



# 2020-2021

## SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

August 2020-May 2021

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Office of Planning

May 19, 2021



## Purpose of Annual Report:

- It's called for in the City Code, 2-150.63:  
  
*(D) ...The Commission shall hold, at a minimum, one public meeting in April, May, or June each year to review its accomplishments and ideas during that fiscal year and preceding years, and shall present a summary of its events and accomplishments to the City Council each year in June or July. At the public meeting, members of the community shall be permitted to speak about and showcase issues pertaining to sustainability during a public comment period.*
- It's an opportunity to increase information-sharing between staff, administration, boards, commissions and City Council.
- Allows for anticipation of upcoming issues and priorities, in order to prepare and budget, if necessary

## Creation:

Division 14 of Article III Boards and Commission Generally of Chapter 2 Administration of the City's Code of Ordinances.

## Membership:

The Sustainability Commission shall consist of five (5) voting members appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the City Council, who shall serve three (3) year terms.

Membership		
Commissioner	Original Appointment Date	Current Term Expires
Nathan Inks	June 6, 2017	June 6, 2021
Mark Graf	June 7, 2016	June 30, 2023
Jonathon Matthews	June 19, 2007	June 30, 2023
Raelanda Robinson	June 17, 2008	June 6, 2022
Vacant	January 20, 1998	June 30, 2022
Ashley Frank		Resigned
Chris McLeod		Liaison
Allison Bittner		Liaison



## Purpose:

Pursuant to its City Charter authority to establish advisory boards and commissions, the City Council has determined that establishing a sustainability commission for the following purposes will serve and support the city's sustainability responsibilities and be beneficial for the City of Sterling Heights:

- (1) To advise and make recommendations to the City Council and City Manager on the city's long-range goals, policies, and programs on all matters pertaining to sustainability, including matters referred to the Commission for study as well as matters initiated by the Commission of its own accord;
- (2) To develop and advise the City Council on implementation of community-wide strategies regarding waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable growth and development;
- (3) To create a model of sustainability through efforts to advocate, educate, and promote the social, economic, and environmental health of the community, now and into the future;
- (4) To develop and implement public recognition programs promoting individual property and neighborhood level sustainability projects;
- (5) To develop educational materials and/or public campaigns regarding litter reduction, recycling, and sustainable yard and property enhancements;
- (6) To work in collaboration with city staff, officials, and existing city nonprofit partners to determine annual city and community priorities, projects, and resources relative to sustainability issues that improve the environment, save the city money, or reduce the city's carbon footprint;
- (7) To assist city staff with the engagement of the city's residents and businesses in sustainability initiatives;
- (8) To broaden the lens and scope of energy and environmental needs in the future such as wind, solar, clean air, water, and improving infrastructure;
- (9) To study and propose climate action planning, reduction of municipal energy consumption, increasing alternative energy use, and encouraging residential cultural change to embrace individual actions to help the city attain its long-term sustainability goals;
- (10) To recognize natural resources as chief assets of the city and encourage responsible stewardship of these assets;
- (11) To collaborate with state, county, and local officials, businesses, community organizations, developers, residents, educational agencies, and experts to complete studies, develop educational programs, establish volunteer programs, and identify grants;
- (12) To research initiatives outside of the city to determine how other communities are addressing sustainability;
- (13) To review the city's current plans and policies, and assist with planning, implementation, community engagement, goal setting, and progress monitoring;
- (14) To provide access for comment and input from residents and businesses in the city;



- (15) To offer recommendations for policy updates and revisions;
- (16) To educate and inform residents and facilitate sustainable practices that enable smart choices for the city and its residents which lead to a reduction of the city's carbon footprint while promoting, through education, outreach, and awareness efforts, the conservation of energy, water, and fuel; improvement of air, climate, and water quality; investment in renewable energy; reduction of waste; and protecting and restoring the community's natural resources;
- (17) To prioritize sustainability policies;
- (18) To create a Sustainability Plan by the end of its first year of existence, and thereafter update and maintain a three-year sustainability plan that outlines specific areas for City Council to study and the Commission's recommendations relating to those areas; and
- (19) To advise the City Council on any other issues and best practices related to sustainability as deemed appropriate by the Commission

### Challenges in 2020:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes in 2020, including the operations of the Sustainability Commission. The pandemic brought many changes from what should have been from the “normal” inaugural meetings of the Sustainability Commission, including online “zoom” meetings starting in August 2020. These meetings required coordination with the Office of Planning, Sustainability Commission, and presenters. Zoom meetings have been conducted since, which have proven to be successful, as business has contained to be conducted in a streamlined manner, despite not meeting in person.



