

1-7-2013 Mayor's Climate Protection Citizens Advisory Committee

Members present: Linda Thompson, Denise Smith, Gayle Simmons, Shelby Hallmark, Deb James, Jeff Hill. Community present: Nick Sussillo

The regular meeting was called to order a 5:05 p.m. by facilitator Linda Thompson. The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed. Shelby made the motion to accept the minutes. Jeff seconded. The minutes were approved as read.

Reports:

Nick Sussillo reported for the Office of Sustainable. Jan. 24th will be the third meeting for the Sustainability Task Force. There will be two more task force meetings. Two community meetings are scheduled, the first of which will be Tues. Feb. 19th at 6:45 p.m. the University. Nick made arrangements with Jeff to sponsor a meeting room for this event. Dr. Dubois, NM State Climatologist, will speak at this meeting. Once the task force and community meetings are completed in June, a report will be presented to the mayor/City Council in July or August.. There was some discussion about water availability in the state and some record-breaking statistics in water levels and length of fire season. There was a call for more research regarding water-tank storage, municipal water rights, flood capacity, etc. Nick summarized the completed tasks so far by the Office of Sustainability under a variety of grants. He discussed the relationship between his office and the Climate Protection Committee as background information to newer members concerning the bigger picture of the work currently being undertaken. Concerning the solar array Nick reported that the construction crew has begun to bring in equipment and set up some infrastructure for the construction of a security fence and drainage installation. This will clear the ground for construction. A ground breaking ceremony will be announced. Construction should be complete by May. Gayle asked if local workers were still going to be employed. Nick will check with the construction manager with Affordable Solar to find out the status of using local labor.

Denise Smith reported on the progress of the Water Conservation Plan, which she says is moving ahead on schedule. They have gathered data concerning the increase in water usage between 2002 and 2012. They have listed the top 25 water users, more than half of those being WNMU.

Gayle reported for the Education Subcommittee that the NMSEA chairman is very excited about the plans for expanding local Sunchaser Program trainings to include municipal/county workforce groups and an increased number of school groups. The committee has put a tentative proposal together for a comprehensive plan for providing sustainability/resilience information to the broader community which involves partnering with other sustainability/conservation groups.

The subcommittee is currently approaching and awaiting input from members of these groups. The subcommittee will report at the next meeting on how well received a cooperative plan might be.

Shelby reported his findings in consulting with Austin concerning their Plastic Bag Ordinance, which is the ordinance our committee worked from to design our proposal. Shelby was able to clarify some questions that came up at the last meeting. Shelby asked the Austin folks if their ordinance has a preamble, which would include cost estimates. He learned that they did not have a preamble, but there were less formal documents that included a cost analysis (the costs of handling plastic bags – litter control, landfill, maintenance on recycling equipment jammed by bags—that would be avoided if bags were banned). He also acquired a “Short History of Single-Use Bags in Austin”. Linda’s proposal included a list of cities that have adopted a plastics policy. In addition, he looked at the Brownsville, TX ordinance, which allows selling non-recyclable plastic bags for a \$1 transaction fee if consumers don’t carry their own bag. Jeff interjected clarifications concerning the thickness of bags. He also presented his findings about a Los Angeles study concerning costs and benefits of plastic bag bans. Linda made an additional clarification concerning the difference between recycled paper and FSC Certified Paper. Jeff suggested, with Shelby’s agreement, that rather than present the mayor with a full-blown ordinance, we present options, perhaps including materials for an ordinance as one option.. Gayle introduced the environmental impact of plastic-bag production vs. paper and cloth bags, suggesting that we need to be prepared with all of our motives and data in our proposal. There was some lively discussion concerning the carbon footprint issue of both and our best and clearest way to approach the Council within the purview of our assigned tasks. Shelby and Linda volunteered to look up the rationale for the Climate Committee prioritizing a plastics policy as a proposed task for this group. Some further research on the carbon footprint of our three alternative types of bags will be done before the next meeting. An email discussion will begin.

The next meeting is scheduled for Feb.20th.

Deb made the motion for adjournment. Shelby seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debaura James