



July 28, 2010

Proposal for a Sustainability Planning Project for the City of Ashland

Dear Mayor Stromberg and Ashland City Council,

There is a great deal of interest in sustainability in Ashland. This interest is reflected within City government, where the City Council has framed its goals in terms of sustainability and where important work on sustainability is going on in many departments (the Master Water Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Ashland Forest Resiliency Project, Green Building Certification, Transportation Planning, Conservation Division Programs, etc.).

However, the City government does not have an overall, integrated plan for its sustainability efforts that extends into the future. The Conservation Commission believes this would be a valuable and timely project to undertake but that it should be carefully conceived before City resources are expended.

The Conservation Commission believes that scoping out what a City Sustainability* Planning process could look like is a task that could be performed by a group drawn from the Commissions plus some of the City's Ad Hoc Committees.

We envision the Mayor appointing one representative from each Commission or Ad Hoc Committee that is interested in participating, and the city assigning a staff liaison to act as a city affairs advisor. The group would be authorized, either formally or informally by the Council, and its task would be to identify and describe in general terms not more than three approaches for developing a sustainability plan for City government. This, with understanding that city budgets and personnel are very limited and that the citizens of Ashland may have a role in developing such a plan.

The group could be called the "Sustainability Plan Options Group". It would meet twice a month for three or four months max, starting in August 2010, at which point it would report to the Council and City Administrator on what it had produced.

This report would be made to the Council in a study session and then become part of the input for the Council Goal-setting in January, 2011.

Our point of view is that tapping into the citizens already involved in Commissions and Ad Hoc Committees would be an effective and credible way of enabling the City Council to make an informed decision on this important piece of Ashland's sustainability efforts.

The meetings will be facilitated and recorded by a Conservation Commission representative team member and/or a volunteer facilitator.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jim McGinnis,
Chair, Ashland Conservation Commission

* The Conservation Commission defines sustainability as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, including protecting the environment, developing a healthy economy, and ensuring social equality (follows 1987 UN WECD definition of sustainability).