



## **SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)**

Meeting Minutes: Tuesday, December 12, 2016

Attending: Joe Coffey, Jillian Kasow, Scott Kellogg, Kevin Luteran, Randy Milano, Sandy Misiewicz, Lori Quillen (Co-Secretary), Pete Sheehan (Vice-Chair), Ewa Sobczynska (Co-Secretary), Chris Spencer, and Frank Zeoli

Absent: Peter Fleischer, Bill Trudeau, Jennifer Viggiani

Observer: Mary Millius (Senior Planner, City of Albany), Adriana Le Blan (Assistant Corporation Counsel, City of Albany)

### 1. Regular Business

- a. Jillian Kasow called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
- b. Motion to adopt the October 25, 2016 minutes by Joe Coffey, seconded by Lori Quillen, adopted. Due to lack of quorum in June, also voted to adopt the June 23, 2016 meeting minutes. Ewa Sobczynska motioned to adopt the minutes, seconded by Joe Coffey, adopted.
- c. Brief discussion about the need to fill vacant SAC seats. A Common Council appointee seat has been vacant for more than two years, a Mayoral appointee seat for 6 months. We also have seats being filled by appointees with lapsed terms. Kate Lawrence has been in contact with Leah Golby regarding the vacancies.

### 2. Public Comment Period

- a. Lauren Alpert, a new Senior Planner at the City of Albany, made an introduction.
- b. Adriana Le Blan noted a request from the Energy Subcommittee to access information related to the City's negotiations with National Grid to purchase the streetlights. The legal department determined that releasing the feasibility study would be a conflict of interest and should be kept confidential for the time being.

### 3. Communications to the SAC

- a. Lori Quillen reported there were no communications to the SAC during the period of October through December.

### 4. MOE&S Activities Update

- a. Mary Millius from the Planning Department introduced herself to the SAC. She will be continuing MOE&S work, along with Kevin Luteran, while the Planning Department seeks to fill Senior Planner and Planner vacancies. One of these positions would likely continue full-time with MOE&S; the Department is currently reviewing options and recommendations.
- b. Kevin Luteran discussed efforts converting City lighting to more energy efficient LED in parks and municipal buildings. The City is close to meeting its targets. Funding for the project came from the New York Power Authority. Once completed,



the lighting retrofit will save \$100K annually. He is working on a summary that will capture energy savings at the scale of buildings, departments, and the city as a whole.

- i. Joe Coffey expressed interest in a dashboard that would provide insight into metrics on how energy use changes from quarter to quarter.
  - ii. Kevin mentioned adopting a system where City Departments could access their energy profiles.
- c. Kevin discussed the ongoing solar power purchase agreement (PPA) project. A contract on a 10-megawatt system was signed over a year ago with Monolith Solar.
- i. Ewa inquired about the location. The Department of General Services rooftop and the landfill are being investigated. There are also privately owned buildings willing to lease their roofs. Solar power would feed the grid, producing solar energy in the city.
  - ii. Pete Sheehan noted that some of this energy would be fed to customers via remote net metering, but that we (the City) would get credit for the energy production. Most users won't even know they are tapping into it.
  - iii. Pete inquired if the MOE&S will remain in place in light of Kate Lawrence's departure, and noted that she was an important liaison for the SAC.
    1. Chris Spencer noted that the Planning Office was undergoing a staffing transition, and that Lauren Alpert was likely to be the SAC liaison. Mary Millius will also take on some of the responsibilities.
    2. Ewa expressed the importance of an administrative office dedicated to sustainability, and noted MOE&S puts Albany in a leadership position in terms of branding its sustainability operations.
    3. Pete mentioned that investments in sustainability and energy efficiency tend to attract younger people to cities.
    4. Joe stressed that success depends on embedding a culture of sustainability in day-to-day operations, so every worker feels invested/involved. The Water Department is likely to add sustainability as core value, in the vein of safety and customer service. Sustainability also needs to be part of strategic planning, with accessible metrics.
5. Commissioner Updates
- a. Joe Coffey, Commissioner, Department of Water and Water Supply
    - i. Exploring a conservation easement with DEC for Alcove Reservoir that engages the Water Department with the NYS in a forest management program and adds a revenue stream. Not committing, but exploring options.
    - ii. Ramping up cross-department collaboration, so that every time a road is dug up in the City, we can look at ways to add in appropriate green infrastructure to manage storm water.
    - iii. Working on a flood control. This includes a project at Hansen and Rykmann, diverting flow into an underground infiltration gallery located in Woodlawn Park, and Patroon Creek flood management in the Tivoli Lake Preserve.



