

MINUTES FOR THE ASHLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, October 28, 2015
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

1. Call to Order

Roxane Beigel-Coryell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room.

Commissioners Mark Weir, Risa Buck, Bryan Sohl, Shel Silverberg, Cara Cruickshank, and Marni Koopman were present. Councilor Rich Rosenthal and staff member Adam Hanks were present. Commissioners James McGinnis was absent.

2. Consent Agenda

Wier/Buck m/s to approve the minutes of September 23, 2015, as presented. Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion Passes.

3. Announcements

The next commission meeting will be held one week earlier than the usual meeting date on November 18, 2015. The Earth Bowl subcommittee will meet on November 19th at 3:00 p.m. Location to be determined.

Ashland Independent Film Festival has a regional student competition, this might be an interesting way to get a student involved with the Climate and Energy Action Plan kick-off event or process.

SOU was recently honored for their sustainability efforts and for being a bee-campus. Additionally, SOU now has zip cars for rent on campus. Beigel-Coryell stated that you don't have to be a student to use the program, but students do receive a discounted rate.

4. Public Forum

Kristina LaFever – Suggested the group watch the video from the Council Study Session regarding a glyphosate ban. She was pleased that Council seemed supportive of the topic. She gave statistics regarding the dangers of glyphosate use. California is considering listing glyphosates as major carcinogens. She also stated that since Ashland is a Bee City, USA, we should be more interested in a ban because their use disrupts pollinator navigation.

Huelz –Described his concept of a department of conservation and how they could save more energy than our current level of savings. Stated he re-did his analysis and encouraged the group to look at his figures and use them in the commission's work.

Jeff Sharpe – Thanked the group for moving ahead with the greenhouse gas inventory and the Climate and Energy Action Plan. He offered to assist with the greenhouse gas inventory analysis. He encouraged the group to support a community solar plan. Stated that Ashland is unique in that we own a large parcel of land and our own electric system. He gave information on energy use assistance which could be achieved with a community solar program. He stated this would also increase local jobs, which would help our local economy.

5. Reports/ Presentations/ Updates

Introduction of new Recology Ashland General Manager – Buck introduced Gary Blake, the new general manager of Recology Ashland. She stated he has been on-board for four weeks and gave an overview of his background. Mr. Blake stated that he is trying to get a good feel for Ashland and has been attending meetings such as this to get to know the community. The group introduced themselves, thanked Mr. Blake for coming, and several group members encouraged him to continue recycling center operation in Ashland.

6. Old Business, part 1

Group agreed to move the Solar Park Resolution proposal to this portion of the agenda, to prevent public participants from having to wait all meeting for the item.

Solar Park Resolution Proposal - Carol Voisin stated she is here as a citizen, not as member of the City Council. She gave an overview of the resolution proposed and the reasons why they consider this a time-sensitive project. She stated California needs renewable energy and would be willing to pay higher prices, whereas Oregon is not currently willing to pay more for renewable energy.

Sohl stated that Lake County did a very aggressive renewable energy project but discovered that California requires that renewable energy be created in-state – would this legislation apply to this solar project? Voisin stated that she doesn't know, but the investors she has spoken to believe this project could work.

Weir stated that he is concerned about the project location, as a large portion of the area is environmentally sensitive and pristine ecologically. He could not support any major infrastructure installation which would harm that area. He also stated that solar energy is not the most environmentally friendly option, as the creation of solar panels is detrimental to the environment. Voisin stated that the area they are proposing is below the area of natural resources.

Koopman stated it would help to have a tour of the site, as she has the same concerns as Weir. Because of her work, she is extra concerned whenever people make climate change adaptations without understanding the implications of other side- or long-term- effects. She feels this discussion should be a part of the Climate and Energy Action Plan ad hoc committee work, so they can see how it fits into all community adaptations or mitigations. Voisin stated that waiting for the ad hoc committee's work could mean a higher costs to have the environmental impact study, cost/benefit analysis, and installation work done.

Silverberg requested clarification as to whether all the group was asking for was encouragement to start the process, not a commitment to the project being completed. Voisin stated that many of the tax credits would run out in 2016, so starting now is essential. Silverberg stated that you can't predict the future, so moving ahead quickly based on concerns of what funding may or may not run out isn't good planning.

Cruickshank stated she knows people who are in the solar business and they are considering getting out of the business because of the sunset of credits. She would support this resolution moving forward now.

Sohl stated that the group is embarking on a community process with the Climate and Energy Action Plan and this should be a part of that process. To approve this outside that process would be leaving the community out of the conversation. He is reluctant to move forward but would be willing to look at it early in the Climate and Energy Action Plan process if timeliness is a concern.

Buck stated she appreciates the perspective that inclusion in the Climate and Energy Action Plan is important. She wondered about the cost and value of sending the electricity to California – would new infrastructure need to be built? Would we be able to send the power to Ashland after the 10 years elapses, or would there be no infrastructure in place to handle that? Voisin stated that yes, we could send power to California and yes the power could come back to Ashland afterward.

Voisin asked the group if her group could work in tandem (but slightly ahead of) the Climate and Energy Action Plan? Would the commission support this project if that were the case?

Beigel-Coryell stated the group had expressed concerns at the last meeting regarding the language of Section 2.c of the resolution. That section has not been altered and still stated that support of the resolution equals support of building the project, not support of doing studies regarding the possibility of the project. Voisin stated she thought a new version had been created.

