



Meeting Minutes

Sustainability Commission

Friday, January 12, 2024

8:00 AM

Development Services Room

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mike Cassity called the meeting to order at 8:03 AM.

Board Members Present: Mike Cassity, John Brevard, Christina Christiansen, Eric McElroy, Brian Stone, and Anna Timme

Board Members Absent: Alderman Beverly Burger, Keith Gordon, and Al Pramuk

Staff Members Present: Eric Conner, Trevor Hannon, Emily Wright, Mark Hilty, Tia Holden, Teresa Anderson, and Andrew Orr

Others: Joe Jensen, Ron Merville, Larry Kidwell, Neil Whitney, and Ned Dannenburg

CITIZEN COMMENTS (Open for citizens to be heard on any issue or concern, including those related to items on the agenda. Please submit a Speaker Card at the beginning of the meeting if you would like to address the Commission. If you would like to speak on an agenda item, the Chair will hold your comment until the public comment period associated with the item. As provided by law, the Commission shall make no decisions or consideration of action of citizen comments for items not on the agenda, except to refer the matter to the Planning Director/Staff for administrative consideration, or to a schedule the matter for consideration at a later date. Those addressing the Commission are requested to come to the microphone and identify themselves by name and address for the official record. The Chair may restrict the period for public comment, including the length of the public comment period, the number of individuals who can speak and the length of time each individual may speak. When time allows, the standard individual public comment time is two minutes.)

None.

Comments on agenda items may be made in person at city hall or by emailing planningintake@franklinton.gov before noon on the day of the meeting. Emailed comments will be provided to the Commission and included in the minutes, but not read aloud in their entirety during the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Consideration Of Approval Of Minutes

Sponsors:

A motion was made by Commissioner Brevard, seconded by Commissioner McElroy to Approve the Minutes from the November 10, 2023, meeting. The motion carried 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS

2. (8:00 - 8:05) Announcements and Introductions

Sponsors:

None.

3. (8:05 - 8:30) Future Options for 200 kW Solar Project

Sponsors:

Ron Merville with Energy Source Partners. He started by discussing the 200 kW Ground-Mounted Solar Array located at the Franklin wastewater plant. The purpose of his presentation was to ask the commission to amend the current contract. Energy Source Partners hopes to replace and improve the current solar panels to create more energy. Mr. Merville then discusses that the solar earnings to date are in excess of \$550,000.00 and the current contract with Tennessee Valley Authority ends in 2032. This solar project would help reduce the energy costs paid out from the City of Franklin to Middle Tennessee Electric. Energy Source Partners uses Fronius inverters and can see the energy produced by panels on a day-to-day basis. In the month of December, the current solar project produced 10.71 MWh. Mr. Merville then outlined two carbon reduction plans as follows:

1. Option 1 amends the existing agreement to allow the replacement of the existing 220 W solar panels with 480 W or higher solar panels. Benefits of this option include maintaining the existing TVA contract with the city, the city's share of the solar project remains the same, and additional solar power will be directed into the Motor Control Center at the wastewater plant.
2. Option 2 amends the existing agreement to improve the existing racking to accommodate as much solar power as possible at the existing site, approximately 800 kW. The benefits of this option are the same as option 1.

Mr. Merville stated his company would pay to move the solar panels. However, they still need somewhere to put them. He made suggestions, such as the roof of City Hall, sewage plants, and other locations that have high energy demands. His company has done a similar project before in Nashville at Music City Center. That site utilizes solar power for elevators, exhibit halls, and lighting signs.

Commissioner Stone asked if the inverters had been replaced yet.

Mr. Merville responded no, there are 15-year agreements, and they are in year 11. If his company puts in new panels, they will put in new inverters. They are cost absorbed.

Commissioner McElroy stated it seems the wastewater plant uses all the energy produced by the solar panels. However, it is currently set up to sell some energy to TVA while the remainder is used for the plant. He asked why all power produced from the panels does not go directly to the wastewater plant.

Mr. Merville responded that the technology was not available back when solar panels were originally installed. They have adjusted the equipment and have a stable connection with TVA.

