



CITY OF NOVI
Environmental Sustainability Committee Meeting
January 15, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room | Novi Civic Center | 45175 Ten Mile Road
(248) 347-0445

CALL TO ORDER: 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Council Members Gurumurthy, Heintz, and Smith

STAFF LIAISON: Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Herczeg, Director of Public Works
Katherine Oppermann, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Gurumurthy, Seconded: Heintz; Approved 3:0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 2, 2024 Minutes

Motion: Gurumurthy, Seconded: Heintz; Approved 3:0

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

MATTERS FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Sustainability Plan Development - Mark Koskinen, AECOM
Katrina Lewis, AECOM
Natalie Kolliq, AECOM
Deanna Weber, AECOM

Mr. Koskinen, of AECOM, thanked the Committee for the meeting and extending the opportunity for AECOM to speak to them. He noted that they have worked a great deal with Mr. Herczeg and the Public Works team. He and the other AECOM representatives will be sharing what they can potentially do for the City of Novi based on what they've done with other communities regarding Environmental Action Plans (EAPs).

They then went through the slides they had prepared for the Committee noting that the current Novi Environmental Sustainability Committee's pillars/goals/etc. are all the sorts of holistic approaches that AECOM has lead projects on. They have done significant work both in the State of Michigan and across the United States in a variety of community types, small towns to large cities and counties. Of potential interest to Novi would be the work they have done with Oakland County and the

City of Detroit. They noted that Detroit had an especially robust public outreach process. Chairperson Smith was curious about Detroit's process and how they managed to get so many citizens to respond and take part. Ms. Lewis indicated that they had hired approximately 15 individuals to work as sustainability ambassadors in the community, assisting with meeting people and engaging with them where they were to get their input.

They illustrated the planning process, in simplest words, could be summarized as: 1. Where are you, 2. Where do you want to go, 3. What are the opportunities, and 4. How to get there. Additionally, AECOM has several existing tools and resources that they have developed or have at their disposal to help with planning, financing, GIS models and more as related to an EAP.

Chairperson Smith thanked AECOM for the excellent presentation. He noted that the Committee has had challenges in narrowing their scope to something reasonably achievable in their lifetimes. Councilmember Gurumurthy agreed and stated that she appreciated seeing the different case studies from AECOM's portfolio. With so many ideas, how did AECOM help the other communities narrow down their scope? Ms. Weber said that Novi has done a lot of work already. AECOM would start with what we already have (the four key pillars) and work on what should be narrowed or expanded, and where different ideas fit in. Ms. Weber added that they would build a framework/criterion to stress test and determine presiding of the actions within the current means (time, staff, finances) of the City.

Councilmember Heintz acknowledged AECOM's experience in the field. He asked how they would recommend "selling" the process of creating an EAP to other Councilmembers and the Novi residents. Is there a "purchase" message? Ms. Lewis said that it depends on the area/populace, their politics, point of view, established habits related to environmental actions, etc. She said that the necessity of environmental stewardship, as well as the positive impact and productivity that it can give to City departments and the community. She also suggested showing examples of positive outcomes from other areas around the state and country who have successfully completed the work.

Councilmember Gurumurthy asked, with respect to timing, what would be the typical length of the process? Ms. Lewis stated that there is a range, anything from 9-months to 2-years. The level of community outreach is a large determiner of the process length. Ms. Weber said that a 12-month process is probably the "sweet spot" where the consultant firm would work with staff and council to get necessary signoffs along the way.

Ms. Mahoney asked if any of the other communities AECOM has worked with had been at the very beginning of the process of developing a program, with no dedicated staff or department for environmental sustainability? Ms. Lewis said that yes, they've worked with several who were at the very beginning of their sustainability journey. Ms. Kollig agreed and noted that, nearby, Oakland County had not yet appointed any of their dedicated sustainability staff when AECOM started working with them. They could certainly advise on recommended staffing

and organizational needs and strategies for sustaining the sustainability efforts even with limited resources.

Councilmember Gurumurthy asked what the Committees (like the Novi Environmental Sustainability Committee) looked like in the other communities AECOM has worked with. Ms. Lewis said that it varied, in some it was entirely an internal (staff) effort where others had Council engagement or specific committees. Ms. Weber pointed out that there was also often the creation of focus groups and a robust process of alignment. Ms. Kollig pointed out that, regardless of committee makeup, knowing the specific decision-making protocol, and flow of approvals is very important. Nail down channels and know where support is for said approvals as well.

Councilmember asked for a range of cost and Ms. Lewis said that it typically falls in a range from 250 – 750,000 depending on the scale and scope. Novi would likely be somewhere in the middle based on what has been established so far. As with the time duration of the process, the level of public engagement is the primary point where it can become more costly.

Councilmember Gurumurthy asked what are some challenges that AECOM has encountered in the process of plan creation in other communities? Ms. Kollig said that misalignment and lack of documentation of scope is a main one. Tracking their process usually mitigates this but misalignment always creates issues both upstream and downstream. Ms. Weber agreed regarding misalignment and added understanding data gaps. It is important to make sure all of the City Council is onboard early and that there is a clear understanding of expectations on the deliverable. Also ensuring that there is the necessary time and briefings for time.

Chairperson Smith thinks that the most valuable thing if they chose to work with AECOM would be the efficiency and avoidance of “rabbit holes.” He also thinks that residents should be brought on to help with the longevity of the program.

