



Sustainability Committee
Monday, March 14, 2022
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Minutes

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/9603491554>

1. Introductions

- a. Attendees: Wendy Ogilvie, Dan Taber, Rachell Nagorsen, Senci Pace, Carlos Calderon, Jessie Schulte, Aaron Bodbyl-Mast, Carrie Rivette, Matt Soehnel, Jamie Vaughan, Annabelle Wilkinson, Greg Madura

2. Sustainable Agriculture

a. Urban Farming

- i. Urban Agriculture Committee: 13 board members, help establish zoning and composting policies, hoop house construction regulations, plantings in the rights-of-way, etc. Trying to be a resource hub for urban homeowners who want to compost, bee keep, have chickens, etc. Meetings are quarterly. Most ordinances in GR currently relate to residential, they are working on zoning and guidelines for commercial sized urban ag. – i.e Container Farm
- ii. Sustainability Department: Food waste reduction and climate action/adaptation, goats eating invasive species on college campus.
- iii. WMEAC received a USDA grant to work on urban farming in SE Grand Rapids. KCD received funding from NACo to continue working with Plainsong Farm to reinvigorate the West Michigan Growers Group. Jessie suggested that Carlos connect with Levi Gardner, formerly with Urban Roots for urban ag information. Reuse of gray water was discussed, Carrie mentioned that it's difficult to get around State plumbing codes for its use. Aaron brought up the Cuban Model (Havana) for ag systems.
- iv. **New! USDA Urban Agriculture Grants Program — Applications due July 20, 2022** — USDA Urban Agriculture Grants support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. Total funding available is around \$4 million for two types of projects: planning projects and implementation projects. Proposals are due July 30. Projects may range from \$50,000 to \$300,000 and do not require match. For more information, click [here](#).

- 1. If anyone is interested in pursuing this, let's talk about it!

b. RCPP Project Updates

- i. EQIP sign ups – Matt reported that 11 contracts were obligated for FY21. He is now finalizing the contracts and will provide the information about the practices when contracts are signed. Last year about \$266K was spent. FY22 has 10 applications so far. Right now they don't have any outstanding so another sign up this year is probably not necessary. The next sign up will be in January 2023.

- ii. Practices approved – Most funding is going towards cover crops in the watershed. Some funding for wildlife habitat improvements. They are installing an aquatic organism passage in northern Kent Co. in Solon Township by replacing a culvert with a fish friendly system. Kent Conservation District will be getting a No-till Drill and will possibly help with signups in the Rogue River Watershed.
 - iii. Funding remaining – about \$1M is still available for practices.
- 3. Watershed Resilience Plan
 - a. Wendy gave a summary of the EPA Equitable Community Building Tool and explained that Community workshops will be held in Buck Creek, Plaster Creek and Indian Mill Creek/Mill Creek Watersheds this spring to gain additional input to complete the subwatershed action plans.
 - b. Wendy encouraged everyone to check out the [Social Pinpoint](#) where you can input watershed specific changes or issues. Workshops will be held within the above mentioned subwatersheds. If anyone is willing to do outreach in the Mill Creek Watershed, contact Wendy.
- 4. [Lower Grand River Water Trail](#)
 - a. A Community Open House was held on February 23 at Seidman Center downtown. About 20 people showed up to give their thoughts and ideas for the water trail. Wendy will contact Aaron about scheduling an Open House in Ottawa County.
 - b. A link to the document for this committee to provide comments and suggestions is here: [Plan Documents](#).
 - c. Next steps - Possibly using [Social Pinpoint](#) for the Water Trail input. Possibly promoting it on Earth Day as an activity for people to contribute to the environment virtually.
- 5. Sustainable Watershed Funding Initiative
 - a. [Summary of Project](#) – Wendy provided a brief overview of the project. A more thorough review will be given at the next meeting.
 - b. Statewide MOU – Creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with other regions throughout the state to help this move forward.
 - c. Wendy will be reconvening the Communications Team and asking for willing partners to join.
- 6. Other business
 - a. The 19th Annual Grand River Forum will be held May 19, 2022, to May 22, 2022. Check back often for more details. <https://www.lgrow.org/spring-forum>
- 7. 2022 Meeting Schedule
 - a. Monday, June 13, 1:30-2:30
 - b. Monday, September 12, 1:30-2:30
 - c. Monday, December 12, 1:30-2:30
- 8. Adjourn