

Athens City Environment and Sustainability Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda
Zoom Conference Call
Wednesday February 3, 2021 6:00 PM

1. Call to Order Chairperson Aimee Delach called the meeting to order at 6:02PM with a land acknowledgement statement. Members present include Aimee Delach, Megan Almeida, Jasmine Facun, Ed Newman, Sarah Conley-Ballew, Paul Logue, Elaine Goetz, Sam Crowl, Stefan Gleissberg, and Austin Babrow. Members absent include Abby Rodjam. Quorum was established. Guests include planning intern Lauren Conner.

2. Disposition of Minutes the January 2021 minutes was reviewed by the commission. Elaine Goetz motioned to accept the minutes as submitted to the commission. Sam Crowl seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The minutes were approved.

3. Next Meeting Date – March 3, 2021

4. Old Business

A. Backyard Chickens – Sarah Conley-Ballew shared that she and Megan Almeida discussed having a pilot initiative which would allow a small group of about 10 city residents to house backyard chickens. The shortest term suggested for this potential pilot program would be 3-years since it takes hens about 10-months to fully mature and about 2-years until they are productively producing eggs. The pilot program participants would be encouraged to attend educational classes on how to care for chickens. Jasmine Facun expressed her concern for what may happen to the chickens once the pilot program is over. Aimee Delach expressed how it may be beneficial to have pilot program participants have their neighbors sign a written acknowledgement agreeing that they are aware of their neighbor housing chickens for the pilot program. Paul Logue shared that City Council, the planning commission, and the Board of Zoning Appeals will need to be made aware of the pilot program. He thought city code might need to be changed even in a pilot program since there are already laws on the books on this matter. Jasmine suggested gauging interest with the community to see how many residents would be interested in a backyard chicken pilot program. Sam has been contacted by 2 residents about backyard chickens and thought that a strategic approach would need to be taken to inform the community, as well as gain accurate information about the interest of backyard chickens in Athens.

B. Sustainability Plan Reporting - Paul shared that he and Lauren Conner are still working on the Sustainability Plan and it will be done before May. Elaine Goetz called attention that there is a small-time frame to get the electrical data and expressed the importance of getting that data in February.

C. Pollinator Habitat/Planting for Solar Array – Aimee shared that the grad students who were supposed to present at this meeting were not able to make it due to a conflict. They will be at the March meeting to present their findings on natural vegetation and pollinator habitats. Stefan Gleissberg asked if open green space by the highway would be a suitable location for solar arrays. Paul responded by stating that that land is owned by the state and ODOT will most likely not give up land for a use that they cannot control. He shared the importance of installing solar on land the city already owns.

5. New Business

A. Bee City USA – Sam announced that he is enacting a plan to apply for Bee City USA and Bee Campus status and hopes to announce that Athens and OU were granted those statuses on Earth Day.

B. Earth Day 2021 – Elaine asked that if anyone hears of any Earth Day events to let her know so she can post the event on the website. Since the community cannot safely gather to celebrate Earth Day this year, Sarah suggested that one of the activities could be uplifting the work Athens does for the Earth and reflect on challenges the community faces through a video or other media source. Several commission members supported an ‘Earth Day Resolution Video’ to share with the US House of Representatives, the Senate, and President Biden for recognition. If commission or community members hear of any Earth Day events in the spring, they should send those to events.sustainability@ohio.edu or Sam Crowl to get those activities posted on the website.

6. Announcements and Updates

A. Wayne National Forest Plan – Aimee shared that the Wayne National Forest has put a pause on the planning process as of 2/3/2021. They are awaiting new guidance and mandates from the federal level about forest management.

B. Backyard Bird Count – Backyard Bird Count will be coming out mid-February and the announcement went out to the Athens area bird enthusiasts this week.

C. Climate Sustainability Ambassadors Student Organization – Elaine shared that Professor Ryan Fogt asked the students what they would like to do this semester, and several were interested in pollinator habitats, invasive species removal, and tree plantings. If there are any upcoming projects that would need volunteers, commission members can email Ryan Fogt so that he can ask students to help. Elaine suggested emailing Ryan Fogt to see if any students would be interested in becoming the Sustainability Commission’s student commissioner.

D. Arts West Pollinator Garden – there is no update about this announcement.

7. Adjournment – Stefan Gleissberg motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ed Newman seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 7:09pm.

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Conner (City Planning Intern).