## Meetings

August 2020				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Introductions
	Members gave a brief introduction of themselves and their backgrounds.			
			Action: No Action Necessary	
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Determination of Meeting Dates
	Discussion took place regarding meeting dates and the need to wait for the final members to be present.			
			Action: No Action Necessary	
3	Agenda Item	3	Title	Goals/Projects for 2020
	Discussion took place in general about the role of the Sustainability Commission and how the Sustainability Commission related to other boards/commissions and the City Council in general.			
			Action: No action necessary	
September 2020				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Election of Officers
	The Commission held the election of officers, officers included Nathan Inks as chairperson, Mark Graf as vice chairperson, and Ashley Frank as secretary.			
			Action: Approved	
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Adoption of Meeting Dates
	The Commission discussed having regular meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 6pm and conducting them via zoom until COVID restrictions allowed otherwise.			
			Action: Approved	
3	Agenda Item	3	Title	Sustainability Plan Overview
	Planner McLeod provided an overview of the plan and the history of the Plan to this point. The Commission members indicated they would review one (1) section (or more) each month to be completed by May 2021.			
			Action: No Action Necessary	
4	Agenda Item	4	Title	Urban Forestry Initiative
	Planner McLeod provided an overview of the City's work with the Green Macomb group and the future review of the Tree Preservation Ordinance. The Planner also noted the City is working with Macomb County for a potential grant.			
			Action: No Action Necessary	
October 2020				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Curbside Recycling Review
	DPW Director Mike Moore presented the status of recycling in the City and the current proposal to provide curbside recycling to individual homes. Discussion took place regarding bidding, current contracts, and the need to ask this question via a survey.			
			Action: No Action was Taken	
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Sustainability Plan Review Sections 2
	Commission members reviewed Section 2 of the draft Plan and how it should be structured. Discussions took place regarding Tree City USA, an environmental day, natural assets, and how environmental information should be mapped and made available.			
			Action: No Action Necessary	





## November 2020

1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Curbside Recycling Review and Recommendation
	Planner McLeod provided an update on behalf of the DPW Director regarding the additional information requested by the Commission at the October meeting. This included how the program would be paid for, tax caps, cost scenarios, Solid Waste Commission review of the subject, and education on the issue			
	Action: Recommendation to pursue curbside recycling and encouragement of educational funding			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Sustainability Plan Review Sections 3
	The Commission reviewed the sustainable mobility section of the Plan. Discussion included equitable access for sidewalks and modes of transportation, pedestrian safety, nonmotorized transportation lanes, alternative means of transportation, youth advisory board input, and how land use concepts impact transportation needs.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			

## December 2020

1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Tree Preservation Ordinance Amendment Review
	Planner McLeod provided an overview of the current Tree Preservation requirements versus the proposed. The Commission discussed why certain trees were exempted, the cost of replacement trees, the City's woodland map, the percentage of tree preservation and if it could be higher, etc. Discussion took place in regards to other community's ordinances, if the ordinance protected overall tree canopy, and what action the City Council was seeking.			
	Action: No Action Taken			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Sustainability Plan Review Sections 4
	The Commission discussed brownfield redevelopment, underground storage tanks, community open and green space, green infrastructure and green energy ordinances.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
3	The Commission discussed the potential of having a social media platform where information could be disseminated from.			

## January 2021

1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Tree Preservation Ordinance Amendment Review and Recommendation
	Planner McLeod discussed the updated changes to the Ordinance as requested by the Commission, including definition of grubbing tree size, list of acceptable trees based on Green Macomb, requiring native species, and requiring site inspection one (1) year after sign off to ensure trees remain in viable condition. The Commission discussed need for a woodland map, the fee in lieu.			
	Action: Motion to Recommend Approval of the Tree Preservation Ordinance Amendments Subject too.			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Sustainability Plan Review Sections 5, 6 and Introduction
	Discussion took place regarding the City's ability to track changes, such as paper usage. The Commission also discussed how recommendations that come out of the Sustainability Commission are followed through on such as curbside recycling that was previously before the Commission. The Commission also discussed changes to Section 6 of the draft Plan.			
	Action: No action necessary			
3	Discussion also took place regarding the tree grant via the country for tree inventory being denied but that the City was moving forward with the program anyway.			



## February 2021 - cancelled

## March 2021

1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Sustainability Plan Re-Review Sections 1-3
	The Sustainability Commission reviewed Sections 1-3 of the draft Sustainability Plan and how the plan may ultimately be formatted. Discussion took place in regards to the rating indicators as to high, medium and low priority and the need for clear definitions of the rating system. Finally, members discussed sustainable mobility and Mound Road and the Iron Belle Trail.			
	Action: No Action Taken			
2	Sustainability Commission members discussed frequency of meetings, the need for an annual report and the how in person meetings would take place.			

## April 2021

1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Sustainability Plan Re-Review Section 4-6
	The Commission reviewed final draft edits from previous reviews of the draft of these sections, discussed sewer line life expectancy, having an engineering representative present in the future, sustainable housing and HUD definitions, etc.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Re-review of Section 1-3
	The Commission discussed the UN goals and the priority levels of action items and the definitions of high, medium and low priority action items.			
	Action:			