

Athens City Environment and Sustainability Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday August 3, 2022, 6:00 PM  
Athens City Building  
8 East Washington Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Athens, OH 45701

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1. Call to order Chair Aimee Delach called the meeting to order at 6:12 PM. Members present include Aimee Delach, Sam Crowl, Jasmine Facun, Katelyn Rousch, Megan Westervelt, Sarah Conley-Bellew, and Ed Newman. Quorum was established. Members absent included Megan Almeida, Elaine Goetz, and Paul Logue. Guests included Susan Righi, Molly Jo Stanley, and Jacob Kemp.

2. Disposition of Minutes—Minutes from June were not submitted, and the Commission did not meet in July. Rousch volunteered to write minutes for the June meeting and August meeting for approval in September.

3. Next Meeting Date—September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

4. Old Business

A. Green House Gas (GHG) Inventory—Jacob Kemp, a Rural Action VISTA volunteer, has completed a survey of GHG emissions by the City of Athens. This report has not been published yet, but compared with other cities who have gone through this process, Athens is performing very well, with much lower emissions per person per year than most other cities in Ohio. Westervelt suggested cooperating with Ohio University to produce graphics and videos to spread the word about this report. Conley-Bellew suggested presenting through the Mayors' Partnership. Delach recommended sharing the information in a press conference, Crowl suggested using the mayor's conferences. Facun expressed interest in trying to broaden the report to the state level or more, and to report on the other sustainability measures Athens has accomplished as well. Rousch built on this idea by suggesting that a model such as a UN Voluntary Local Review could be a good format for this.

B. Arts West Pollinator Garden—This project was put on hold due to COVID concerns. The Federal Hocking HS has expressed interest in the past for completing this project for their service day. Crowl explained that the main barrier for the sustainability of the project is finding a way to maintain the garden after it is established. He asked if the commission would be interested in taking on the project and received favorable responses from all present members. No motion was made due to the infancy of the project. Crowl also reminded the Bee City USA Certification renewal would be upcoming in February 2023, which requires a species list and supplier. Delach suggested Butterfly Ridge Consultants and Conley-Ballew suggested reaching out to Gary Conley with Rural Action to accomplish this.

5. New Business

A. Hocking River Corridor Mowing and Management—The Hocking River and land alongside of it is managed primarily by the Hocking Conservancy District. Newman observed that pollinator-friendly plants in and around the river were being mowed. Facun suggested reaching out to the Conservancy District to gain a better understanding of mowing schedules and purpose to suggest periods like “no-mow May” where native biodiversity would be left alone. Kemp introduced an idea of planting native

fruit and nut trees along a part of the river that could be harvested by community food initiative volunteers. Newman expressed interest in fostering community discussion of revitalizing the river corridor. Rousch reminded the commission of Sarai Carter's landscape architecture presentation that included designs for reimagining the river corridor at the Athens County Public Library. Delach advised that the committee might want to form a sub-committee for the purpose of discussing a strategy for river corridor revitalization in depth.

B. Athens Move Out Recovery Effort—Susan Righi called for the city to offer additional aid for Ohio University's move-out recovery efforts, especially in off-campus areas by coordinating with local leaders like landlords and neighborhood associations. She suggested that some of the money that goes to the Athens-Hocking Recycling Center (AHRC) for this purpose could be diverted to renting trucks or hiring people specifically for reclamation purposes. Facun pointed out that these large item pickups could become short-term jobs for people who need extra money, and that the availability of this kind of service would help mitigate illegal dumping. Rousch suggested that a form of public-private partnership could help, citing an initiative in El Salvador that is using food-delivery services to expand compost and recycling collection services. Newman and Rishi will be working together to produce a best practice document based on their combined experiences with furthering zero waste efforts in the region.

C. Deposit-return Strategy for Events—This time of year, many festivals and events take place around the Athens region. Rural Action's Zero Waste Event Productions helps manage many of these events. Rousch wanted to know whether they might utilize a deposit-return strategy to incentivize the return and reuse of commemorative cups among those who do not wish to keep them. Delach pointed out there might be collection and sanitation logistics associated with that kind of model.

6. Announcements and Updates—Westervelt produced video of the commission's Beautification Day project is available at <https://vimeo.com/meganwestervelt/athensbeautificationday2022>. This will be published on the Athens City webpage. Next month the commission will hear from Chris Fahl about a biodiversity partnership with the Shade Tree Commission.

7. Adjournment—Facun motioned to adjourn the meeting. Rousch seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Katelyn Rousch.