

MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF OXFORD
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

June 2, 2021
7:00 p.m.

**This meeting was conducted in accordance with Sub. H.B. 197 and the guidelines set forth
by the Ohio Department of Health**

Call to Order

Environmental Commission members in attendance for the Wednesday, June 2, 2021 virtual meeting were: Chair, Mr. Jon Ralinovsky; Vice-Chair and City Council Representative, Ms. Chantel Raghu; Planning Commission Representative, Mr. Jason Bracken, Mr. Andor Kiss, Mr. Steven Elliott, and Mr. Justin Fain. A quorum was present.

Mr. Bracken moved for approval of the minutes from the May 5, 2021 Commission meeting; Mr. Elliott seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Discussion

A) Oxford Comprehensive Plan Input Project

For the Environmental Commission's participation in the Comprehensive Plan Input Report, Staff had previously prepared and distributed a memo describing the Commission's purpose, duties and responsibilities. Staff utilized the City of Oxford's Codified Ordinance Chapter 135 that established the Environmental Commission as the basis for the write-up. Commissioners observed that there was no specific reference to the climate in the write-up, but as Chapter 135 was last revised in 2012, widespread public awareness of climate change issues had likely not yet occurred. Staff inquired of the Commissioners if they wished to include a short list of the Environmental Commission's recent accomplishments in the Comprehensive Plan input; Staff was instructed to do so. This summary write-up is due June 30, 2021. Also due on June 30th are three questions that the Commission wishes to be included in a community survey for the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioners discussed various topics and presentation styles for the public input. It was concluded that the general topics of the Public survey questions would focus on the Commission's existing duties and responsibilities and if they should be revised for the future, renewable energy, and land use and development. Mr. Ralinovsky requested volunteers for a sub-committee to develop three questions for these topics. Mr. Ralinovsky, Ms. Raghu, and Mr. Kiss volunteered and are to meet and develop the specific language for the public survey questions. The questions are to be provided to the Commissioners for review and/or comment prior to the June 30th deadline.

B) Stormwater BMPs/Riparian Buffers for Pending Development

Currently, there are no established regulations for stream setback distances that are applicable to the City of Oxford (Oxford). Discussion with the Butler County Soil and Water Conservation District (BCSWCD) indicated that their recommendation for the width of undistributed, natural vegetation (ideally, wooded) areas along waterways is 75 feet on either side, although there is no regulations or legislation mandating that distance. The BCSWCD stated that they were not aware of any regulations or legislation anywhere in Butler County requiring riparian buffers. Staff presented an example of determination of stream setback distances from the Warren County zoning regulations, which utilizes the area of the watershed to determine the width the (ideally) undisturbed area along either side of a waterway. Utilizing the BCSWCD's Butler County Watershed Inventory, Oxford is largely located in the Acton Lake Dam-Four Mile Creek watershed that has an area of approximately 38 square miles. If the same standard as Warren County utilizes is applied, the stream set back along the Four Mile Creek would be 100 feet on either side of the Four Mile Creek. Smaller setbacks of 75 feet are called for watershed drainages of one-half to twenty square miles, and a setback of 50 feet for drainages that are less than one-half square mile in area. Discussions with Oxford's Community Development Department indicated that they typically utilize the BCSWCD's 75 feet for stream setback, but will use a smaller setback distance as a negotiating tool with developers. The concern was expressed that establishing specific setback distances could hamper the Planning Commission and the Community Development Department in dealing with future developments. Staff was instructed to develop a proposal for establishing stream setback distances utilizing the Warren County zoning regulations as an example.

C) "Solarized Oxford" Update

Ms. Raghu informed the Commission that the installation of roof-mounted solar panels on seven residences and one church by PRO Lighting, Inc. is tentatively scheduled for late June, 2021. PRO Lighting is currently starting the installations in Silverton, Ohio. By having multiple communities involved, PRO Lighting, Inc. was able to purchase the panels and associated equipment at a reduced expense due to the economy of scale.

D) Pending Return to In-Person/Open Public Commission Meetings

With Ohio lifting the last of the COVID-19 restrictions on June 2, 2021, future monthly meetings of the Environmental Commission will be in person and opened to the public.

Other Business

Ms. Raghu informed the Commission that at the May 18, 2021 City Council meeting, there was a presentation by Miami University Institute for the Environment and Sustainability graduate students summarizing the greenhouse gas inventory they had conducted on Oxford. City Council subsequently approved a Climate Action Steering Committee proposal to have Oxford become carbon neutral by 2040.

Staff updated the Commission on the monthly emission monitoring event of the landfill's 23 passive gas vents for May. The total carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) monthly value was slightly above the average value for the past eight months. At approximately 132.5 metric tons (MT) CO₂e for the entire landfill, May's monthly value was slightly above the average value for the past eight months (130.7 MT). Six of the 23 passive vents contribute approximately 75% to the total CO₂e emissions to date, with one vent (gas vent #23) contributing almost a third of the total monthly CO₂e value by itself. The fluctuations in the total CO₂e values (ranging from 23.7 MT to 291.7 MT) continues to suggest that the landfill emissions are not particularly steady over time, and that continued monitoring will likely be necessary to determine an accurate estimate of the landfill's CO₂e emissions. Mr. Bracken had previously shared a summary from the USEPA District 5 office discussing options for voluntary methane destruction. Only gas vent #23 has the emission volume rate and methane concentration to justify the use of a solar flare. The other five gas vents could be combined by piping to possibly achieve the necessary flow volume for a flare to function. Another option is to install "biofilters" by the gas vents, pipe their emissions through the biofilter, which would reduce or eliminate the methane content, utilizing compost material and the associated bacteria. Staff is current researching details for biofilter construction and operations.

Staff provided a summary of the on-going residential food scraps drop-off program. Since the program started in April 2019 and through May 24, 2021 (112 weeks), approximately 79,500 pounds (39.75 tons) of food scraps have been collected for composting. This is approximately 710 pounds per week on average, with the program's expense coming to \$0.32 per pound. For 2021, a total of just over 15,850 pounds has been collected in 20 weeks, with a weekly average of just over 790 pounds, and a program's expense of \$0.29 per pound.

Adjournment

Commissioners concluded discussions at 7:55 p.m. The next regularly scheduled monthly Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on July 7, 2021, in the Municipal Building's First Floor Conference Room.