



CARBONDALE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Thursday March 21st, 2024 - 5:00PM

Carbondale Civic Center – Room 103
200 S. Illinois Avenue, Carbondale IL

AGENDA

- 1. Call to Order and Roll Call**
- 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes:** February 15th, 2024
- 3. Citizen Comments and Questions**
- 4. Presentations**
- 5. Report of Officers, Committees, and Communications**
 - a. Sustainability Coordinator Monthly Progress Report (L. Becker, attached)
 - b. Former Koppers Wood Treatment Site Report (A. Beck)
- 6. Old Business**

Sustainability Commission Memorandum to City Council Regarding Biodiversity Protections
- 7. New Business**
- 8. Announcements**
- 9. Adjournment**

Voting Members:

	Present	Absent	Comment
Treesong (Chair)			
Aur Beck (Vice Chair)			
Jane Cogie			
Kevin Clark			
Sarah Heyer			
Yoonseo Jung (CCHS Student)			
Vacant (SIU Student)			
Gayle Klam			
Joan Davis			

Ex Officio Members:

	Present	Absent
Vacant		

City Staff:

	Present	Absent
Lauren Becker (Staff Liaison)		

Community Members Present:



CARBONDALE SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Thursday February 15th, 2024 - 5:00PM

Carbondale Civic Center – Room 103
200 S. Illinois Avenue, Carbondale IL

MINUTES

Voting Members:

	Present	Absent	Comment
Treesong (Chair)	x		
Aur Beck (Vice Chair)	x		
Jane Cogie	x		
Kevin Clark	x		
Sarah Heyer	x		
Yoonseo Jung (CCHS Student)	x		
Vacant (SIU Student)			
Gayle Klam	x		
Joan Davis	x		

Ex Officio Members:

	Present	Absent
Vacant		

City Staff:

	Present	Absent
Lauren Becker (Staff Liaison)	x	

Community Members Present: Laurel Toussaint

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call** (5:00)
2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:** January 18th, 2024 (G. Klam moved, J. Cogie seconded)

Liaison Becker shared that minutes will go back to being brief, following city best practices.

3. **Citizen Comments and Questions**

Community member Laurel Toussaint drew attention to the Parks Survey that is currently live and accessible through signage, email newsletter, and social media.

S. Heyer drew attention to instances in which new business was not being moved to old business on the agendas. Liaison Becker communicated it's likely because no further actions were proposed (i.e. memorandums).

4. **Presentations** (None)

5. Report of Officers, Committees, and Communications

- a. Sustainability Coordinator Monthly Progress Report (L. Becker, attached)

Commission members requested further information surrounding (1) the winter seed sowing demonstration, (2) city support and collaboration on the Army Corps of Engineers Section 206 funding opportunity to restore local aquatic ecosystems, and (3) whether there was any news from the Department of Energy regarding the Energy Futures Planning Grant.

- b. Former Koppers Wood Treatment Site Report (A. Beck)

6. Old Business (None)

7. New Business

Approval of the 2024 Sustainability Commission Schedule of Meetings

Chair Treesong ensured unanimous consent, the 2024 Sustainability Commission Schedule of Meetings was passed

Approval of Sustainability Commission Memorandum to City Council Regarding Biodiversity Protections

Discussion was held surrounding (1) minor grammatical changes, (2) whether edits should be made to specify the inclusion of biodiversity considerations and a survey of biological species on public lands within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan scope of work, and (3) whether the Commission should request additional staffing. Conflicting opinions were shared.

The Commission decided to send proposed revisions to drafting author J. Cogie ahead of the March meeting, to be applied and re-submitted to the commission for final review and vote.

8. Announcements

J. Cogie shared that February 28th, at 6:30pm via Zoom “Clean Homes of the Future in Southern Illinois: A Healthcare Professional’s Perspective” would be held.

J. Cogie shared that March 21st at 7pm at the Carbondale Township building, Trent Ford, the State Climatologist would be speaking to the Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club.

9. Adjournment (6:14pm G. Klam moved, A. Beck seconded. Chair Treesong ensured unanimous consent.)

The following will serve as my Sustainability Coordinator report of progress for the month of February 2024. Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions and comments.

