

MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF OXFORD
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

August 5, 2020
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, August 5, 2020 virtual meeting were: Chair, Mr. Jon Ralinovsky; Vice-Chair, Mr. Wright Gwyn; City Council Representative, Ms. Chantel Raghu; Planning Commission Representative, Mr. Jason Bracken; Mr. Andor Kiss, and Mr. Steven Elliott. A quorum was present. Also, present for the virtual meeting was Ms. Suzi Zazycki, Associate Director of the Miami University (MU) Institute for the Environment and Sustainability Department (IES).

The minutes from the June 3, 2020 monthly Commission meeting was unanimously approved as presented.

Discussion

A) Summary of IES GHG Inventory PSP

Ms. Zazycki provided an anticipated timeline for the IES Professional Service Project (PSP) to prepare a community-scale greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory for Oxford. The community-scale GHG inventory is required for Oxford's participation in the Global Mayors Covenant for the Climate and Energy. Work on the PSP will occur during the upcoming MU 2020 – 2021 academic year. Presently, five graduate students will be work on the PSP, but it is not yet known about the distribution of in-person attendance versus remote learning due to the on-going COVID-19 restrictions. On-line experiences with last semester's PSP indicated that while cumbersome, remote and/or virtual efforts could be successful in completing PSPs. The graduate students will spend the first semester researching the GHG inventory process, reviewing work on GHG inventories from past PSPs, and are to prepare a proposal to the Commission outlining their proposed goals and objectives. Work on the Oxford community-scale GHG inventory will start in January 2021. The January "J" Term is typically when the students can make good progress on their PSP, as they do not yet have other class loads to compete for their time. The initial intent was to utilize 2020 data for the preparation of the community-scale GHG inventory, but Commissioners pointed out that given the social disruptions due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the 2020 data may not be representative. The Commission recommended utilizing 2019 data instead.

B) Tree Preservation and Protection Legislation: Tree Fund Fee

Mr. Gwyn presented a summary of his research regarding other Ohio communities' determination of their tree fund fees for trees that are not planted as part of a property's development. Previously, City Staff had prepared a summary of City tree planting expenses to assist in determining an appropriate value for a tree replacement Tree Fund Fee associated with the recently enacted tree preservation and protection legislation. From 2016 – 2019, Oxford planted 293 street and public trees at a total of expense of \$97,719. The average expense for a tree during this time period was \$333.51. Utilizing an administrative expense of 19.46% (the administrative fee utilized by the Finance Department in Oxford's 2020 refuse and recycling fee schedule), the cost of Oxford having to plant a replacement tree would be \$398.41. From Mr. Gwyn's research, the fees charged by two communities (the Cities of Delaware and Dublin) are based upon the size of the tree removed, at \$100 and \$150 (respectively) per caliber inch. The local Ohio Department of Natural Resources Urban Forester recommends an expense of approximately \$810 per trees to allow for watering and training/maintenance pruning for up to 15 years. The City of Waterville utilizes this approach, with their tree fee being \$850 per tree planted. The City of Westerville utilizes an approach similar to Oxford's previously described cost estimation, with the tree fund fee being \$350. Commissioners liked the transparency and ease of justification presented by Oxford's cost estimate, which also could be easily adjusted for the annual Fee Schedule Ordinance. The Commissioners also thought that an additional 15% surcharge to encourage the developer to plant the trees was appropriate. The Oxford Tree Fund Fee for 2021 would be \$458.18 per tree if planted by Oxford.

Mr. Gwyn proposed the following Motion. Ms. Raghu seconded the Motion.

Motion:

The Environmental Commission recommends that the Tree Fund Fee for 2021 be \$458.18 per tree in the upcoming 2021 Fee Schedule. The Tree Fund Fee can be periodically revised based upon average tree planting costs incurred by Oxford, as well annual administrative expenses, and a 15% tree planting encouragement assessment.

The Motion passed unanimously. The Commission instructed Staff to incorporate the Tree Fund Fee into the upcoming 2021 Fee Schedule Ordinance, pending City Council's consideration.

C) City Council, Planning Commission, Parking and Transportation Advisory Board, and/or Climate Action Task Force Activities

Ms. Raghu informed the Commission that bicycle lanes were added to either side of East Chestnut Street, running approximately between South Campus Avenue to South Patterson Avenue. During a strategic planning session held on Monday, August 3, 2020, it appears that the potential of installation of solar panels at the closed landfill and a program to assist home owners with obtaining solar panels for their private properties were popular with the City Council.

Mr. Ralinovsky informed that Commission that the Parking and Transportation Advisory Board has requested Oxford's street paving plan for 2021 with the intention of exploring expansion of designated bicycle lanes.

Mr. Bracken informed the Commission that the Climate Action Steering Committee had its first meeting. The second meeting of the Steering Committee is on Monday, August 10, 2020.

Other Business

City Staff updated the Commission regarding on-going monthly emission monitoring of the closed landfill passive vents. The emission monitoring was initiated in an effort to document the accuracy of the USEPA's estimation of 4,764 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂e) being emitted by the landfill annually (averaging 397 metric tons CO₂e monthly). If the USEPA's estimation were accurate, the closed landfill emissions would account for approximately 36% of the municipal operations GHG emissions (estimated at a total of 13,348 metric tons CO₂e in 2018). Since May 2020 (three months of data), the monitoring data suggests that the total volume of CO₂e emissions for these three months to be approximately 7.6 metric tons CO₂e, or an estimated approximate 30.5 metric tons CO₂e annually (assuming similar emission values for the rest of the year). Staff informed the Commission that the Southwest Ohio Air Quality Agency is currently reviewing the emissions monitoring data to date to ensure its accuracy. The Commission suggested that Oxford have at least one monitoring event conducted by an entity that performs emission monitoring, to permit a comparison of Oxford's monitoring procedures and/or observed values.

Adjournment

Commissioners concluded discussions at 8:25p.m. The next regularly scheduled monthly Commission meeting is to be an online, virtual meeting starting at 7:00 p.m. on September 2, 2020.