

REGULAR MEETING OF THE DEARBORN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Dearborn, Michigan

June 18, 2025

This regular meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Chairman Saymuah.

Commissioners present: Asma Said, Mahmoud Tanana, Ramsey Saymuah, Paul Boyce, and Rene Ziaja (arrived 5:42pm)

Commissioners present via Google Meet: Machhadie “Micho” Assi

Commissioners absent: Batoull Haidar, Mohamed Dabaja, and Lamis Srour

Also present: Sara Elhasan (Public Health Advisor), Jeremy Brown (Assistant Corporation Counsel), Tim Hawkins (Director of Public Works), and a member of the public.

Chairman Saymuah announced Item II., Approval of April Minutes. Motion to approve minutes by Commissioner Boyce, seconded by Commissioner Tanana. All present in favor.

Chairman Saymuah then announced Item III., Update from Department of Public Health. Sara Elhasan provided updates of current happenings in the department. Interns working in the department are adding value. Launch of Rx Kids late summer/early fall, \$7500 for first 20 weeks, \$500/month for next six months. Air Quality monitoring with JustAir, reviewing data and its use from past year, looking at next steps, grants. Community Health assessment ongoing. 988 crisis hotline signs being posted; program assists with behavioral/mental health.

Commissioner Saymuah asked if there was any update on bulk solid storage and handling recommendation from last meeting, noting a recent moratorium on recycling centers and facilities that fall under recommendation. Ms Elhasan indicated moratorium allowing time to research code and facilities impacted. Chairman Saymuah asked if there was any follow-up work for environmental commission on the bulk solid storage and handling recommendation.

Commissioner Boyce asked when Industrial Greenbelt details would be made available to the commission and to the public.

Mayor Hammoud stated in the 2025 State of the City address that details of flood mitigation and basement flooding prevention would be made public in the next few months. Commissioner Boyce asked when this would be made available to the commission and the public. Mr. Hawkins, Director of Public Works indicated it could be done with videos and other communication, some details pending, e.g. outfalls that require EGLE approval. Flood mitigation and basement flooding is being worked on by OHM, Applied Science and in-house engineering as well as GLWA. Commissioner Boyce asked where the environmental

commission could help, e.g. recommending review of downspout disconnections and tree planting. Discussion on surface drainage issues and tree planting initiatives by the Director of Public Works. Public Works focusing on tree planting in parks and park easements. Trees can be ordered for free at dearborn.gov/FreeTrees. Director Hawkins noted trees are for public easements with consideration of location particulars by city arborist for final determination. Mr. Hawkins noted possible delivery of free tree curbside that residents could plant on private property under consideration by Legal. Commissioner Boyce noted downspout disconnection (~20-25 yrs ago) was ordered with little direction to residents; revisiting downspout disconnection could reduce flooding and improve surface drainage issues. Commissioner Boyce stated the ability of a resident to select a species is important and a hurdle for many planting on private property is transportation of 2" balled and burlaped trees. Commissioner Ziaja asked if downspout disconnection was on inspection checklist when selling a home. Motion to close discussion and move to next agenda item by Commissioner Boyce, seconded by Commissioner Tanana. All in favor.

Chairman Saymuah then announced Item IV., Old Business

Under Old Business Chairman Saymuah reintroduced Item IV.A., Work Plan. Commissioner Ziaja added to school workgroup on row (k). Motion to forward Work Plan to Mayor motioned by Commissioner Boyce, seconded by Commissioner Ziaja. All in favor.

Chairman Saymuah then announced Item IV.B., Recommendation - Tree Canopy.

In collaboration with the City Beautiful Commission, a 3-30-300 Tree Survey was piloted. Dearborn's tree canopy is estimated at 22%. Recommending a goal of at least 30% tree canopy citywide. Advise residents be able to order trees on the City website, by species, for either easement or private property. To achieve this goal, recommend an Urban Forestry Plan is developed. Further, recommend City partner with large landowners, e.g. Dearborn Schools, Ford Land, Wayne County, State of Michigan and other business owners in commercial districts, to protect and enhance our urban forest. Attached is a spreadsheet from Michigan DNR Urban and Community Forestry Program for species selection. Commissioner Boyce motioned to approve recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Ziaja. Discussion followed. Public comment: Ms. Afeefeh Seblini asked, Are Michigan native trees encouraged on the tree species list? Are they prioritized? Mr. Hawkins stated Public Works currently does not accept requests for species, but looks at location particulars such as: nearby utilities, what was removed, width of easement, nursery availability, road projects, Mayor would like all trees planted at least 1.7" diameter at breast height; which could be 6 month poplar or 5 year oak. Attached list from Michigan DNR Urban and Community Forestry, UCF Species Selection List, and contractor availability list from past two years similar, many michigan native species listed. Again, residents can order trees at dearborn.gov/FreeTrees. Commissioner Ziaja asked the name of the contractor cutting

down/trimming trees. (Mr. Hawkins indicated either CHOP or Wonsey.) After voice vote, all in favor of forwarding recommendation.

