

October 12, 2016

Call to Order: 5:32 pm

Roll Call:

Clark Sorensen—three years of service
Bob Austen—five years of service
Jacqui Bauer—five years of service
Rhonda Baird—9 months of service
Dave Harstad—9 months of service
Andrew Guenther—eighteen months of service
Peter Iversen—two years of service
Megan Darnley

Community Presentation: Matt Pierce:

- State House Environmental Affairs Committee—had no issues assigned to it during the past session, therefore it did not meet
- “No More Strict Than”—Sen. Walkin (Also chair of the environmental committee in the House) presented this ALEC bill, vehicle for corporate America to get model legislation in. Says IDEM can’t adopt a rule more strict than an EPA or Federal Law. People were not excited about this on the State House side. The State Senate side modified it to say that IDEM couldn’t adopt something stricter until the next legislative session concluded. Gov. Pence vetoed this. He put a moratorium on new rules, with some exceptions for emergencies. IDEM believes this will tie their hands. The question is whether the legislature will try to override the veto. Our 1852 constitution only requires a weak majority to override the veto. If we have a democratic governor, the legislature may try to override it if they believe the governor will be more involved with environmental issues.
- Environmental Affairs committee—is mostly about conservancy districts and new sewage considerations. Up in the Ft. Wayne area septic systems are failing. Sewage treatment plants are being created—but people are upset about being mandated to pay. The rural systems do not have enough customers to pay for the bonds. Lake County—solid waste districts are upset about the way money is flowing around these districts. After Jan. 2017 counties do not have to stay in the SWD. Allen County thought they could run more effective recycling programs than a single entity. That might be the case for them. These were created in the 1990’s to keep trash from out of state coming in. Counties will be able to make their own decisions.
- Rep. Matt Pierce also is on the Utilities Committee. Energy policy—IRC adopted some energy efficiency programs that were pretty good. The large utilities didn’t want the regulation—arguing they were geared to be the most efficient. However, they are more focused on quarterly returns for shareholders. The bill basically began to be voluntary—but it was just eliminated altogether. There is supposed to be a new program coming together—according to the utility commission. Now the utilities get to come up

with their own plan. There's no third party or administrative oversight. Distributed energy and net-metering—there was a move to put a cap on how much could be credited. The utilities are trying to make their current model work as long as possible. Generation plus storage in residences raises a lot of questions about the grid and maintaining the grid. Even though the bill passed out of committee, there were several complaints and the speaker of the house took it off the agenda. The question is will there be further attacks on net metering after the elections.

- Clean Power Plan—the governor and attorney general are ready to sue EPA, but IDEM might be secretly preparing for this because there are tight timelines for compliance.
- While the state doesn't want legislation that is more progressive than federal legislation, they also don't want communities to pass progressive legislation—so that changed the approach to Home Rule. The microbead ban was something consumers wanted and also industry wasn't opposed to it. There was also very good information from scientists documenting the effects—and it pointed to something that the legislators did that was “environmental.” Also, Sen. Bauer was able to show leadership. The Governor's office and who is appointed at IDEM and the message sent is really helpful for shaping legislation.

Protocol for introducing legislation:

Find a legislator to sponsor the legislation. It goes to a team to be drafted in legal language. Deadline for bill draft language is the first week of December. The chairs of the committee set the agenda for their committee based on the legislation assigned to the committee. Then it passes out of the committee. Once the session ends, everything starts from scratch. The earliest day is organization day two weeks after election day (November 22).

At the county level—it would be good to work on promoting renewable energy as a way to address climate change. That's where the focus needs to be. At the county, what programs could be put in place? The PACE program—local govt. raises money through bonding. Then repayment comes through the tax bill. Then it would be treated by the property taxes. The federal loan guarantee people didn't like it, because of defaults. That shut down the whole thing. There was some accommodation to this. A state program has been suggested, but it hasn't gotten much traction. There has been push-back from commercial lenders. It would be good to watch net-metering and push solar forward. Climate change is still questioned by legislators—so it's hard to get them fired up about it. Other representatives are concerned about coal interests.

Logging in State Forests—there has long been concern about the ramping up of logging on state forests. There have been clear-cutting that has been happening. A lot of timber is being sold at less than market value. The Indiana Forest Alliance is getting some more traction through grant and volunteer support. There are some Republicans that are beginning to come around and question this. Holcomb is happy with the status quo and Gregg thinks it is too much.

Coal-gasification plant—Citizens Action Coalition and Duke have come to some sort of agreement that saves money for the rate-payer. It's been a bit of a boondoggle. There has been

some fine-tuning to reach for some measure of efficiency. Edwardsport has calmed down for the moment—but it bears watching.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Bob Auston

Seconded: Andrew Guenther

Election for Secretary:

Peter Iversen—nominated Rhonda Baird as Secretary. She was confirmed unanimously.

Monroe County Energy Challenge:

Jacqui update: They are doing well. They kicked off Project Porchlight. They've purchased 1500 LED bulbs and they are being distributed through local hardware stores. Encouraging people to take advantage of the free assessments.

Yesterday there was a meeting to discuss what comes next: there was consensus to keep moving even and after Georgetown. There will be no updates until after 2017 from Georgetown. The data is tough to keep updating properly—so they will crunch the final numbers. This commission should keep watch because there might be aspects we might want to adopt. The core organizers would welcome that. Jacqui Demler (?) could step in. That might be a good thing for the community presentation next meeting.

Dave Parsons was officially recognized by the County Commissioners. You can find it on CATS. The commissioners shook his hand and asked him to speak--it was a wonderful moment.

New Business:

Peter read the founding document and our annual report is due January 31. We will start to work on that as a group.

Working Groups:

Andrew, as Vice Chair, will act as an ex-officio member on each of the working groups

1. Thompson Property and Trillium (Rhonda Baird)
 - a. Trillium met and agreed to work on a project which would be a demonstration to the community and identified 12 acres to begin designing. The proposal will be brought to the committee before going to the commission. Likely that will be in late winter.
2. Prioritizing County Greening Projects (Clark Sorenson, Megan Darnley)
 - a. Clark contacted Julie Thomas and Megan also has an update on the energy fund. It is not appropriated at this point. It needs approval and appropriation – which will take a minimum of three weeks to get things rolling.

3. Green Buildings (Dave Harstad)

a. The planning department is working with a consultant (MKSK?) to re-write the zoning code. They've created a framework. That document should be drafted within the next year. It's a good time to get involved. The feedback they got from elected officials and community members is that sustainability is an important part of that document. We should be working with them. Jacqui and Dave will work on some congruent things with the city.

Members of the commission were asked to sign up for a working group if they were not currently involved with one.

Sustainability Tip:

--Always boil water with the lid on.

--October and November are the best times of year to plant perennials.

--Be more informed.

Reports from Represented Organizations

--City of Bloomington: There is a new initiative to put solar on city hall and the police department. There is a possibility for citizens to get involved in the buy in for the solar panels at a cheaper price. There's also a contract out for energy management for the city.

Monroe County Soil and Water: The representative does not have Wednesday nights open, and they are looking for a board member to come.

Monroe County Govt. --not present.

Next meeting:

November 9, 2016, 5:30 pm. Room 106A at the Shower's Complex.