

## **City of Portage Environmental Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for June 08, 2022**

### **7:08 p.m. Call to order approval of minutes from previous meetings**

- Environmental Board President called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

### **7:10 p.m. Welcome and introduction of guests**

- Environmental Board Members Present- Thomas Schaffer, Jerry Kroehn, David Lancaster, Joe Chamberlin, Justin Gish, Diedre Courtney
- City Liason- Jamie Harmon
- Guests Present- Rick Frieman, Jeremy Roland

### **7:20 p.m. Approval of the minutes from May's meeting**

- Meeting minutes approved unanimously.
- Questions about the timing of the Greenathon and a possible fall event were raised and will be discussed later.

### **7:21 p.m. Public comment**

- Rick Frieman congratulated the City of Portage on earning gold status from the Michigan Green Communities organization.
- Rick spoke to the fact that there is a distinction between decarbonization and energy efficiency. Decarbonization is the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while decarbonization is the transition from the combustion of fossil fuels completely. Rick posited that the consultants who are hired by the city, pushed the city towards efficiency, with the promise of financial savings, and the reduction in carbon emissions is generally a secondary benefit to the cost savings.
- Rick asked about the use of electric water heaters in the City of Portage. Jeremy Roland stated that water heaters in the public parks are electric water heaters. Rick then raised the idea of the city replacing their furnaces and boilers to heat pumps and geothermal technology.
- Rick submitted a questionnaire for Jeremy to respond to and asked if the Public Works Department would be willing to undergo an analysis of the functional. Jeremy stated he cannot agree to any endeavors requested at this meeting.
- Thomas Schaffer suggested that the board use the questions asked by Rick Freiman to draft a motion. The motion would be made after hearing from Jereme Rowland.

### **8:12 p.m. Exchange with Public works director to discuss environmental board's electrification vision/an exploration of feasibility in city. Examples of Portage decarbonization progress to date.**

- Jereme Roland talked about the climate plan adopted by the city council. This resulted in increased efforts to be more sustainability minded as a municipality. Jeremy again

mentioned the gold status recently awarded to the City of Portage and detailed the projects that lead to this award. Jereme talked about the three electric vehicle charging stations on city property. The city purchased a new Ford Electric Pick Up truck, and Jeremy expects Portage to be the first city on the west side of the state to use these vehicles. The city plans to use grant money to purchase an electric pick-up truck. The city uses electric chainsaws and is looking to add more electric machines for use. Jeremy said there were downsides to electric machines with regards to battery capacity on large projects in the city. Working on a 20% reduction in the use of natural gas usage by the city over the next three years. The city is installing digital thermostats that can alter buildings temperatures in response to working hours. The buildings are no longer kept at a constant temperature, which should result in a reduction of carbon emissions and increased energy efficiency. Also noted by Jereme were the city-wide brush pick up programs, single stream recycling, and hazardous waste disposal programs through Kalamazoo County. In 2018 Consumers Energy conducted a solar audit but the installation cost was too high, and no panels were installed.

### **8:42 p.m. A motion was made that reads:**

*The City of Portage Environmental Advisory board requests that the City of Portage Department of Public Works analyzes the feasibility of replacing gas or oil burning furnaces, boilers, and small engines with electric options and analyzing the electrical cost savings of installing solar panels on city property.*

*The board requests a written report of the current oil and gas burning machines with the locations/descriptions/specifications and age, barriers to replacing these gas and oil burning machines with electrical replacements, to include the cost to replace gas or oil powered machines with electric ones. The board also requests the cost of installation of solar panels on city property and the cost savings of installing these solar panels. This information is requested for capital budgeting purposes and to obtain a reasonable estimate of cost and a replacement date.*

Joe Chamberlin made the motion to approve. The motion passed unanimously.

### **9:09 p.m. Future items**

Add to the agenda for August, a possible fall event, a review of the garlic mustard pulls this past spring and celebrating Arbor Day in the future.

### **9 :21 p.m. Adjourn**