Table of Contents:

1. Uncategorized Updates
2. Energy Sovereignty, Security, & Democracy Proposal
3. Comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan
4. Biodiversity Protections
5. City Sustainability Commission
6. Jackson County Communities LEAP Community Coalition
7. Carbondale's Cabinet for Children & Youth

Uncategorized Updates:

- Continued regular check-ins with Justin Harrell, SIU Facilities & Energy Maintenance
- Continued bi-weekly check-ins with Gary Williams, City Manager
- Continued regular check-ins with Wade Halva, Faith in Place
- Continued attending weekly "Federal Funding Fridays" and "Federal Funding Flurries" offered by the Midwest Climate Collaborative
- Continued attending monthly "Complete Streets" meetings, which stimulate interdepartmental collaboration toward well-designed cityscapes
- Continued regular "Synergy Meetings" held by Keep Carbondale Beautiful Executive Director Mike Baltz
- Continued regular Southern Illinois Clean Heat meetings
- Continued regular media request check-ins with Public Relations Officer, Tourism Director, and Planning Department
- Began monthly check-ins with Aimee Lemrise, SIU Sustainability Director
- Attended the American Climate Corps Listening Session 4 (2/1)
- Continued collaboration with Fire Captain D.W. Presley regarding replacing aging forced air gas heating units with electric heating + increased air circulation (2/1)
- Was interviewed by current student at Columbia, Karlynn Park regarding managing climate depression in young people (2/2)
- Submitted Sustainability Budget request for FY25
- Attended the public input gathering session held by the Jackson County Health Department in collaboration with Greater Egypt regarding Jackson County 5 Year Waste and Recycling Planning (2/6)
- Attended the first annual Outdoor Economy Summit held at Touch of Nature by SI Now! (2/21)
- Met with Elevate Executive Delmar Gillus along with Jane Cogie and Wade Halva to provide additional feedback on the DCEO CEJA Workforce Hub process thus far (2/22)
- Attended introductory meeting with new Carbondale Main Street Director, Matt Collinsworth (2/27)
- Attended the State of Illinois' first and only public input gathering session on the State's Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) (2/27)
- Attended a successful "Homes of the Future in Southern Illinois: A Healthcare Professional's Perspective" hosted by the Southern Illinois Clean Heat group (2/28)
- Attended the February 2024 Member Meeting for the Midwest Climate Collaborative (2/29)

Energy Sovereignty, Security, & Democracy Proposal:

- Continued regular Clean Energy 2 Communities (C2C) Expert Match team (Pacific Northwest National Laboratory) bi-weekly check ins.
- Attended the Interagency Working Group's webinar "Coal Countries: Transition Strategies from Coal Communities Across the Globe" (2/1)
- Presented at the Neighborhood Alliance Annual Meeting (2/3)
- Learned that the City of Carbondale had been included in a grant application without our knowledge, submitted by a staff member of Jackson County who is no longer employed with the County. Subsequently met with Economic Development Director Steve Mitchell and Economic Development Coordinator Cody Lueker to troubleshoot. (2/16)
- Met with Village of Dowell teammates Debi and Jan to let them know about my concerns about the deliverables included within the grant application. Troubleshot successfully and scheduled another meeting with the whole team. (2/20)
- Met with Jackson County staff along with Economic Development Director Steve Mitchell, and Economic Development Coordinator Cody Lueker to bring everyone up to speed surrounding the grant application, and confirmed that the City of Carbondale and the County were not liable for grant performance. (2/20)
- Held one final meeting with Jackson County staff member Anthony Henson, to communicate concerns formally and provide a close-out to collaboration. (2/26)
- Held a community consultation with the Carbondale Branch of the NAACP (2/27)

Comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan:

- GIS Specialist Anthony Alonzi and Greater Egypt Water Planner Kelsey Bowe continued to collect and "clean" data, in addition to reviewing existing resources
- Attended meeting between the City Manager, Water Operations Director, Liz Gershbach and Gayle Klam to discuss updates surrounding the protection of our potable water supply (2/2)

Biodiversity Protections:

- Attended the ICLEI USA Member Journey Call where I learned about the offerings available during this calendar year for our membership, including the Climate Vulnerability Assessment Cohort (2/1)
- Enrolled in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment Cohort (2/1)
- Met with Vicki Lang-Mendenhall and Rhonda Rothrock to discuss strategies toward ensuring biodiversity and habitat protections in bird populations (2/14)
- Met with the Illinois Botanizer, Chris Benda to discuss the feasibility of performing a biodiversity inventory for the City of Carbondale (2/16)

City Sustainability Commission:

- Held 2/15 meeting

Jackson County Communities LEAP Community Coalition:

- Meetings rescheduled.

Carbondale Children's Cabinet:

- General Meeting and Student Voice Impact Table (2/26)

MEMORANDUM

TO: The City of Carbondale City Council Members / Gary Williams, City Manager

FROM: City of Carbondale Sustainability Commission—**NOT VETTED DRAFT**

RE: Biodiversity Protections on Public Land | Recommendation to Increase Staffing

DATE: **Revision sch/February 22, 2024 /revision sch / with a few adds by jnc
3/12/24**

In October of 2023 the City and the Carbondale Park District signed an agreement, a Proposal for a Master Plan, for managing our Parks. The Sustainability Commission took note of this, in light of two other commitments the City council has made: The Pollinator Pledge was signed by the Mayor last April; and the Carbondale Sustainability Action Plan [SAP] passed unanimously in the Spring of 2022. In this memorandum, the Commission cites these now foundational commitments to biodiversity to focus on the need for the City to develop a land use plan in the long term and, in the short term, a biological inventory followed by an invasive species management plan. Rapid environmental changes make land management ever more critical to species preservation.*

Park planning must consider park location, and place in the larger ecosystem. Our City and parks are part of the amazingly rich biodiversity and ecology of Southern Illinois. Carbondale is surrounded by half a million acres of public land, located 15 miles from the largest river in North America and the Mississippi Flyway. Twice yearly millions of migratory birds pass over Jackson County, many stopping to rest or breed at Evergreen Park.

