

City of Clearwater

City Hall
112 S. Osceola Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33756



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

4:00 PM

Council Chambers

Environmental Advisory Board

Roll Call

Present 3 - Chair Jared Leone, Vice Chair Mark Wright, and Board Member John Thomas

Absent 2 - Board Member Ashley Wilson Pimley, and Board Member Candace Gardner

Also Present - Sarah Kessler – Environmental Specialist, Patricia O. Sullivan – Board Reporter

DRAFT

1. Call To Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall.

To provide continuity for research, items are in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

2. Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approve meeting minutes of the Environmental Advisory Board from July 18, 2018.

Re Hillcrest Bypass Project, information was requested on steps taken to protect children and animals. Environmental Specialist Sarah Kessler will forward related information to the board.

Member Wright moved to approve minutes of the July 18, 2018 Environmental Advisory Board meeting as submitted in written summation. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda: None.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Presentation on the status of Clearwater Greenprint initiatives by Lauren Matzke, Long Range Planning Manager

Clearwater Greenprint was published in December of 2011. The entire document can be found at <https://www.myclearwater.com/home/showdocument?id=1132>. Ms. Matzke will provide a verbal report on what initiatives the City has already accomplished.

Long Range Planning Manager Lauren Matzke reviewed the background of Clearwater Greenprint and its approval by City Council in 2011. In September 2018, she presented updates listed on the summary sheet to Council. While all strategies were not intended to be accomplished in the short term, the City had met few short-term initiatives. A Sustainability Coordinator was not hired. Accomplishments included converting traffic lights/streetlights to LED; parking lot lighting updates were underway. Via ongoing contract, City buildings were being monitored and retrofitted to

decrease energy use. Meetings were scheduled on expanding the Complete Streets program to provide all ages and abilities safe access to pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular and transit transportation. A Complete Streets plan for Drew Street was underway.

Ms. Matzke said the City Council adopted a US 19 zoning plan that changed square-foot requirements and was designed to make surrounding areas more walkable and include activity centers to improve pedestrian and transit transportation options. A seminar on energy use by housing type concluded even when green building materials were used, carbon foot prints increased when residents had to drive everywhere. Increasing density was being considered to increase duplex and carriage house construction. Downtown parking requirements were eliminated.

Ms. Matzke said the City had added green space via its purchase of 111 acres at the Clearwater Christian College site. The annual tree giveaway furthered Greenprint goals. Reeducation efforts were underway re recycling requirements to reduce land fill waste. The City had not promoted the natural gas use at a new fire station and Morningside Recreation Center.

Discussion ensued with recommendations: 1) City construct visible pilot solar facility canopy over approximately 1 acre of beach parking, charging premium fees for shaded spaces while producing clean power; 2) City aspire to adopt LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) criteria standards for new projects and follow guidelines when economically feasible; 3) City attract business sponsors or Solid Waste to offer cash prizes for sculptures created with recycled materials and displayed to educate residents about sustainability; 4) City encourage resident sustainability efforts by demonstrating how to incorporate efficiency standards at all municipal buildings via LEDs, solar panels, etc.; 5) Update City website to promote sustainability and consolidate all related information from bike trails to recycling in one place; 6) Update purchasing policy to require green product preferences; 7) City promote Greenprint strategies to staff and community partnerships; 8) City review, update, and narrow Greenprint policies annually; 9) City adopt work program to achieve annual Greenprint goals; 10) City hire a Sustainability Coordinator to act as point person to help start sustainable energy businesses, manage City work projects, coordinate multi department sustainability efforts, develop strategies and goals, educate residents, encourage developers and landowners to xeriscape, coordinate cleanup activities, etc.; 11) City eradicate invasive plants from City properties and parks; and 12) City change land uses to allow tiny houses in enclaves or neighborhoods with large houses.

It was stated that Greenprint was forward thinking but concern was expressed that Clearwater lagged behind local cities that already hired

Sustainability Coordinators, adopted sustainability practices, and educated residents.

Residents Bryan Beckman, Jana Wiggins, Craig Murtha, Glenna Wentworth, and Sheri Heilman commented. Concerns were expressed re lack of City efforts to install solar panels and track related financial benefits and reduced emissions; Dunedin, Largo, and St. Petersburg had hired Sustainability Coordinators; the City also should hire a Sustainability Coordinator to communicate and train Councilmembers and staff, encourage green collaboration among departments, and reach out to residents, including those who did not know the meaning of sustainability; City should adopt actions proposed in the compelling UN climate report; City should adopt an ocean friendly sustainability plan to reduce beach plastic; City should recognize Ocean Friendly certification recipients, develop an Ocean Friendly culture, and incentivize Ocean Friendly practices; City should address inability to build tiny houses, small transitional units, and starter homes in nice neighborhoods where many want to live but most houses are too large.

