

**Environmental Stewardship Commission Meeting**  
**April 14, 2021**

In Attendance: Chris Babb (Chair), Lauren Albarella, Sarah Flem, Dennis Healy, Katie Lawrence, Katie Stock, Patrick Walker

City Staff: Terry Huxel (Public Works Director)

City Council Representative: Sarah Stankorb Taylor

Absent: Chris Pagan

**Approval of March 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Minutes were approved at 8:03 pm with no changes

**Retirement of Terry Huxel**

Public Works director Terry Huxel is retiring May 7. ESC thanked Mr. Huxel for his years of dedication to the commission. He has been staff liaison since the commission was the “Solid Waste Commission.” He will be greatly missed. Michael Lippert will be the new staff representative until a new Public Works director is in place.

**Upcoming Urban Forestry/ESC volunteer events**

Urban Forestry and Beautification Commission is planning a seed planting event at Stearns Woods April 17. ESC is invited to help, as the two commissions have been volunteering together (to limit numbers) over the course of the pandemic. Likewise, rain garden maintenance will be done by UFBC and ESC (plus families) May 8, 9-11 am to help make sure it can work effectively to control stormwater. Last time it didn't take much more than an hour to complete the cleanup.

**Upcycle Day**

The group talked through logistics for the upcoming Upcycle Day, April 16. Ms. Albarella gave an update on volunteers, noting five to six people had signed up for each time slot. Mr. Healy asked what periods of the day were busiest last year, and Ms. Stankorb Taylor noted the 4-6 p.m. period after school was busiest. Mr. Walker noted that Junk King and Eco Development would each have two staff members on hand to help direct people at drop-off. So long as we have enough people to help triage batteries and paint cans, we should be covered for the event. What would be helpful is more volunteers to help collect reusable items from the street. Mr. Walker said he would be at the event site, Oak Park, early to make sure everyone was in place and comfortable but would also be available to do pickups if help is needed. Ms. Flem's husband is also available to help make runs on Friday.

Mr. Healy asked if any guidelines would be available for volunteers. Ms. Stankorb Taylor offered to ask Ms. Martin in the city office to print extra copies of what is being accepted for the volunteers to have on hand. Mr. Babb noted that volunteers will need to be able to keep tabs on what we are *not* able to accept. All agreed that we want volunteers to be happy with their experience. Mr. Healy noted though that residents need to be responsible for their stuff—no bringing hazardous materials. We can't ask volunteers to handle anything like that. The group agreed. Ms. Albarella pointed out that the big message for volunteers should be that if we are not accepting an item, they can be empowered to show residents how to look up alternative drop-off locations via Hamilton County Recycling's website (to take to those locations instead), and she will create bullet points for the volunteers.

Mr. Huxel noted that his staff will need to leave by 4 pm, so volunteers need to secure whatever paint cans they cannot move to the city building lot by that time—as everything needs to be cleaned up at the end of the event to free up the lots for soccer in the morning Saturday. Mr. Walker explained he would load up whatever was left at the end of the day in his truck. Matthew 25 will pick up the cans on Monday from behind the city building.

Mr. Huxel noted he would drop off cones in the morning but will not have signage.

Ms. Stankorb Taylor indicated that Acting City Manager Rusty Herzog had helped create signs upon her request and would have them ready.

Ms. Lawrence will collect for Terracycle and provide weights. Mr. Walker will provide weights for the batteries.

Ms. Flem asked if anyone is taking pill bottles; Matthew 25 will but labels must be removed, and we cannot take them for this event. Pets in Need will take them too if someone needs an alternative.

### **Freebox Free-for-All**

Ms. Stankorb Taylor noted that due to rain the Freebox Free-For-All weekend seemed less busy than the prior event, especially on Saturday. It's impossible to know the tonnage of what was shared/saved, but an informal survey of the group showed:

- 34 people were able to freebox between 0-5 items
- 26 people freeboxed 6-12 items
- 4 people freeboxed between 13-24 items
- 4 people freeboxed between 25-35 items
- 7 people more than 36 items

In terms of how people utilized the online event:

- 14 people were posting within the event and in Freebox
- 11 people just stuck with traditional Freebox and skipped the Free-For-All
- 30 decided not to participate due to the weather but did afterward or later in the week before Junk Day

Some suggestions for next time include a rain date; asking anyone posting to be *very* clear about what items are up for grabs and which aren't; and to keep a civil tone if something is accidentally taken.

### **Community waste education**

Mr. Babb began a discussion of the magnet/mailer that ESC has been working toward for a few months. The estimate for print, postage and mailing came back around \$4,200, which costs more than the \$2,500 ESC had hoped to do it for (using as a benchmark the amount saved within the Public Works budget by ESC by the last Upcycle Day).

The group discussed passing them out by hand to save money on postage or doing some of that combined with handing them out at the Fall Festival, assuming that event will be allowed this year.

Mr. Healy and Ms. Flem both discussed how perhaps the savings generated between both Upcycle Days could go toward this educational piece, as city council tasked ESC with educating the community on waste reduction overall, and with an eye toward eventually transitioning away from Junk Day. Mr. Huxel suggested that perhaps during the budget process ESC should be talking with city staff about a line item in the Public Works budget for ESC—say, for example, \$8,000 per year—to put toward education and waste reduction for the community. This would mean coming up with an itemized proposal.

Over the next few months, members agreed, they would develop such a budget proposal. In that scenario, the educational magnet would be the first step in a longer plan of items ESC could suggest.

Ms. Stankorb Taylor suggested also showing all the ways ESC's various projects over recent years have been saving the city money. Although council may have heard about these projects here and again, seeing it all written out could help clarify how much the commission's efforts would offset what they are asking for (and then, possibly help save the city even more money in addition to reducing waste). For example, Mr. Walker noted the way Upcycle Day is structured, the city does not have to pay anyone to divert the tons of waste residents drop off directly with our partners, whereas Rumpke bills for all the time it takes to do Junk Day pickups. Mr. Huxel pointed out that if the budget is justified and goes toward the master plan goals, that would be key.

Mr. Walker asked if a smaller group of members (less than quorum) should meet to help make the timeline for developing that budget faster.

Mr. Babb suggested putting it on the agenda for May to set priorities.

Ms. Stankorb Taylor pointed out that with Tax Day pushed until May it is still a little unclear whether income tax receipts would come in as budgeted this year, or more or less, so it might make sense to give it a little time as ESC comes up with its budget proposal—and wait to see how much the city sees from the American Rescue Plan.

Ms. Flem asked if there are grants available, perhaps through the EPA to help with things like funding the magnets.

Ms. Stankorb Taylor noted the county had reached out asking the city to apply for their grant again but those grants are more project based, with quantifiable deliverables (*e.g.*, the grant earned to fund the community compost bin supplies). Mr. Babb noted some of it depends on how much time and energy ESC has available to put into researching grants.

Mr. Babb also noted that due to the city's high recycling rate, it may be difficult to show where there is room for improvement, so the group has its work cut out for it, but will come back next month to talk about what to prioritize.

### **Meeting Ended**

Members voted to end the meeting at 8:07 p.m. ESC's next meeting will be May 12, 2021 at 7 p.m.