

MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF OXFORD
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

August 7, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order

Environmental Commission members present at the Wednesday, August 7, 2019 meeting were: Chair, Mr. Wright Gwyn; Vice-Chair, Ms. Madeline Maurer; City Council Representative, Ms. Chantel Raghu, and Mr. Andor Kiss. A quorum was present. Planning Commission Representative, Ms. Carla Blackmar, and Mr. Jon Ralinovsky had previously informed the Commission that they would be unable to attend the August meeting. Also in attendance was Ms. Suzanne Zazycki, Assistant Director of the Miami University (MU) Institute for the Environment and Sustainability Department (IES).

The minutes from the June 5, 2019 Environmental Commission meeting was unanimously approved as presented.

Discussion

A) Status of Municipal Operations Green House Gas Inventory PSP

Ms. Zazycki attended the evening's Commission meeting to inquire if the Environmental Commission was interested in continuing to be the client of the IES 2019-2020 academic year Professional Service Project (PSP) inventorying the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the Oxford municipal operations. An initial PSP had been undertaken during the 2018-2019 MU academic year by a team of IES graduate students, to quantify the carbon footprint of Oxford's municipal operations, with the Commission as the client. In the course of the PSP (entitled: "Understanding a Local Government Operations GHG Inventory"), the data collection and processing was found to be more complicated, tedious, and time consuming than initially anticipated, and the entire GHG inventory was not completed. However, one of the products produced by the PSP team was an instructional manual on the use of ClearPath Pro, which is a Global Protocol for Community-Scale Emissions compliant GHG inventory software tool. Access to ClearPath is through Oxford's annual membership in the Local Governments for Sustainability. With the newly adapted PSP schedule, the graduate students have three to three and a half months (January into April) to collect and process any data, with a final presentation and report due by early May. Ms. Zazycki proposed that the GHG emission data (distribution of questionnaires to appropriate City Divisions and to Rumpke of Ohio) is collected from Oxford during the fall with herself and City staff, so the data would be available for the PSP team starting in January, 2020. The Environmental Commission concluded that any effort to reduce Oxford's GHG emission would need a baseline inventory, and unanimously chose to be the client for this academic year's PSP.

B) Draft Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance Status

Mr. Gwyn informed Commissioners that Community Development Director, Mr. Sam Perry, and he had continued discussions regarding the draft Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance. Mr. Gwyn indicated that Mr. Perry was still reluctant about having a stand-alone tree protection and preservation ordinance, and believes that the desired benefits could be achieved by simply adding the requirement of a tree survey to existing codes for Major Subdivision or Planned Developments, along with the inclusion of standard drawings of protection of existing trees during construction activities (existing tree protection is already included in Oxford's Codified Ordinances). Mr. Gwyn stated that a written City proposal had not been provided for The Environmental Commission's review, but Mr. Perry's approach would seem to preclude inclusion of provisions for tree replacement, maintenance, and compliance plan with the tree survey requirement. There was also a lack of agreement between the two regarding the preservation and protection of landmark and/or protected trees on residential private property. Mr. Gwyn proposed to the Commission that only construction on owner-occupied residential property requiring a building permit from the Community Development would be impacted by at least some of the draft preservation and protection ordinance requirements. If a permit was required and protected/landmarked trees were involved, there would be the requirement of preparing a site drawing depicting the landmark and protected tree locations. Landmark and protected trees removed for the construction could either be replaced with a 1-inch caliber tree of the same species planted on the property, or by payment to a Tree Fund in the estimated amount of the average cost of a 1-inch diameter tree planted during the most recent City of Oxford Tree Planting Project (typically conducted in the late fall). Commissioners indicated that this was considered a good compromise of protecting or replacing landmark/protected trees on residential private properties while trying to reduce the potential cost to the residential property owner. A Motion was proposed as follows:

Motion:

The Environmental Commission accepts the draft Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance in its current form and content, and instructs Staff to provide the draft Ordinance to the Planning Commission for their review and/or comments.

The Motion passed unanimously.

C) Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Proposal

Mayor Kate Rousmaniere had provided the Commissioners with a proposal and associated background information pertaining to the City of Oxford purchasing, installing, and maintaining equipment for the public to charge electrical vehicles. Mayor Rousmaniere requested that the Environmental Commission consider supporting this proposal. As the Commission has been researching the acquisition

of electrical vehicle chargers for some time, the Commissioners indicated that they would support such a request. The following Motion was proposed:

Motion:

The Environmental Commission supports the City of Oxford's effort to obtain, install, and maintain a publically accessible electrical vehicle charging station as outlined in the July 16, 2019 request from Mayor Rousmaniere. The Environmental Commission also recommends that any surplus funding generated by the monies paid by the public to utilize the electrical vehicle chargers be designated to efforts to further expand the number of publically-accessible electrical vehicle charging stations in the community.

The Motion passed unanimously.

D) Discussions Regarding Councilor Raghu's City Budget Requests

Councilor Raghu informed Commissioners that she was proposing three items for City Council consideration during the upcoming 2020 budget discussions, these being: A) Divestment of fossil fuel-related investments in Oxford's holdings; B) Prohibition of the City of Oxford utilizing single-use plastic bottles (barring any public health or emergency situations); and C) Continuation and ultimate expansion of the food scraps composting pilot program. The divestment is considered to be at least budgeting neutral in the immediate future, and could be a financially wise decision in the long term, as potential restrictions on the use of fossil fuels (in an effort to combat global climate change) are enacted. Eliminating the City of Oxford's use of single-use plastic bottles should be a budget-positive decision, as potable tap water is much less expensive than bottled water. Continuing the food scraps drop-off program for the 2020 year would cost approximately \$14,700 (assuming no rate increase from the hauler, GoZERO Services for 2020 and no expansion in the number of the drop-off containers). Oxford has approximately 4,800 total refuse and recycling accounts. Paying for the food scrap drop-off program in 2020 could be accomplished by an approximate monthly charge of \$0.26 to each account. Curbside residential food scrap collection would likely be cost-prohibitive at the present. GoZERO Services has estimated a monthly fee of \$12 if all residential accounts (referred to as "non-subscription" service) are included in the service. Presently, there are approximately 3,200 residential accounts, so the monthly expense for curbside food scraps collection would be approximately \$38,400, with an annual expense of some \$460,800. If individual residents wish to enlist GoZERO Services to provide curbside food scrap collection, the estimated fee would be \$19 per month, and would require at least 300 residential accounts to subscribe with GoZERO Services.

The following Motions were presented for consideration:

Motion:

The Environmental Commission supports City Councilor Raghu's proposal for the City of Oxford's 2020 budget considerations to divest Oxford's investment holdings in any fossil fuel-related equities, bonds, and/or funds.

The Motion passed unanimously.

Motion:

The Environmental Commission supports City Councilor Raghu's proposal for the City of Oxford's 2020 budget considerations for the elimination of the City of Oxford's use (except in situations of public health or other emergencies) of single-use plastic water bottles.

The Motion passed unanimously.

Motion:

The Environmental Commission supports City Councilor Raghu's proposal for the City of Oxford's 2020 budget considerations for the continuation of the existing pilot program of residential food scrap drop-off for composting.

The Motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Staff informed the Commission that the draft of the refuse and recycling contract document and specifications had been completed. Several of the Environmental Commission's recommendations have been incorporated into the document's text and request for prices, including an option for a lower volume of residential services ("Discounted Service"), having the 65-gallon lidded, waste wheeler cart be the default of residential recycling service (23-gallon red bins available upon request) each with no monthly rental fee, and a request for residential curbside food scraps collections. Presently, it is anticipated that the contract document and specifications will be made available to waste haulers in mid-September 2019, with their price submittals due in early to mid-October 2019.

A summary of the residential food scraps drop-off pilot program was provided and discussed.

Staff informed the Commission that the annual Tree Maintenance Project had started. Twenty one public trees (three of which were Ashes) were scheduled to be removed, and two stumps in the tree lawn were to be ground-out. Staff has started to compile planting locations for the annual Fall Tree Planting Project, and has noted that there are a large number of potential planting locations in the residential area between Tollgate Drive and West Chestnut Street.

Adjournment

Commissioners concluded discussions at 8:55 p.m. The next Environmental Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7:00 pm on September 4, 2019, in the Municipal Building's First Floor Conference Room.