b. Randy Milano, City Engineer

- i. Bicycle pedestrian improvements continue throughout the City. The Albany waterfront project will be wrapped up in May of 2017, all major infrastructure is in, with bike lanes installed on Clinton Ave on sections of Northern Blvd by the middle school. The Madison Road Diet is now entering its second phase.
- ii. Pavement preservation is one of DOT's new guiding principles, avoiding 'full depth' reconstruction and restoring whenever possible with resurfacing, ADA compliant ramps, etc. When project components are bundled together it makes things more competitive for contractors.
- iii. The final project advisory committee meeting for Complete Streets met November 30 and approved the final draft. It was a comprehensive process and is an important step for the City. Now that the Complete Streets Design Manual is approved, the hard part is implementation.
  1. Pete inquired as to how Complete Streets Manual will impact the way the City performs updates/maintenance. Randy noted that from an engineer's perspective, it wouldn't change the projects per se, but how they are approached so that the City can streamline efforts across departments.
  2. Joe affirmed, and gave the example of how sewer upgrades could be aligned with street projects, for a more holistic treatment.
  3. Chris noted that Complete Streets was a longer-term approach, more proactive and less reactive, and that projects need to be in the pipeline for several years to implement Complete Streets in a meaningful way.
  4. Ewa asked how City staff were informed about the Complete Streets manual. Randy noted that an internal checklist is being developed. Every two years a report will be submitted to the Common Council outlining why choices were made in relation to Complete Streets recommendations. Considered planning will be essential to integrating departments, pursuing funding, and moving the City forward.

c. Chris Spencer, Planning Director

- i. Many of our sustainability efforts are spread across projects. ReZone has a large sustainability component, with incentives for green roofs and limited lot coverage (how much you cover with a building, not driveways). Under the new ordinance we now include all impervious surfaces. Some developments managing storm water need to use pervious pavement, bioswails, etc.
- ii. We are looking at some 30,000 parcels to better understand how we can use good ordinance to address vacant lots and buildings. A comprehensive document is being developed that looks at sustainability measures as well as ways of addressing vacancies.
- iii. Received CFA funding for rail-trail connection between the Corning Preserve and the Mohawk Hudson bike trail. A feasibility study was conducted outlining a preferred route that could be implemented quickly and with an



attainable budget. Looking at the South Pearl section and under 787, turning onto Broadway, and hooking up by the USS Slater.

1. Ewa asked when we might expect a ribbon cutting for the rail-trail.

Chris felt if funding was secured it would be a two-year timeframe.

d. Frank Zeoli, Director of Operations, DGS

i. The pilot program for automated recycling using 64-gallon containers is going well. Close to 3,000 containers have been assigned to households.

Neighborhoods in New Scotland west of the City were recently added to the pilot (214). The goal is that by early summer, and any homes that can accommodate automated tipping will be able to join.

ii. There is a 60% set out rate for the initial pilot; DGS can track participation via microchips inside the recycling containers. This technology will allow DGS to geo-map data and compare neighborhoods to target recycling efforts.

1. The bins are large. Joe inquired if they should be brought out each week, or only when full. Frank confirmed that putting the containers out when full was most efficient, but that it's critical to keep residents in the rhythm of recycling.

