

The Environmental Advisory Board's objective is to provide citizen insight to the city council and staff on environmental activities within and affecting the City of Clearwater.

We are the city's only advisory board with a stated objective. I am here tonight to update you on our accomplishments this year and our plans for the future.

Last year, the State Legislature gave cities the option to prohibit cigarette smoking at public beaches and parks. We asked to explore the feasibility of such an ordinance in Clearwater. In May, interim Police Chief Michael Walek gave the board a presentation on a proposed ordinance to exclude the use of cigarettes and vaping products at city beaches and parks. We wrote a letter of support and this city council unanimously approved the ordinance in June. Pinellas County and St. Petersburg also approved similar ordinances.

In a previous presentation we asked for realignment of the board to a department with a more city-wide view. That request led to the board moving this year from the Engineering Department to the Office of Innovation as well as a new liaison, Micah Maxwell, chief innovation officer for the city. With this move, the board worked on substantial changes to increase effectiveness. The realignment process offers the board the opportunity to serve as a more valuable partner for the city as projects, plans and initiatives move forward.

The board showed its value as a partner this year, as city staff developed a tree replanting program. The board first heard a presentation in May from Chuck Lane with an update on the plan. At the time, he asked for suggestions from the board. In October, Assistant City Manager Dan Slaughter shared the progress of the monthslong effort, which included input received from the board. The city council recently unanimously approved the plan.

We also heard presentations this year from Ruth Eckerd Hall on its sustainability plan for The Sound/Coachman Park; an update on GreenPrint, the city's sustainability plan; Clearwater 2045, the city's comprehensive plan; Cenergistics savings so far; the city's solar implementation plan; a possible "feebate" program; the progress and plan for Coopers Point; and the use of pesticides on city parks and other property.

Looking to 2024, the board plans to increase its meeting frequency to six times a year, hear updates on the city's continued energy savings, achieving Ready for 100 goals and plans for solar installations.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve, our board looks forward to the possibilities the future holds and how we can continue to contribute to make Clearwater bright and beautiful.