

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Standing Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Spencer Thibodeau (D2), Chair
Councilor Belinda Ray (D1)
Councilor Jill Duson (A/L)

Minutes

February 15, 2018

Councilors Present: Councilor Thibodeau, Councilor Ray, Councilor Batson

Staff Present: Troy Moon, William Needelman, Caity Hager, Kevin Dennault

Review and approve minutes: Councilor Ray mad a motion to approve the minute from October 18, 2017. Seconded by Councilor Batson. All in favor.

Sustainability Updates:

Streetlights: The streetlight conversion is going well. Councilor Thibodeau and Councilor Duson attended a press event to mark the kick off that was held on January 30.

Smart Traffic Signals: The City is preparing to install smart traffic control equipment at Morrill's Corner. This technology should improve traffic flow efficiency by 30%, reducing idling from cars waiting to go through the intersection.

Ocean Avenue Landfill: Councilor Thibodeau asked for an update on the solar project and other work at the landfill. Troy indicated that staff has reviewed and commented on a draft permit for the project and that we're awaiting the final version. The work on the cap was completed last fall. Staff will be looking at other areas of the landfill to determine depth of cover. If thin spots are discovered there will be a need to add material. Chris Branch is working to sample water from the test wells.

EV Charging: The City is looking at deploying EV charging stations around the City. The City Manager has asked that the Sustainability Office identify a number of high visibility locations for chargers. Councilor Thibodeau asked whether the traffic schedule will need to be changed to add chargers on the street. Troy did not believe so but said he would check with Public Works and Corporation Counsel.

Recycling: Councilor Ray asked if we had seen improvements in the recycling rate. Mr. Moon indicated that the City had its highest recycling rate ever in November, 2017, but the rate was lower in December. January numbers were not available at the time of the meeting. Councilor Ray wondered if people were following our recommendation and only putting the carts out when they were full. Mr. Moon suggested we'd probably have to watch the rates over a period of time to determine a trend.

Climate Action Planning Process / 80x50 goal

Mr. Moon made a presentation proposing a collaborative planning process with the City of South Portland. Following a meeting with Jon Jennings, City Manager of Portland, and Scott Morelli, City Manager of South Portland, the Sustainability Coordinators in each City drafted a plan calling for each city to spend \$110,000 to hire a consultant that would assist in the development of a climate action plan for each city. The consultant would also help facilitate a number of community engagement meetings in each City in order to get feedback from a wide range of citizens and community members. The plan also includes a steering committee of experts in key areas including energy, transportation and land use, waste reduction, and resilience. This group would assist the Sustainability Coordinators in guiding the process and provide feedback on drafts of the action plan. Mr. Moon also described collaboration between the two cities and Grid Solar, who has offered to undertake detailed mapping of energy use in both cities as well as a map showing the capability of the electrical grid. Data from this project would inform the climate action plan and help make decision about where to deploy infrastructure such as solar and micro-grids. The overall project is expected to take at least 18 months. As part of the process, City staff recommends the City Council adopt a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. This goal corresponds with the resolution the City made to join the Mayors Climate Agenda, in which the City agreed to take actions that would honor the goals of the Paris Climate Accords.

All of the Councilors agreed this would be a good approach. Councilor Thibodeau asked that staff prepare a draft resolution for the 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050 for the committee to take up at the next meeting. He also asked that staff provide information about where the funds to hire the consultant might come from.

Communication: High Water Marks and Bayside flooding signs

Kevin Dennault presented information about the High Water Marks program which places signs in key locations around the city that shows the level of water during the 1978 blizzard. This is the benchmark storm for Portland around flooding. The signs will also show where water would be if additional sea level rise is added to the benchmark storm. The goal is to provide information about the impacts of sea level rise in Portland. The program is collaboration between the City, FEMA, NOAA, and the Army Corp of Engineers. Caity Hager described signage the City will be placing in Bayside to alert people about the potential for flooding. The goal is to prevent vehicles from parking in vulnerable areas during storm events or astronomical high tides when flooding is likely. Caity also described protocols being established to barricade streets during high tide events when street flooding is likely.

Upcoming Meetings

The Committee members discussed upcoming work. For March, Councilor Thibodeau asked that staff present the 80x50 goal, the bike share ordinance, the Bayside Transportation Plan, and update on testing of the wells at Ocean Avenue Landfill, and a report on whether creating parking spots for EVs would require an ordinance change. Other items Councilor Thibodeau would like to discuss this year

include sidewalk plowing ordinance, a review and discussion of solar/energy efficiency in historic districts, opportunities for solar on City buildings including parking garages, and keeping track of the climate action planning process. Councilor Ray would like to discuss the sidewalk plowing ordinance, the parking study, making sure the property assessment doesn't discourage people from installing solar, potential loopholes in the building energy code, more environmental alternatives to road salt, and next steps for the solid waste/recycling program. Councilor Batson agreed with all of the topics suggested by his colleagues.

Public Comment:

Bill Weber: New schools should be energy efficient – use them as examples to demonstrate sustainability.

Allen Armstrong: Overjoyed to hear about the climate action planning process. Encourages the committee to make sure tax assessment doesn't discourage renewables.

Tica Douglas: Concerned about idling vehicles. Would like more enforcement and more signs.

Aaron Witham: Very supportive of the climate action planning process.

Luke Truman: Supports the climate action planning process and would like to see 100% renewable goal extended to the City as a whole, not just City operations.