Commissioner Stone asked if the premium from TVA had expired.

Mr. Merville said the premium expired after ten years, and 12 cents, and is another reason for going to the grid and allowing TVA to pay them 22 cents. Now they are paid around 11.5 cents.

Commissioner Stone asked if cash flows for both options had been examined.

Mr. Merville has not, but he imagines it would be quadrupled.

Commissioner Brevard asked if there would be an initial investment required.

Mr. Merville said no, his company would pay for everything. He is looking for an investment of time to answer questions to ensure things are done correctly.

Commissioner McElroy asked if time would need to be amended or a time extension.

Mr. Merville responded that he would ask for a few more years.

Mr. Hilty asked which option Mr. Merville recommends.

Mr. Merville responded he would choose option 2. If solar panels get more powerful in ten years, he will be back. He has not mentioned batteries, since standards are not where they need to be yet.

Commissioner Brevard asked if there had been any downsides to the city.

Mr. Merville answered no, there had not been any downsides yet and does not anticipate any.

Mr. Hilty asked if the current panels could be split up into various locations depending on space.

Mr. Merville said yes.

Commissioner Brevard asked how long installation would take.

Mr. Merville said it takes about one month.

Commissioner McElroy asked if there is enough space to build a new array next to the current array at the wastewater plant.

Mr. Merville said the possibilities are endless, he just presented two of the options. His goal is to maximize the investment in the city.

Commissioner Stone asserted the Inflation Reduction Act has changed things for public entities. It allows a 30% direct refund per MW for solar arrays for public facilities. This could be another option for the city to optimize the refund.

Mr. Merville said with the partnership, the city could still get the refund and reduce the cost. The language of the current contract can be revised to benefit the city for the refund. Mr. Merville would get a tax credit with this option.

4. (8:30 - 8:55) Honeybee Glass Recycling

Sponsors:

Neil Whitney from Honeybee Glass Recycling. Mr. Whitney has been picking up his neighbors' glass since 2019. He asked how long everyone thinks a glass bottle lasts in a landfill. He told everyone it takes about 1 million years. Glass in landfills is a major problem that Mr. Whitney hopes to help with his company and services.

When Mr. Whitney moved to Franklin, he threw his glass bottles into the blue recycling bin, not knowing glass was not allowed. He believes many Franklin residents are also unaware of the city's recycling standards, especially as more people move to the area from places with more recycling options. He started taking his glass to a local recycling center and began asking his neighbors for their glass before he went. He now collects glass from 275 of his neighbors in Westhaven, equally almost 2,300 pounds of glass a month. He hopes to expand his glass collection and recycling outside Westhaven. The purpose of Honeybee is to help neighbors, improve the environment, give back to Military Veterans, and be a good role model.

Mr. Whitney then explained how the glass collection process works. Customers sign up for the service and receive a 12-gallon storage container that Honeybee picks up once a month. Honeybee then collects and sorts glass during pickup. Once collection is complete, Honeybee takes the glass to a commercial recycling center for disposal. The current process in Westhaven takes about 5 hours for one person to complete pickups. Honeybee is also discussing taking glass recycling to Florim USA in Clarksville, TN. Florim USA would process glass and turn it into tile for low income housing, resulting in a more sustainable solution.

Honeybee has a growing demand to expand beyond Westhaven, receiving nearly 5–10 requests per week. However, resources and growth constraints are making expansion difficult. Honeybee currently charges \$10 per month, which Mr. Whitney understands it may be a high price for some customers. Mr. Whitney is seeking support from the City of Franklin to expand Honeybee and support Franklin's environmental initiatives. An initial goal would be 30% of city residents opting into

Honeybee glass recycling services. Honeybee is asking for a 4-year, \$280,000 contract with the city and a 10-year sole service provider agreement. Mr. Whitney stated his goal for the meeting was to understand the city's commitment to supporting this program and how to better operationalize Honeybee. Nothing else is being done in the city for glass recycling. Mr. Whitney explained the company's 4-year goal would be 10,000 customers and collecting around 1,800,000 pounds of glass.

