - a. Minutes reviewed and approved by all present. Aaron Detter made the motion, Ben Grimstad seconded.
3. Quick Updates:
 - a. L4, S3: Affordable Housing Ad Hoc Committee (Mayor Borowski)
 - i. Met with the City Manager & Mayor pro tem of Independence, Iowa. Steve Zittergruen will talk about Iowa Rural Housing Readiness kit at their next meeting. Date TBD. Aaron Detter said it was great meeting with other communities; will seek out other communities to learn from.
 - ii. Jim MS asked about proposed housing projects such as the one proposed on the site of the old Alliant building and the other in the old Fareway parking lot next to the Co-Op. Travis Goedken noted that both are early in their development. The one for the old Fareway parking lot is closer to market rate/ workforce housing. It may not be affordable housing. The one in the old Alliant building is probably above market rate. Another potential project is being talked about. It's early in all of the projects based on costs. Question remains; what are we doing about affordable housing?
 - iii. Noting the rise in short-term rentals in Decorah, Aaron asked if the city can require that the 40 units proposed for the old Fareway parking lot be owner-occupied units. Travis noted that state law prevents local restrictions such as these but the group selling the properties might include such a stipulation. Jim M-S suggested a HOA could also provide a similar provision.
 - b. W3: Recycling in the Business District (Jeremy Leitz)
 - i. Jeremy Leitz; working with Letter Werks for signage on the bins. Should be able to get the bins to Jeremy Brill at the Street Dept and get them placed by June. Molly asked if any educational component was part of the roll-out? Jeremy is working with Evan Neubauer with Winn. Co. Conservation to do that with a press release, etc.

- c. W4: City composting and recent visit by Jennifer Trent, Director of the Iowa Composting Council. (Jeremy Brill)
 - i. Jeremy Brill met with Jennifer Trent on Friday May 13th with Jim MS, Jim Tripp, Chris Frantsvog from Luther, Ross Hadley, and Evan Neubauer from Winn. Co. Conservation We can start collecting pre-consumer food waste now. Can accept 2,000 lbs. of food/week before needing a permit from the state. Focus on grocery stores and large food-serving institutions/restaurants. Jeremy feels there's real potential to get a pilot up and operating. Very exciting to think we can divert considerable food waste from the landfill.
 - d. E8: EV charger installation (Jeremy Brill)
 - i. Waiting for electrician for physical placement of chargers; everything else is complete. Hopefully will see the chargers installed soon. City Council approved the charging rates and overnight parking arrangements at their meeting on Monday night (5.16.22)
4. Discussion Items:
- a. [Resilient Iowa Communities Best Practices Assessment](#) (Jim M-S)
 - i. We are close to being able to send the document back to CEEE. Ann Mansfield consulted with the NE Iowa Food Council for input on the local food items. Peter Kraus, submitted feedback. Jim has asked him for specific feedback on action steps.
 - ii. Are there best practices that we need to review and consider including in the updated Decorah Sustainability Plan?
 - b. [City Council Sustainability Plan revision and prioritization](#) (Jim M-S)
 - i. Subcommittee reviews
 - 1. Transportation – Aaron Detter working with Steve Zittergruen to update this section. Will include Jeremy Brill and other key city staff in this update.
 - 2. Waste – Only 4 action items; composting and downtown recycling are in progress. Add to composting action from Jeremy Leitz – the composting bin project was very successful with over 200 bins sold. Group met to discuss #4 to study route and customer data (3 businesses currently collecting garbage); idea for Luther's ENVS 250 class to work on this but uncertain if they can get the data. Another related question - Should the city be considering an RFP for sanitation services? This is something to consider after we have gotten and analyzed the data.
 - 3. Economic Development – 9 items.
 - a. Quarterly stakeholder meetings – city leading and ongoing
 - b. Ice Cave Road – closed, used as recreational trail. Who needs to be in this conversation? What's the role of DSC with this? County has vacated their half; city now owns all of Ice Cave Road end to end. Involved; Park & Rec, DSC. Michelle Barness - Need to have a plan so we can be opportunistic for future grant opportunities.
 - c. Business Incubator – Ben G. will reach out to Luther College since they are also interested in a business incubator. Kevan K. asked whether it would be possible to include such an incubator on the ground floor of the new 40-unit housing complex planned for the

old Fareway parking lot. Travis explained ed related zoning matters regarding parking and street level businesses.

- d. Land Use plan – Lots of land issues in our community – this is too big for the Ec. Dev. Subcommittee; Jim M-S suggested this be conducted by a multi-stakeholder group as part of a revision to Decorah’s current comprehensive plan.
4. Postponed other subcommittee reports until June DSC meeting.
- ii. Process (timeline, review, and location) of “administrative policy to address ongoing efforts” for 13 action items
 1. Jim M-S asked: How will the drafting of these policies happen? Travis said he would work with Sustainability Commission members for the creation of the policies. Admin policies are kept at City Hall; they are essentially standard operating procedures. Intent is that these policies are ongoing. Jim M-S suggested it would be ideal to make sure these are accessible as possible to the community, for example, by making it possible to read them online. Jim M-S will create a new tab in [Sustainability Plan Action Items document](#) to store all of the administrative policies related to the Sustainability Plan once they have been reviewed by the Sustainability Commission.
 - iii. Process to record completed items
 1. Jim M-S will create a new tab in [Sustainability Plan Action Items document](#) to record completed action items.
 - iv. Process to revise the Sustainability Plan
 1. Is it our (DSC) prerogative to revise it? Jim M-S suggested that subcommittees proposed revisions or new items for review by the whole commission. Proposed revisions, additions, or deletions that receive majority support will be forwarded to the City Council for approval. Travis encouraged the subcommittees to consult city staff as they develop these recommendations.
- c. Discussion of DSC communication and coordination (Aaron Detter)
 - i. Aaron asked: What is the role of the DSC as it relates to things happening in our community (e.g., decisions made by other commissions and/or the city council). Also, how does the DSC engage with the other commissions?
 - ii. Jim M-S noted the stated purpose of the DSC:
 1. *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.*

2. City Manager - DSC can weigh in on policies and practices but if it's a site plan review, for example, we cannot treat this decision different than others because of the way the ordinance is written.
 3. As an advising body, it seems it's appropriate to "weigh in" with a sustainability lens, make recommendations to the City Council.
- iii. Discussion tonight is the beginning of several larger discussions. Another big question for future discussion is how does the Comprehensive Plan relate to City Code?

5. Other Business.

- a. Historic Preservation provides awards. It would be great if DSC can recognize individuals/organizations doing good things! How can we make that happen?
- b. Jim and Karen MS would like to host a social gathering for the DSC in the coming weeks; Jim will send out a note looking for good times for people to meet.

7. Adjourn.

- Motion to adjourn by Ben Grimstad, seconded by Molly McNicoll
- Motion passed unanimously; meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Minutes drafted by Ann Mansfield.