

MINUTES FOR THE ASHLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 27, 2015
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

1. Call to Order

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

Commissioners Bryan Sohl, Jim Hartman, Risa Buck, Marni Koopman, Mark Weir, and Councilor Rich Rosenthal were present. Staff members Adam Hanks and Julie Smitherman were in attendance. Commissioners Jim McGinnis and Shel Silverberg were absent.

2. Consent Agenda

Weir/Koopman m/s to approve the minutes of April 29, 2015, as presented. Voice vote: All ayes. Motion passes.

3. Announcements

The next commission meeting will be held on June 24, 2015. The climate and energy subcommittee will meet on June 3 and 17, 2015.

4. Public Forum

Huelz – Stated he gives a class every Friday evening at the Library, starting at 7:00 p.m. There he explains the three components of energy significance: Housing, Car, and Things We Buy. Energy is now very complicated to understand as there are so many parts including; generation (how the energy is made), efficiency (how housing or other technology help), conservation (learning to be efficient), and ecology (bio-cycle maintenance). The goal is to make all those parts the most efficient they can be. Solar is the most likely efficient source in our area and the closest access points for good solar are rooftops. We should encourage more solar use.

Francis Oyung – Works for the Rogue Basin Partnership (RBP). She was formerly of Bear Creek Watershed Council but the four councils in the greater area combined into one. She is working on public education and outreach regarding water quality. She works with local cities and communities, including the City of Ashland. The RBP is working on a shared message for residents regarding being stream smart (she handed out stickers with their www.stream-smart.com website). She's glad that the City of Ashland has a car wash kit available in Public Works for borrowing. This kit helps keep car wash residue from entering the storm drain system as that system connects directly to our creeks. She encouraged the commission to continue to promote these types of educational tools regarding storm drains as well as look into funding sources to continue to grow the RBP projects.

Group discussed ways in which the RBP and the City of Ashland can connect on other projects. Group thanked Ms. Oyung for her attendance and her educational outreach.

5. Reports/ Presentations/ Updates

Water Conservation Q&A – Smitherman gave a presentation on where the City currently is regarding the drought. She included an overview of current programs in place to aid in water conservation, including how much water those programs have saved year to year.

She discussed with the group the current artificial-turf test project going on in front of Omar's restaurant. This test project came about after researching this product in other communities and finding lots of success. Many city halls are replacing lawns and medians with this product. What makes it different from the products used on sports fields is that no rubber as in-fill is required, making the product durable but less environmentally harmful.

Hanks stated that it's not just the water savings the City is hoping to gain with this product, but also labor savings, petroleum/fuel savings, and carbon emissions reduction from eliminating the need to mow.

Smitherman stated that so far the test product is doing well and that because it is permeable it handled the recent heavy rainfall very well. Staff is currently still looking for a local source for recycling the product.

Group discussed the water conservation division's budget, as recently approved by the budget committee, including the addition of a water conservation technician position. Group also discussed with Smitherman the work she has been doing with local school districts to increase their conservation efforts.

Group thanked her for attending.

Council Update – Councilor Rosenthal gave information regarding the budget committee meetings and the proposal brought there regarding funding a solar farm on the Imperatrice property. He explained that he voted against it not because he doesn't support solar production but because he felt this particular project hadn't yet been fully vetted and the funding source was incorrect. He also gave information on the recent approval of a utility bill increase to pay for the AFR project. He feels it is important for the city to have, "skin in the game" and not depend entirely on other funding sources. Additionally, each dollar the City has helps us to leverage more money from outside sources.

City Conservation & Operations – Hanks informed the group that the Climate and Energy Action Plan funding was approved by the budget committee. The new facilities management position was also approved, which should help city projects move forward faster. He let the group know that a new electric vehicle is coming to the Conservation Department in July.

Earth Bowl – Group thought it was a successful event. Beigel-Coryell offered congratulations and thanks to all who worked on the event. There were six teams of 4 students and they were all well prepared for the competition. The group was appreciative of the good community engagement and felt this event will have a lasting impact on the students. They hope to include all Ashland schools in next year's event and to focus on only one specific topic for more in-depth learning.

Fourth of July – It was determined that the Commission will not be in the parade this year. They are hoping to have enough participants to enter next year's parade.

Recology Quarterly Report – The FireWise clean-up day had 152 vehicles for a total of five 40-yard boxes of material. It was challenging this year as it was scheduled on the same day as the Earth Day events. The May 5 and 6 Hazardous Waste event wasn't as successful as Buck would have liked but they did have 478 cars. Buck will be attending the upcoming Association of Recyclers Conference. Recology has noticed an increase in calls from the community regarding recycling. Multi-family building recycling continues to be complicated. Hanks stated that the City is working on increasing opportunities to aid multi-family buildings recycle.

6. Old Business

Sneak Preview Column – The following upcoming topics and writers were agreed to by the group:

July – SOU Sustainability/Conservation on Campus written by Beigel-Coryell

August – Ashland School District Conservation written by Hartman

September – Storm Drain/Leaf Removal written by Hanks, Will Bridges (Public Works Department, and Buck

October – Climate and Energy Workshops written by Koopman and or McGinnis

November – Winter Heating and Weatherization author to be determined.

Compost Classes – Buck requested volunteers to attend each of the classes. The following agreed to attend:

June 20 Basic Class – Weir

July 15 Basic Class – Koopman

August 15 Advanced Class – Beigell-Coryell (maybe)

September 12 Worm/Bokashi Method – Buck

Climate Action Plan Presentation – Koopman stated that the subcommittee had added more details in the timeline based on suggestions at the last meeting. They are concerned about timing all the pieces as every group's work will affect all the other groups.

Group asked if the timeline will work with City policies and procedures (i.e. is it too ambitious). Hanks stated that he already recognizes small changes which will be necessary but the general, overall timeline is good.

Weir/Hartman m/s to approve the recommendation of the sub-committee for the Council packet. Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion passes.

Bag Ban Survey – Hanks asked the group to submit to him any suggestions regarding feedback they feel is important to have on the bag ban survey in order to make future recommendations about any policy changes or improvements.

Group believe big grocery stores can give the best data due mostly to the volume at which they operate. They would like to know information on the number of paper bags used before and after the ban was implemented.

Group wanted to know what strategy will be implemented to bring non-compliant retailers into

compliance.

7. New Business

Carbon Fee and Dividend – Hanks stated that there happened to be an un-planned for opening in the schedule for next week's Council Study Session and so he reserved space for the commission to ask Council to support this legislation. If the commission doesn't feel up to it in this short of a timeframe, that's fine, we don't have to be on the agenda. Koopman stated that she also was approached by Oregon Climate to put forth a request to Council for support.

Group discussed some of the various bills the State legislation is considering. The group preferred presenting resolutions which were supportive, but not specific in which option the Council should support.

Group discussed whether this was a symbolic gesture and whether a resolution from the City Council would make any real difference. They also discussed whether this request should come out of the Climate and Energy Action Plan. They determined that it's better to be an example and be concerned with doing our bit to move forward rather than get overwhelmed with the bigger picture. They felt there was no harm in asking for support.

Weir/Hartman m/s to have Weir go to Council and see if they [Council] are interested in supporting reducing greenhouse gases by putting a price on carbon. Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion passes.

8. Wrap Up

Beigel-Coryell requested that the group e-mail to her any updates or items they want on the next agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Assistant