Chairman Saymuah moved to Item V., New Business

Chairman Saymuah introduced Item V.A., Recommendation - Recycling Rejection Rate. Currently 15% of the material collected curbside as recycling is rejected and is landfilled. In 2024, an estimated 1,500 tons (3 million pounds) of material that could have been recycled was instead sent to the landfill. Recommend residents and small businesses are reminded of recycling guidelines. Suggest direct mailing to each residence, small business, and landlord with a “RECYCLING ONLY” sticker to be applied to green bins. In mailing, list material that can be placed in green bins and what should not. Commissioner Boyce moved to approve recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Said. Discussion followed. Mr. Hawkins asked who puts sticker on bins? Commissioner Boyce suggested contractor could put sticker on bins, noting GFL had similar stickers. Remark made that next (solid waste collection) contract rates likely will be high. Suggested tipping bins and ticketing, even removing bins from offenders, noting one bad bin can spoil whole truckload of recyclables. Used cooking oil identified as problem waste; suggested use for old cooking and old motor oil as biodiesel. Commissioner Ziaja called for equal focus on what should NOT be placed in recycle bins. Mr. Hawkins noted example sticker does not address pizza boxes and related personal experience recycling pizza boxes. Commissioner Tanana inquired what’s next when sticker fades; Bins originally acquired with \$5M millage, 10 yr warranty. Mr. Hawkins emphasized education of the public effective through the schools, students bringing knowledge home. (Side discussion of larger recycling dumpsters, 3 yard) Commissioner Ziaja outlined other means to disseminate stickers besides mailing, e.g. distribution through DFNA. Commissioner Boyce modified motion to address pizza boxes and leave distribution of stickers to administration. Public comment: Ms Afeefeh Seblini suggested adding refrigerator magnet as part of campaign for recycling communication. Ms Seblini also suggested in mailing, have an opt-in mailing list for materials for residents to increase accessibility of communication. Ms. Seblini recommended testing sticker format for recycling communication. Before a vote, discussion of bringing back “Oops!” sticker. After voice vote, all in favor of forwarding recommendation.

Chairman Saymuah addressed Item V.B., Recommendation – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification.

Recommendation that the City of Dearborn applies for LEED for Cities and Communities: Existing Cities Certification. Commissioner Saymuah reviewed background information and why it makes sense for City of Dearborn to pursue this certification. Discussion followed. Mr. Hawkins commented train station is LEED Certified. Commissioner Saymuah noted Dearborn has qualifications, e.g. the Warren corridor is walkable. Two other cities nearby are certified, Ann Arbor and Royal Oak. LEED certification opens doors for green initiatives, improved

health, funding/grants. Commissioner Saymuah motioned to recommend Dearborn apply for LEED Certification for Cities and Communities: Existing Cities Certification, seconded by Commissioner Ziaja. All in favor.

Chairman Saymuah opened discussion on V.C., Food Waste - Discussion.

Landfills are projected to be full in 21 years. The largest contributor (30-40%) of landfilled solid waste is food waste. Make Food Not Waste and Food Scrap Composting are programs that could reduce Dearborn's landfilled waste. Commissioner Dabaja is lead on topic for commission and emailed asking commissioners to help with surveys, especially businesses. Department of Public Health has been working on proposal before commission created; Sara Elhasan related current happenings. Feedback on proposal due Monday, June 23. Commissioners invited to meeting July 1. When asked what commission could do, Ms. Elhasan indicated commissioners could help disseminate survey to residents/businesses and look at ordinance(s) on composting. (Mr. Hawkins noted rats need shelter, water, and food source.) Director Hawkins sees issue as transportation of food waste. Food waste management would be included in next solid waste contract in 2028. Proposal goal is diversion of 50% of food waste from landfills by 2029. This could be achieved by including compostable organic debris (not meat scraps) in with yard waste. The facility currently receiving Dearborn yard waste reportedly accepts commingled yard waste with other compostable organic debris (not meat scraps). Mr. Hawkins cautioned effluent from waste undesirable on city streets, would request no compacting of yard waste if commingled with food waste. Ms. Elhasan indicated there would be a pilot program. Commissioner Boyce highlighted proposal recommends Dearborn startup in-house composting facility, creating jobs and by-product of soil. Commissioner Ziaja mentioned possible capture of methane gas, zero emissions. Mr. Hawkins welcomed new technologies. Public comment: Afeefeh Seblini stated above ground tumblers (18" above grade) are ok. Ms. Seblini supported any programs to pay for and encourage users to utilize above-ground composts and solar cones to help reduce waste and achieve goal. Commissioner Saymuah motion to add food waste management to agenda next meeting, seconded by Commissioner Tanana. All in favor.

Chairman Saymuah asked for Other Business, Item VI.

Commissioner Tanana described recent school garden installation at McCullough-Unis by Home Depot at \$4,200 cost with installation by Home Depot employees. Such an event would be good opportunity for commission outreach. Commission's school workgroup looking at adopt-a-school garden program modeled on adopt-a-park program. Mr. Hawkins knew history of existing school gardens, program through University of Michigan, assisted by Public Works. Commissioner Tanana identified Salina Elementary garden as best maintained, periodic maintenance of other school gardens an outreach opportunity, have coffee, . . . Commissioner Ziaja asked where existing school gardens are. Commissioner Tanana emphasized school gardens are good meet & greet opportunity, he will advise next Home Depot school garden project. Public comment: Afeefah Seblini encouraged native pollination plants as part of garden

initiatives, liked adopt-a-garden, further advised food forests and perennials (vs annuals). Ms Seblini recommended educating community about maintaining and restoring pollinator populations, pointed out Friends of Rouge pollinator kits.

Discussion continued under Other Business. Commissioner Ziaja suggests looking into a table at Homecoming for outreach. Commissioner Saymuah liked idea of advertising what the Environmental Commission does. Commissioner Ziaja motioned to pursue table at Homecoming, seconded by Commissioner Tanana. All in favor.

Sara Elhasan wished to thank Batoull Haidar for her service on the Environmental Commission. Rene Ziaja accepted reappointment to commission and has sworn in. Machhadie “Micho” Assi intends to accept reappointment and swear in after returning from overseas; Council may need to revisit appointment and this position may be vacant short term. Claudia Walters has been appointed to the commission with term ending June 30, 2028.

Commissioner Saymuah motioned to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Tanana. All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31pm.