It was reported 17 Clearwater beach businesses were certified Ocean Friendly including large corporate hotels, multiple businesses were in queue, a coop was forming to allow small restaurants and businesses to purchase ocean friendly products at bulk prices, and a task force was formed to educate beach businesses, hotels, and residents re Ocean Friendly practices. Citizens reached out to Homeowner Associations, sat on panels to educate residents, and offered to help the City expand its outreach efforts re recycling, sustainability, etc.

It was recommended that the City base development on permitted square feet per acre rather than units to encourage construction of more small homes, increase densities, reduce automobile use and pollution, and expand affordable housing in good neighborhoods for singles, professionals, and millennials.

4.2 Discuss status of Red Tide, the City and County responses, and plans for the future led by Sarah Kessler, Environmental Specialist

Ms. Kessler reviewed local effects from Red Tide and City and County efforts to harvest dead fish from the Gulf and Intracoastal and remove them from the beaches. Red Tide, a natural phenomenon, was worsened by human activities. Stormwater was working on off season resident education re importance of keeping land waste out of storm drains. It was recommended that a red tide workshop, in partnership with other communities, feature experts and be scheduled at libraries to educate residents without politicizing the subject.

In response to a question, Ms. Kessler said septic tanks were well mapped in Clearwater; septic tanks in unincorporated locations posed

problems. She will provide information at the next meeting re City efforts to remove septic tanks. It was stated Northeastern states required septic tanks to be registered, cleaned every few years, and pass inspection before houses were sold. Discussion ensued regarding failing septic tanks, high replacement costs, a requirement that homes with failing septic tanks connect with sewer lines if available, and a suggestion that homeowners qualify for tax credits when they replace septic tanks with sewer connections.

Ms. Kessler said septic tank replacement and sewer connections were expensive; she was not familiar with a funding source to help homeowners and did not think the City Council would fund a tax incentive.

Ms. Kessler said Pinellas County banned the use of hydrogen and phosphorus fertilizers, which feeds Red Tide, from June 1 to October 1, during the rainy season. Concerns were expressed agricultural runoff into Lake Okeechobee was then discharged into estuaries causing green algae blooms, the plan to purchase 180,000 acres south of the lake to purify its discharge and restore water flow to the Everglades was not realized, water pollution from the Mississippi River exacerbated the Red Tide outbreak, and toxic chemicals sprayed on lawns to kill weeds poisoned children, bees, and pets that had contact with the grass.

Ms. Kessler suggested green algae blooms contributed to the excessive Red Tide outbreak. She did not know the status of the long range plan to modify the south Florida hydrology and let water flow like it did previously.

4.3 Discuss presentation to City Council on December 6, 2018; EAB Members

Recommendations to include in the Boards presentation included: 1) Request City Council direction re Greenprint implementation strategies; 2) Hire a Sustainability Coordinator; 3) Septic tank oversight and review other community actions to protect aquifers and waterways; 4) Encourage xeriscaping; 5) Upgrade beach trash receptacles and add recycle receptacles; 6) City reengage with Keep Pinellas Beautiful; and 7) Improve trash pickup on City streets, gutters, and rights-of-way.

5. Old Business Item: None.

6. Director's Report

At the January 16, 2019 meeting, Ms. Kessler said she would provide an update on the City's septic to sewer program and report on Public Utilities expansion plans. Information was requested on how much less pollution entered the aquifer and waterways when 1 septic was removed. It was requested that the board discuss Code changes that would encourage residents to adopt xeriscaping, Florida friendly landscaping. Requests

were made for an update on the Ocean Friendly program and a tour of City purchased land at the former Clearwater Christian College site including a review of its environmental resources. Ms. Kessler said the City's project should be done in the Spring; she will forward to the board the site's Master Plan. The property was difficult to access.

7. Board Members to be Heard

Chair Leone said an exciting announcement was planned at the October 24, 2018 meeting at CMA (Clearwater Marine Aquarium) re the Ocean Friendly program. He hoped the program will continue to expand. He said a plastic forum was scheduled on November 7, 2018 at the Main Library.

Chair Leone thanked the public for attending and speaking at today's meeting.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Chair, Environmental Advisory Board

Attest:

Board Reporter