

**City of Portage Environmental Board
Minutes for the Meeting on February 8, 2023**

Members present: Justin Gish, Jerry Kroehn, Lauren Tompkins, Jason Beasley, Thomas Schaffer, Loren Kimeldorf, Joseph Chamberlin, Jaime Harmon (ex officio)

7:02 p.m. Meeting called to order

- Thomas Schaffer made motion to start the meeting. Seconded by Justin G. Motion passed unanimously.

7:03 p.m. Welcome and Introduction of Guests

- No guests were present.

7:04 p.m. Public Comment

- No members of the public present to speak.

7:06 p.m. Approval of the January Minutes

- Jaime H. said she made edits for clarity but the substance remained the same.
- Lauren T. made motion to approve the minutes with edits. Jason B. seconded. Motion passed. Justin G. abstained as he was not present at January 2023 meeting.

7:07 p.m. New Tree Ordinance

- Jerry K. questioned if the intent was to bring back a previous tree ordinance discussion. For context, Loren K. explained the rationale behind the previously proposed ordinance. Thomas S. asked if the tree ordinance could be put into the upcoming master plan. Jerry K. suggested that if the intent behind this ordinance was to have more trees in Portage, why not encourage citizens to plant trees. Thomas S. suggested a targeted ordinance that would protect trees that would most benefit wildlife, especially birds as they relate to the Urban Bird Treaty. Jaime H. thought that it would be easier from the City's perspective to plant desired trees. Thomas S. suggested the city find a way to identify their trees to create a city-wide inventory of trees. It was thought that this would prove difficult, as expertise would likely be required, and it was not known if citizens have this expertise or the ability to hire an expert. Lauren T. suggested that the Board review existing ordinances to see what the city already requires regarding cutting of trees during development. Jason B. suggested looking at the policies of similar cities who are in Tree City programs and how they approach the tree issue being discussed. Lauren T. requested that board members familiarize themselves with the ordinances before next meeting, and Thomas S. suggested that board members keep the Urban Bird Treaty in mind as they explore the tree ordinance. Thomas S. made motion to table this discussion until next month so board members can educate themselves. Loren K. seconded. Motion passed.

7:35 p.m. Masterplan and Local Power Generation

- Thomas S. asked the board members for information that they pledged to research after last meeting. Lauren T. raised the point that there is really no incentive for individual citizens to decarbonize, pointing out that Michigan does not have good rebate programs to encourage citizens to put solar panels on their roof, or otherwise decarbonize. Loren K. suggested that the Portage City Council work to get the State Legislature to get incentives passed. Lauren T. suggested the city work on educational outreach to citizens teaching them about decarbonization and energy efficiency. Thomas S. asked Jaime H. if this could be put into the Portager. Jason B. raised a concern that advocacy and for energy efficiency could push developers away from creating affordable homes in the area. Loren K. suggested that developers need to see the value in energy efficiency, or they won't install these changes. Lauren T. volunteered to draft an educational piece for the Portager regarding decarbonization/energy efficiency. This will be submitted to the Board for their approval. Loren K. offered to coordinate an educational meeting for the board with local companies who can explain to the board more about the solar power and green energy. Lauren T. asked for a broader expert in renewable energy and all the policies, rather than a local solar company. Jamie H. will investigate who performed similar duties for the city and if they would be willing to speak to the Board. Loren K. will not reach out to the local solar company until he hears back from Jaime H.

8:27 p.m. Board Member Discussion on Upcoming Events

- Jerry K. asked about the Garlic Mustard Competition sponsored by the Portage Parks Department. The Board is not going to do a sponsored Garlic Mustard pull this year. Jerry K. thinks this is a terrible idea.

8:35 p.m. Motion to adjourn by Thomas S. Seconded by Jason B. Motion passed.