

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING

January 5, 2012 6 PM

7700 Southern Avenue (Public Services Building)

MINUTES

Present

Chairman Joe Skelley
Susan Threlkeld
Urania Erskine
Linda Kaplan
Steve Fleischmann
Paul Mosteller

Clyde Davidson
Alderman Palazzolo
Dr. Jimmy Davis
David Thorpe
Andy Foster

Staff

Joe Nunes
Bo Mills
Tim Bierdz
Juanita Bell

Absent:, None

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Skelley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS:

The Commission welcomes Mr. Steve Fleischman as a new member. Mr. Fleischman is originally from New Jersey but moved to Germantown in 2003 due to his wife's job. Mr. Fleischman enjoys snow skiing, golf, yard work, and working on his classic car.

The Commission also welcomes Mr. Paul Mosteller as a new member. Mr. Mosteller has lived in Germantown for 30+ years and enjoys exercising. Mr. Mosteller has also served on other committees in the past.

MINUTES APPROVAL:

The minutes of the December meeting were approved.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION:

Andy Foster was nominated, seconded and approved unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS:

Bo Mills:

Mr. Mills reported to the new members and updated older members on the Environmental Quality Cabinet, which Bo co-chairs. The Cabinet is composed of representatives through the City's staff. Tim Bierdz is a member and focuses on stormwater. We're also working with Joe Nunes for solid waste looking at the diversion rate and recycling. We are currently working on a Natural Resources Management Plan. We're looking at our potable water with our goal being to have a pure clean and adequate supply of potable water. And, our City's carbon footprint which includes electric, gas, and diesel/fuel related products. We report our findings to the Board of Mayor and Alderman through our strategic planning process each quarter. This quarter's plan is going to be presented at the BMA retreat in February so we're working on finishing up the quarter now. Today we met with the Ground Water Institute, the group that spoke to this Commission in November. We were looking for some metrics that we can use to report to our BMA and the citizens as a whole about the quality, quantity and our actual water level as related to our drinking water in our City. We have considered our drinking water as the greatest natural resource in our City so using it wisely has been the goal of this Commission for years. The GWI (Ground Water Institute) is currently doing more testing now for those metrics. Brian Waldron's presentation talked about the various activities of the GWI and now we are trying to get those into measurable numbers that we can include in our pure water report to go along with our Environmental Cabinet report. Each month, I will try to update you on what the Cabinet is doing. For February, we are going to try to look at our CO2 emissions. We've updated our contract with Brown and Cauldwell, who conducted the 2008 carbon footprint for the City. I'll pass out a copy of the 2008 report but we are in the process of updating it. We're going to look at 2009, 2010, and 2011 on our greenhouse gas inventories and update this. You'll see that we generated 31,190 metric tons in 2008. Our goal is to reduce that total. We have contracted with them to provide that and we are in the process of gathering those numbers.

Mr. Thorpe asked how our numbers compare to similar cities. Bo responded that there is no comparison because we are one of the first cities and there are no other cities near our size and our area to compare. Our goal is simply to reduce our own numbers every year. One example is the new LED traffic lights. I was really socked about how high our wastewater is as a percentage of greenhouse gas emissions. I argued that point and will continue to because I just don't think our waste water process should be that high but that is done by Memphis and Brown and Cauldwell think the number is correct.

Alderman Palazzolo requested that Bo bring the Quarterly report to the Commission and have the Commission hear it before the BMA so that you could present it to the BMA as already passed on by our Commission.

Mr. Foster would like to see Brown and Cauldwell's information and how they get their numbers.

Bo will check into that and see if that information is available.

Tim Bierdz:

Mr. Bierdz reported that Germantown did receive the new stormwater permit through TDEC as we are classified as an MS4. Under this permit we have certain regulations, one of which is that we have six impaired/unhealthy streams in Germantown and it's our responsibility to try to clean them as much as possible. The chemicals in the streams include e-coli, lead, phosphorus, anthropogenic alterations, silt and sediment. This endangers wildlife so we are working with neighboring cities to clean up the streams and rivers. We do multiple testing for levels of those chemicals. There is an EPA grant we are applying for Wolf River Conservancy which would provide a youth education pond near the Wolf River to set up water testing there and fishing. We have a professional angler fisherman trying to help us get that grant. Also, if we get the grant we would want to install a stormwater rain garden at Riverdale Elementary School with signage to teach them about rain gardens and rain barrels for each City resident with workshops to demonstrate how to make these rain barrels functional.

Mr. Foster asked if there would be any incentive for using a rain barrel.

Mr. Bierdz stated that there wouldn't be enough benefit for that.

Mr. Bierdz reported that the city has set up monitoring stations on Wolf River from Kimbrough to Farmington because of the new Wolf River Boulevard project which won't be completed until June 2013. We sample waters from baseline, during construction and after construction. We test pH, temperature, nitrogen, total phosphorus, turbidity, lead, copper and others.