The Sustainability Action Plan includes the following goal:

“Include all City-owned lands, natural spaces and waters under a plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions, maximizes community benefits, and sustains biodiversity and ecosystem functions.” (Focus Area 2: Nature, Goal #2)

Objective #1 of Goal #2 affirms that protections for biodiversity and ecosystem functions are to be incorporated in all land use plans, public and private.

“Incorporate sustainability goals in all land use plans.” (Focus Area 2: Nature, Goal #2, Objective #1)

The first two actions under that first objective specify the measures whereby this objective for landscaping on both public and private land is to be met:

1. *"Develop a resilient land use plan that incorporates goals in this plan where applicable and also explore and implement methods to measure carbon emissions, and improve community benefits, and biodiversity and ecosystem functions"* (Focus Area 2: Nature, Goal #2, Objective 1, Action 1)
2. *"Reduce acreage that requires mowing; increase number and variety of native species, including pollinator plants and tree species that provide habitat for wildlife"* (Focus Area 2: Nature, Goal #2, Objective 1, Action 2)

Moreover, the commitment to implement these goals and actions for protecting biodiversity and pollinator supportive landscapes was reaffirmed in March 2023 with City Council's approval of the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, by which the City of Carbondale

"Commits to conducting review and revision of city code to encourage pollinator-supportive landscape on public and private land within Carbondale city limits."

"Commits to evaluating and correcting operations and landscape maintenance practices that could have unintended and detrimental effects on pollinator species."
(<https://www.explorecarbondale.com/899/The-Mayors-Monarch-Pledge>)

In August, 2023, when City employees sprayed pollinator habitat, they were performing their jobs as directed. City staff do an excellent job day to day: mowing, trimming, picking up litter, and various other maintenance work. But spraying the milkweed and other native plants that had volunteered along the ditch near the Splash Park had "unintended and detrimental effects on pollinator species" contrary to the Pollinator Pledge to "evaluate and correct operations and landscape practices that are causing this harm." We can't protect resources unless we know what and where they are. And that requires a biological inventory followed by education and training of the relevant City staff. Then we can protect valuable natural resources-including plants that support pollinator species. (See January 9, 2024, City Council minutes, citizen comments from L. Toussaint.)

Without a resilient land use plan that incorporates the City's commitments to support biodiversity, the City will continue to lose valuable biodiverse habitat. That is what happened in December 2023, when the City removed dozens of native trees and shrubs at Evergreen Park. These landscape changes severely impact populations of birds and other wildlife in Evergreen Park. The trees and shrubs were destroyed because they were not identified or their ecological value was not recognized,

Establishing a responsible land use plan, one that supports corrective action, requires a baseline inventory of plants and animals living and visiting Carbondale Parks, including invasive species that threaten ecosystem health. Ideally, this inventory would be included in the preparation of the Park Master Plan being developed by Hutchison Solutions. If the contract cannot be amended to include an inventory, the City and Park District should initiate a new contract with a qualified individual or agency who can perform that inventory. It is our understanding that there are ongoing discussions with biologist(s) regarding surveys at all City-owned properties.

Once a baseline inventory is completed (either by a contractor added to the Hutchinson Solutions contract or contracted by the City and Park District), the next step in establishing a land use plan would address the growing threat of invasive species and involve necessary maintenance to protect native species. This would require the City's engaging an ecological restoration contractor to provide invasive plant management and initiate ecological restoration. After a management plan is implemented, City staff could be trained to continue restoration work on all City property.

The Sustainability Commission, according to the bylaws of our commission, is issuing this memorandum as a recommendation to the City Council of Carbondale.

In order to implement the Sustainability Action Plan and the commitments in the Mayors Monarch Pledge, and to ensure the implementation of pollinator supportive landscaping and all the benefits to the health of our community and wildlife that depend on such biodiverse landscapes, the City of Carbondale Sustainability Commission urges the City to take the following steps:

- 1) Ensure the completion of a baseline inventory (by a contractor with Hutchison Solutions or City or City and Park District); and
 - 2) Establish a city-wide invasive species management plan by contracting services to manage invasives and train City staff.
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*NB: Some of the text in this memorandum was provided by Laurel Toussaint and presented at meetings of the City Council and Sustainability Commission. Her contributions are recognized, albeit without quotation marks.