

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

City of Somersworth-City Hall

September 16, 2021 - 6:00 P.M.

Committee members present: Sarah Eckstein, Chair, City Councilor Paradis, Lilac Snowden-Hallowell, Wendy Berkley

Absent: Michael Bobinsky, Doug Watson

Public: Meghan Enos, Community Member

1.APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: Minutes were not reviewed and will need to be reviewed at the next meeting which will be on October 21.

2.CONSERVATION COMMISSION & OTHER ACTIVITY UPDATES: Sarah congratulated Lilac for being appointed to the Sustainability Committee. Lilac is now an official alternate member of the Committee. Sarah also introduced Meghan Enos to the group. Meghan expressed interest in volunteering with the Sustainability Committee.

Lilac mentioned the Sustainability Club at the Somersworth High School (SHS) started up again. The current focus is on the school's recycling program. Two high school students showed up to volunteer but Lilac is hoping this club will gain more interest as the school year progresses. Wendy mentioned there is a newly formed Sustainability Club at Maple Wood Elementary (grades 3-5). Melony Kent is leading this club with an overwhelming amount of student interest. They are currently looking to beautify the Maple St entrance to the school and hope to collaborate with SYC on Monarch Pledge efforts.

Sarah mentioned she would love to see students engage in public policy. She asked Lilac and Wendy if they think these groups would be interested in engaging with city councilors on the topic of Climate Change. Lilac mentioned she would bring it up to Derek LeBrie but stressed the current focus is on reducing waste within the school. Wendy said she would speak with Melony Kent.

Wendy mentioned the Farm to School program is working with SHS and representatives from the technical school to create a mobile maple syrup trailer which gives opportunities for all year programming.

Crystal gave an update on the Bee City USA program since a member of the community had recommended the city look into this program. This program emphasizes the use of community member beekeeping and pollinator gardens. This program could help achieve long-term goals and dovetail the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. Membership cost for this program is based on the city's population size. For the City of Somersworth it would cost roughly \$200 annually to sustain membership in the program. It is not clear if the Bee City USA program is an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation but Crystal was going to check.

Sarah gave a recap on what was discussed at the last Conservation Commission (CC) meeting that is relevant to this group:

- 1) CC would like to partner with the Sustainability Committee on helping the city to complete the National Wildlife Federation's Community Habitat Certification. The Monarch Pledge activities would count towards several of the requirements for this certification. Sarah reached out to Maureen Jackman to get a better understanding of what activities within the Monarch Pledge have been completed, in process or not started yet.
- 2) CC is looking to target the Salmon Falls trail as a designated recreational trail but will need to assess what work needs to be done in preparation (ie. build and reconstruct bridges)
- 3) CC voted to place Tree City Board signs up near Somersworth welcome signs so people know Somersworth is a Tree City.
- 4) CC brainstormed ways the City could better market its newsletter (ie. QR code to hang up in city hall, city staff to put up flyers, as new or existing residents fill out paperwork at City Hall such as register to vote, register their dog, pay water bill...etc. ask them if they would like to sign up for the newsletter at the same time)
- 5) CC brainstormed a few ways we could promote solar in the city (ie. do a house/commercial solar tour and have residents/company's share or publish data, Jeremy Rhodes mentioned he would be a participant, others to recruit could be the state liquor store, Lilac Carwash, continental diner?, resident on garden st)

Sarah also mentioned several Climate Action events she posted on the shared Google Sustainability Committee Calendar.

3. GOAL AND ACTION SETTING - Since it has been a long time since this Committee revisited the 2020 Vision goals, this group used the time to brainstorm and share ideas about how the City can raise the bar on existing goals as we look to make recommendations for 2030 Vision. The Committee reaffirmed their role as both advisors to the City and advocates of community outreach in ensuring climate action and resilience are central to the City's ongoing decision-making.

As Sarah kicked off a draft of the Path to Sustainability Somersworth Framework, the Committee discussed what the definition of sustainability meant to them and how we should further define sustainability going forward. Since Doug wasn't able to make the meeting, Sarah relayed Doug's feedback to the Committee on both the Framework and the Action List. The Path to Sustainability Somersworth Framework was meant to be used as guiding principles that could help set the foundation for how the City of Somersworth's future sustainable goals and actions are selected and developed. Councilor Paradis recommended we add several examples of strategies we have taken in the past to align with this framework.

Working in parallel, Doug recommended the group may also want to take a look at a decision-making checklist that was developed several years ago to determine if we want to refine and recommend to City Council that City Staff should adopt it.

Sarah reviewed the draft Sustainability Somersworth Sample Action List with the Committee. This Action List is a starting point for the Committee to comment and discuss what actions they would like to see the City take. Wendy suggested a column be added to indicate which partners we would need to work with that may actually lead some of these actions.

Two important points were raised during this discussion: (1) we would like to get a better understanding of what sustainability initiatives are important to the community and (2) if the City is going to make mitigating climate change a priority then this group feels strongly about having a budget. Without a budget, this group feels they are limited in carrying out certain initiatives and are dependent on other groups.

Members of the Committee have committed to write their comments and edit the draft Framework and Action list (located under the shared Planning folder) before the next meeting.

4. FEEDBACK ON WEBSITE - One change on the website was made- Sarah added Lilac as an Alternate Member. No other feedback on the website was given.

5. FOLLOW UP ACTION ITEMS -

- All members will write their comments and edit the draft Framework and Action List before the next meeting.
- Crystal will check to see if the Bee City USA program is an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation
- Wendy will follow up with Melony Kent on ideas to engage her students in public policy (ie. contacting their city councilor on climate change issues)
- Lilac will speak with Derek LeBrie on ideas to engage students in public policy (ie. contacting their city councilor on climate change issues such as recycling/reduce plastic use)
- Sarah will contact the superintendent on past, current and future EE projects
- Sarah needs to follow up with Doug on what actions need to be reworded vs prioritized
- Sarah will start to work with Maureen, Wendy and Scott O in applying the City for the National Wildlife Federation's Community Habitat Certification
- Sarah will integrate the goals of the NH farm to schools program into the existing draft goals and actions document.

Submitted and prepared by: Sarah Eckstein