

**Madison Environmental Commission  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Meeting Minutes  
July 27, 2023**

1. **Call to order** by Chairperson Claire Whitcomb at 7:34
2. **Announcement of meeting notice**  
Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: Read by Claire Whitcomb, Chairperson.
3. **Present:** Bridget Daley, Joan Maccari, Kirsten Wallenstein, Rachel Ehrlich, Council Liaison, Deanna Schmidt (by telephone), Claire Whitcomb, Ann Huber.

**Guests:** Lisa Jordan, Kathy Caccavale

**Absent:** Brian Monahan, Stephen Stocker, Corinne Bowen, Kate Dunnigan, Trina Mallik.

4. **Council Report:** Rachel Ehrlich no update at this meeting. John Forte gave the MEC update to the Council.

**5. Continuing Business:**

Site Plan Reviews: Ann Huber shared that the Planning Board heard testimony from Engineer and Architect for 13-15 Prospect Ave seeking approval for a multi-story building in the Central Business District. They are looking for a number of variances. She indicated that she would like to see solar panels and heat pumps incorporated into the plans since developed properties account for greatest impact on our carbon foot print. Application is being continued to Aug 1 or 14, depending on when updated maps are done.

A similar site plan application is going before the Zoning board. A question arose about which site plans are directed to which Board. A "D" variance, otherwise known as a use variance goes to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Planning Board has authority to grant some C variances. We need an explanation from Susan about the exact process. The MEC needs enough lead time to review which means that the staff need to upload applications as soon as possible.

There was also discussion of what is meant by a solar ready roof. Deanna explained that it means establishing the infrastructure in such a way as to allow for pathways from the service areas to the roof. Discussion also ensued about whether cheaper energy bills are only an incentive to a developer who will be bearing the cost. In order to know that, we need to know what the future use of the building will be: rentals, condo or is it being built to flip.

Claire offered to call some architect-builders known to the MEC to discuss the costs and incentives of using solar panels and heat pumps in rentals, condos and single family homes building.

Drew Forest: Chair reported she presented a Power Point presentation to the Planning and Zoning Boards as well as most recently, to the Madison Rotary Club on the importance of trees to the aquifer. The Rotary Club is planting 100 trees to replace some of the lost canopy.

Climate Action Plan (CAP) – There was a discussion related to the cost of building sustainable housing such as a passive house. Joan reported that a survey of Northeast areas has shown that when it comes to residential construction, the cost to build a passive house plus the subsequent savings is comparable to regular construction.

It was suggested that we sit down with developers to understand what incentives they need to build passive homes. It was also suggested that a Resource List would be helpful to developers. For example, some landscapers are willing to implement a sustainable plant design. This led to a suggestion of a small forum on redoing front lawns to eliminate grass lawns on Maple Ave.

Rachel reported that the Climate Action Group met with Jim Burnett about electric-use benchmarks. There is a large range in the use from similar size homes. Thus, the tagging for proper surveys is lacking. They hope to emulate PSE & G's gas benchmarks. Also, the Time of Use change in rates is still a work in progress.

Sustainable Madison Advisory Committee Updates: Kathleen reported that a rain garden may be built in the swale in the front of the library to collect water draining from Pomeroy and Belmont. The design, if approved, will be financed as part of a \$20,000 PSE&G grant from Sustainable Jersey. A diversity presentation to the council came together through the efforts of a Team made up of Community leaders including Lisa Jordan, the Housing authority, Wind of the Spirit and Grace Church.

Kathy also reported that our submission for Sustainable Madison has gone in. We should know the results in September.

Kathy also brought to the MEC's attention the fact that Madison's "green" grounds policy is not being implemented. Different groups, including volunteer landscaping companies, manage different public areas, allowing for diverse approaches to maintenance which are not all "green". It was concluded that we need a volunteer to put together a List of public spaces which identifies who is responsible for which space.

House and Garden Tour: We will be partnering with the Friends of the Library so that there will be demonstrations at various homes. Toadshade Wildflower Farm will do a plant sale, Green House Solar, Ciel Power and Java's Compost will be tabling. Friends of Madison Shade Tree and the Climate Action Committee are also tabling. We would like to have anti-idling and Destination EV material displayed as well.

MPS Pollinator Habitat: Bridget and Joan are looking volunteer weeders to maintain the Pollinator Habitat at the Board of Education. Their new proposal is that each volunteer adopt a small area and weed it at their convenience. Bridget will provide a short tutorial for each volunteer. Kristen suggested that the Boy and Girl Scouts be contacted.

Native Plant Giveaway: Joan Maccari will conduct another pollinator plant give away at the farmers market in September.

**6. New Business:** None.

Motion to approve the June Minutes was passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm. Respectfully Submitted, *Ann Huber*