Koopman asked if any other sites had been considered. Voisin stated that none had, as this site has both the 30% slope preferred and it is already owned by the City.

Cruickshank moved to support the next few steps of the process without approving the resolution as written. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Cruickshank asked what the group needs in order to give their support to this project. Group stated that they can't approve it without having more information and hearing from people with perspective on the environmentally sensitive areas of the land.

Sohl/Silverberg m/s to form a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission who will tour the site, meet with the project proposers, and bring back information to the Commission. Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion Passes.

Sohl, Cruickshank, and Koopman volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

7. Reports/ Presentations/ Updates, Continued.

Downtown Recycling – Buck stated they are good to go on the pilot project. They need to get sponsors and figure out how to attach the signs to the garbage cans as these cans are different than the ones in Lithia Park. The subcommittee will meet on November 3rd at 2:30 p.m. to finalize the sign language.

Council Update – Rosenthal stated that on November 2nd there will be a study session regarding a proposed ban on smoking downtown. On November 3rd the Council will consider first reading of ordinances regarding nuisances and unlicensed dogs. On November 16th the Council will

discuss the future of the electric utility as well as the recently completed water cost of service study.

City Conservation & Operations – Hanks stated the bag ban survey for retail establishments is moving forward. The survey he and Weir worked on for the grocers will have some similar questions as those for the smaller retail establishments but will also have more statistical data. Additionally, there will be an Open City Hall survey for general community responses on the city’s website. The review of the ban is tentatively set for the second Council meeting in January. Buck suggested the retail surveys include questions regarding compliance. Weir gave some history as to the original request for a \$.25 surcharge, and why Council instead agreed to the \$.10 surcharge. He stated that if it appears users are just switching to paper, rather than reusable bags the group should consider asking Council to increase the surcharge amount.

6. Old Business, part 2

Sneak Preview Column – Buck gave Silverberg a few suggestions regarding tree recycling and changing the word. “sustainable” to “local”. Silverberg agreed to incorporate those suggestions into the article. **Weir/Cruickshank m/s to approve the holiday conservation article as presented with the changes suggested by Commissioner Buck. Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion Passes.**

Wier warned that the January article to be considered at the next meeting will likely have some missing information when presented, as the survey will not yet be completed. Group discussed the following as upcoming topics:

January – BYOB Update
February – Climate Action Plan Quarterly Update
March – Earth Bowl
April – Natural Yard Care
May – Climate Action Plan Quarterly Update

Climate and Energy Sub-committee – Rosenthal stated the subcommittee had approved the RFP for the contractor. That document has to go through review by both the Legal Department and the procurement officer. This may take some time and might not be completed until closer to Thanksgiving. Whomever is hired as the contractor will work with the group on creating the action plan, as well as a plan for community involvement. There is a new committee member, Claudia Alick, who works at the Shakespeare Festival and is assisting with the Kick-off event in November.

Ashland Climate Challenge – Koopman stated that OSF has joined in a national effort to create short plays regarding the environment and they have agreed to perform some of those at the Kick-off event. So far the planning group has had a great response from local businesses. She gave an overview of the proposed agenda for the week and the Kick-off event.

Group gave some suggestions such as; including information regarding buying and eating local, videoing the event, encouraging the Mayor and Council to participate, and ways to get kids in the community involved. Koopman agreed to send the event flyer electronically to commission members so they can distribute it to their contacts.

Pesticide/Herbicide Discussion – Rosenthal gave background on why this topic is on the agenda and why Council had asked the Commission to review the proposal. Parks Director Michael Black was asked to participate in this discussion. Mr. Black stated there is a role for the Parks Commission and they will aid Commissioner Cruickshank’s group in preparing a grant and testing alternative products. Parks already has a fairly comprehensive no-pesticides policy but they are not in a position to propose this resolution for Council approval.

Group discussed whether a resolution would still be needed if the Parks Department was offering assistance. Cruickshank stated that the idea is to create educational materials that Council would approve to educate the community on the dangers and on alternatives. She asked if the group was interested in creating a sub-committee to work on updating the resolution. The group determined that they support the overall idea of a resolution and educational materials, but don’t have time to assist or work as a subcommittee. Group agreed to consider supporting Cruickshank’s community group if they come back with an updated resolution (or similar means of gaining Council support) at a later date.

7. New Business

Compost Classes – Buck stated the subcommittee is proposing changes to the classes offered in 2016 to encourage more participation. They will do one class on each of these topics: composting, waste prevention, the Climate and Energy Action Plan, energy conservation opportunities, and water conservation. They are considering changing the venue and are working on changing the title as the classes are no longer solely focused on composting. The group agreed this was a good new direction and asked the subcommittee to continue to move forward.

Leaf Blowers – Weir stated Council has recently received e-mails regarding leaf-blowers and a possible ban on their use. He wanted to double check that the group still wanted Weir and Silverberg to continue their research on bans. The group agreed to this course of action.

8. Wrap Up

Group requested an update regarding storm drain care and water conservation management based on Hanks’ and previous commissioner Beam’s work at the next meeting. Also they would like a discussion regarding Historic Commission decisions regarding not allowing metal roofs in historic districts.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Assistant