Councilmember Heintz asked about some of their favorite results of the EAP process. Ms. Weber noted the banning of gas-powered lawn equipment in Ann Arbor as well as the transition to an electric fleet. She also likes to see the hiring of a sustainability or energy manager. Ms. Kollig said that she loves to see the human scale in the plans, things that really drive meaning and benefit for residents.

Ms. Lewis closed by saying it is important to be open to not knowing exactly how things will land. Sometimes something like improved data collection is what is truly needed and important not just the “shiny object” of the moment.

The Committee thanked AECOM and closed out of the zoom call. They also thanked Ms. Mahoney for arranging the meeting.

Mr. Herczeg commented that the 1-year time frame offered would be quite aggressive and that 2 years would probably be more realistic expectation. Ms. Mahoney agreed and said that she appreciated the weight placed on the need of foundations before pursuing the “cool new thing.” Councilmember Gurumurthy said

that in talking to vendors it impressed upon her where Novi currently is. She thinks that, at this stage, a simple, realistic plan is what is needed to start off. Councilmember Heintz asked if there would be any buy-in to hire a dedicated sustainability person for staff. Ms. Mahoney thinks that that direction would need to come from the Committee/Council. They should determine needs and collect data in order to present a "menu" of options to Council in a range of small/medium/large asks/options. It will be important to find out what the rest of Council's appetite is for that and other measures. She is certain that sustainability will be a component of the upcoming Novi 2025 Plan and that there is opportunity to fold some of this work into that larger Strategic Plan.

The Committee plans for a next step to ask AECOM for a scope. Or, as Mr. Herczeg referred to it a "scope of a scope". He noted that this is a process he goes through a lot. It is beneficial that AECOM can provide a number without an RFP and that it can quickly be taken to Council. It is also a boon that AECOM already knows the City and has a relationship with our staff.

2. Yard Waste & Hazardous Waste Collection Opportunities

Ms. Mahoney indicated that the Director of Public Works, Jeff Herczeg, had attended their meeting as an expert on the topic of waste collection and the existing measures for it within the City.

Mr. Herczeg explained that, in Novi, our current curbside pickup for yard waste is already two weeks longer than in previous contracts and that, typically, there has not been a demand for additional collection beyond that. Some communities have their own yard waste processing facility which gives them more options but it would be very difficult for Novi to extend their collection options further without a facility. We could potentially investigate working with Spurt Industries in Wixom, as it is a nominal fee. Something like that could be arranged either as a voucher program through the City or a simple direct pay by resident. In the further future, a high-level option would be for the City of Novi to have our own facility. Councilmember Gurumurthy asked if we had data regarding the usage of the Spurt facility by Novi Residents to which Mr. Herczeg replied that we did not currently have such data but can ask Spurt if such data is collected and available to us. Chairperson Smith inquired if Spurt was noted as an available resource to residents on our City webpage, Mr. Herczeg thinks that it is but could likely benefit from additional promotion. Councilmember Heintz spoke briefly about sustainable mulching options.

Mr. Herczeg noted that yard waste will be a hot topic in the near future. There is currently an argument that yard waste collection is doing harm in that more collection equals more trucks and the resulting exhaust on the roads. Some think that, as an alternative, there should be greater encouragement for mulching yard waste into lawns/gardens. Chairperson Smith asked if there would be an ability to charge per pound on waste which Mr. Herczeg replied by noting that there is not currently reliable tracking for weight of waste per resident. Chairperson Smith suggested that, if we only have total tonnage regarding waste from the City as a whole, we could consider publishing that waste tonnage on the City dashboard.

The conversation then turned to Hazardous Waste. Mr. Herczeg noted that the Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County (RRRASOC) has numbers on usage and that, based on those numbers, our current single day offered in Novi (alongside similar days in surrounding RRASOC member communities) for Hazardous Waste collection is sufficient.

Mr. Herczeg wrapped up the conversation by letting the Committee know that we should be prepared for a likely change/increase in the cost for yard waste, trash, and recycling hauling.

The Committee thanked Mr. Herczeg for his attendance and insights.

3. Prospective New Committee Members

Chairperson Smith said that the reason for adding new resident Committee members is for the longevity of efforts even should elections change the makeup of the current Councilmembers on the Committee. Councilmember Gurumurthy agreed but also noted that City staff would be the larger component and also, based on AECOM's presentation, are typically who such consultant firms are working with. She thinks that the Committee may need to wait for the planned Committee realignment that Mayor Fischer has mentioned. Ms. Mahoney agreed, saying that her interpretation, which was also discussed among staff, was that Mayor Fischer intended an overall realignment prior to any Committee adding new members. Councilmember Gurumurthy thinks that they will need to understand the current state of the Committees/Boards/Commissions including their purpose, alignment, and membership. Likewise, this Committee will need to clearly define what they are doing.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

The next meeting was planned to take place on Monday, February 3rd at 6:00p.m. In preparation for that and future meetings the Committee determined to think about the role(s) of the Committee going forward, and to start considering questions to be included on future FlashVote surveys to the community. Additionally, Councilmember Heintz will be working to engage speakers regarding food waste.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

ADJOURNMENT: 7:37 p.m.

Motion: Smith, Seconded: Heintz; Approved 3:0