6. Subcommittee Updates

a. Energy Subcommittee (Pete Sheehan)

i. Coordinating on the Eco-District Project in Sheridan Hollow. Grid Alternatives will donate the solar panels and engage the community so they can assist in installation. Set to start in spring or summer, under the direction of Susan Cotner, Executive Director of the Albany Affordable Housing partnership. An Eco-District incorporates energy efficiency in the homes that choose to participate. This includes using solar power and adding electric vehicle charging stations. Project is in early stages, more details to follow.

ii. The Albany High School and Middle School mentoring project will continue, and undergo an expansion with more subcommittee members participating.

iii. In the process of measuring net energy outputs of subcommittee member's homes to see if any can be considered net zero. Want to help City of Albany residents participate net zero home incentives being offered by NYSERDA.

iv. Disappointed that Energy Subcommittee is unable to see draft proposal by Wendell Energy, eager to participate in the LED street lighting project.

v. By February, will have draft proposal for ant-idling law with enforcement mechanism. Will run by the City's legal department.

b. Transportation Subcommittee (Sandy Misiewicz)

i. Met in November to brainstorm projects for 2017. Capital Roots is interested in tactical urbanism, with recommendations including a bike demonstration to show how infrastructure works and educate drivers and pedestrians. Outreach focus is on underrepresented areas—West Hill or Arbor Hill. Might be a good forum for testing out bike lanes and sharrows. Considering an event in May or June targeting those who rely on biking for transportation.



- ii. Capital Roots has a Healthy Communities Initiative. They view sustainable transportation as a means for accessing food and have a team invested in transportation infrastructure in the Capital Region. They can provide support on engagement events, such as materials for demonstrations. They are eager to get involved in City of Albany, and a good partner moving forward.
  - 1. Mary Millus noted that Capital Roots provided the City with 20-30 bike racks. Best locations are being determined; DGS will be installing the racks this spring/summer.
- iii. The 787 Study is still in process, with work modeling the mainline to see what would happen if traffic patterns changed. Complex and taking some time. Already funded two of the three proposals in 787 Plan (Albany Bikeway and Skyway Concept). Capitalize Albany looking at converting a piece to something along the lines of the Highline in New York City. A new bikeway connection bridge Broadway/Menands also has some interest.
- c. Agriculture Subcommittee (Scott Kellogg)
  - i. Attempting to come up with legal ownership on properties in South End being used for urban agriculture.
  - ii. No updates on the chicken legislation, waiting on next steps from the Common Council.
- d. Outreach Subcommittee (Lori Quillen/ Ewa Sobczynska )
  - i. Established a social media presence for the SAC (“Sustainable Albany”) on Facebook; have nearly 300 followers. Share sustainability related news, events, and opportunities.
  - ii. Will continue efforts bridging the SAC with Neighborhood Associations this spring. In the process of putting together a calendar and will reach out to the entire committee for participation.
  - iii. Interested in helping Sandy with May/June outreach effort.
  - iv. There is a lot of room to do more networking more with K-12 city schools. Given the amount of general outreach need, this might be a potential standalone subcommittee.
- e. Water Subcommittee
  - i. New Chair is needed for the Subcommittee.
  - ii. Especially relevant given dramatic increase in the storm events; 100 year storms are now 10 year storms. Alcove Reservoir is 10 feet under spill level, and was just a foot off of the alert phase in November. What impact will sea level rise have on property values?
- f. Built Environment Subcommittee
  - i. New Chair is needed for the Subcommittee.
  - ii. At a minimum, we will want to promote the brochure being created on *Understanding Sustainable Upgrades to Historic Homes* (via a 6K grant from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation).



7. Annual Report

- a. Jill Kasow drafted a report and had reached out to subcommittee chairs for comment and input. Content should be finalized for approval at the February meeting.
- b. We are wrapping up the matrix from year one. Appendix 2 should be reviewed for clarity and content, noting status updates as appropriate.

8. Adjourn

*Lori M Quillen*  
*February 27, 2017*