Joe Nunes:

Mr. Nunes reported that recycling volume hit an all time high in December. We're up almost 9% since last December. We are up 2% FY up to date. We have had almost 10,000 recycle carts delivered which is almost 80% of the households and we're still receiving orders. We have ordered another 500 which should be here in a couple of weeks. No multi-family recycle bins were added into that number and apartment recycling is not offered at this time. Due to the economy household trash has been down in most areas but we are up from national averages. Also, when carts were largely unavailable, we collected 5 ½ tons of recycled materials at a dumpster provided at Neighborhood Services in an eight week period. We will be keeping the dumpster even though carts have gone out to see if recycling continues. Mr. Nunes will meet with contractor next week about the possibility of keeping this dumpster for multi-family dwellers or distributing carts to them.

Mr. Nunes shared an article that he had read about a local woman who was using Germantown recycling to make art.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:**Jimmy Davis – Research:**

Dr. Davis had nothing to report.

Linda Kaplan – Think Green:

Ms. Kaplan mentioned an article from the January 3rd Commercial Appeal where Memphis was attempting to get certification from Tree City USA. Is that something Germantown has?

Mr. Mills responded that we are on our 17th year as a Tree City USA member and a Tree Board of appointed citizens has been created to protect out trees.

Ms. Kaplan announced that the 2012 ECO EXPO: A celebration of sustainable practices, hosted by Temple Israel will be held on February 5th from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. All are invited to participate or join in the festivities. Opportunities for sponsorship are available but please get applications in as soon as possible. We generally have about 600-700 people coming through and it's a free event which will have raffles.

Ms. Threlkeld asked if the Commission was interested in having a Water Conservation booth.

Mr. Mills and Mr. Nunes will discuss covering the sponsorship and we will have a booth.

Alderman Palazzolo:

Alderman Palazzolo stated that Public Services has three pieces of equipment on the BMA Agenda and he was impressed that Public Services has used the equipment for such a long length of time. On January 16th, we have a work session on the possibility of looking at municipal school district.

Alderman Palazzolo announced that his role as liaison is to make sure he gets the Commission's information to the legislative branch which may be outside of what our staff liaison does. It's the member's Commission and Alderman Palazzolo reiterated that he is here to support and not push anything through.

Alderman Palazzolo did announce that Oceanview Farms, which will be known as Bobby Lanier Park, will be opening and as a liaison to the Parks and Recreation department too, it may benefit both Commissions for the Environmental Commission to join in this project. Alderman Palazzolo will check with Mr. Lawton and Pam Beasley and report back.

David Thorpe – Air Quality:

Mr. Thorpe reported that the EPA passed the Cross State Air Pollution Rule or “Casper” (CSAPR) which is to reduce emissions across state lines as of January 1, 2012. Essentially every coal burning utility in the country sued the utility to extend the deadlines (two or three years to install very expensive control equipment). For every coal plant to do that at the same time was near impossible. EPA will be forced to close the plants that don't comply. The DC Circuit Court did say that deadline will remain the same. The Allen Plant is looking at

spending \$500-600 million dollars to install SO2 scrubber on the Plant so it's a significant investment. A new plant would be about \$2 billion dollars. Having been through this process before with other rules, they will probably extend the deadline when the time comes. Anyone that buys electricity will be impacted as this passes. Dr. Davis responded saying that he had heard that natural gas has gotten so cheap that all other forms of running electricity has to be subsidized.

Mr. Thorpe said the price has come down but natural gas is really volatile and nuclear fuel is very cheap and very stable, coal is stable and due to instability natural gas won't run other forms out. Plants last 50+ years so it's difficult to make the decision on which resource to use.

Andy Foster – Energy Use Resource Management:

Andy Foster updated the Commission on the GM Volt fires. Recently an article explained that during a side impact, the cooling system for the batteries was breached and it started leaking on to a circuit board and caused a short which lead to a fire. GM has now redesigned how the package is supported inside the car. So, the new cars will have the new design. The old cars will have a voluntary service if you want to bring you car in for repairs but no recall will be made. Buybacks were offered. The Fiskar Karma recently recalled all of its cars due to similar problems.

A similar story, a woman is suing Honda because claims of gas mileage were so high and actual gas mileage was weak. She has taken the case to small claims court and a decision will be made in the coming weeks.

Urania Erskine – Storms/Wetlands/Sanitary Sewer:

Mrs. Erskine asked if there were subsidies or grants available to bring the waste water down in our community by offering homeowners incentives for low flow toilets.

Mr. Mills explained that it's not the output but the input that Memphis charges us for.

Susan Threlkeld – Composting/Xeriscape:

Ms. Threlkeld had nothing to report.

Clyde Davidson – Storm/Wetlands/Sanitary Sewer:

Mr. Davidson had nothing to report.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Skelley inquired if the Commission would like to do something for Brandy Miller who served on the Commission for many years. Many ideas were brought up and collection of money will be taken at the next meeting for possible purchase of books in her name for our library.

Chairman Skelley asked the new and old members to go over the committees available and decide who wants to work with which committee. Chairman Skelley announced upcoming events for the benefit of the new members, such as Amnesty Day and Expos.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Commission adjourned at 7:30 p.m.