Commissioner Brevard asked how Honeybee got its name.

Mr. Whitney explained the Honeybee is the hardest working animal in the animal kingdom and is a communal being.

Commissioner McElroy stated he disagrees with \$10 a month being a high price. He believes it is a low cost to pay for convenience and worth the investment.

Commissioner McElroy asked if collection bins are taken to the curbside, like trash and other recycling.

Mr. Whitney answered yes, they drop off bins called "Bee Bins" which customers take to the street on pickup days. He agrees \$10 a month is not a lot given that residents live 30 minutes to 1 hour away from a recycling center. Mr. Whitney explained he often calls his mom when leaving the recycling center, explaining to her that he recycled 2,700 pounds of glass for his neighborhood.

Commissioner Timme asked what the city's reduction goals are and how much consists of glass. How would Honeybee help in meeting reduction goals?

Mr. Orr explained that glass recycling has long been a topic for the city, and it has gotten increasingly more difficult over the year. There is a demand for glass recycling, and it is within the policy guide to invest in glass recycling. In terms of the waste stream, Mr. Orr did not have the exact percentage of glass.

Mr. Whitney commented that rough data shows only 1.5% of glass is recycled.

Mr. Dannenburg asked why glass recycling is not offered in Franklin.

Mr. Hilty explained the city's processor is Marshall County, which does not recycle glass.

Commissioner Brevard asked if the glass recycling center could handle all the city's recycling.

Mr. Whitney said there is no indication of any problems or inability to meet demand.

Commissioner McElroy asked what happens when glass bottles are broken.

Mr. Whitney responded that a big reason glass is sorted curbside is to prevent breaks. Any small remaining glass pieces get put into a separate bin. This also reduces risks and safety concerns.

Commissioner McElroy asked what the \$70,000 per year would be used for.

Mr. Whitney first commented on workers. Honeybee will operate similar to a paper route. High school students, of legal driving age, will work to collect recycling from a given neighborhood quadrant. Workers will earn \$2 per house and \$1 per house if they sign them up for collection. This creates an incentive to sign up new houses. Workers would take about 4 hours to collect recycling on a given day and could earn up to \$300. This system gives the program longevity, as underclassmen or younger siblings can work as they age up.

Commissioner Brevard asked if the \$10 was billed directly.

Mr. Whitney explained the money was set up through an online e-commerce site and set up through a subscription process.

Mr. Whitney asked whether \$10 a month was too high.

Commissioner Stone asked how Mr. Whitney handles HOAs.

Mr. Whitney said they typically do not deal with HOAs and have not received many complaints except for noise on occasion. HOAs are a great way to get the whole neighborhood involved and signed up.

Commissioner Stone asked if Honeybee picks up on a specific day every month.

Mr. Whitney said yes, they pick up on the last Saturday of every month. They also send out email and text reminders to customers.

Commissioner Timme commented that she previously discontinued recycling service because it did not line up with her trash pick up day, and she often forgot to put recycling out. Therefore, she was wasting money. She commented that convenience can be a huge barrier.

Mr. Whitney appreciated the feedback. He doesn't want Honeybee to interfere with trash pickup workers and schedules.

Mr. Orr said a text reminder the day before would help.

Commissioner McElroy asked if it would be possible to hire 100 high school-aged individuals.

Mr. Whitney believes it is possible. He asked his own neighborhood and had 30 parents respond that their children would want to participate. Using Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts can also be used to sign houses up for service. Another part of honeybee's commitment is to donate 20% of sales revenue to local charities or organizations that focus on environment impact and/or sustainability.

Commissioner Cassity asked if the glass was sold to the recycling center.

Mr. Whitney responded that he pays a tonnage fee when dropping off.

Commissioner Brevard asked what happens to the glass once it is dropped.

Mr. Whitney responded that his line of sight ends there but trusts the city knows they are handling it responsibly. He is willing to get more information on this if needed.

5. (8:55 - 9:00) 2024 Outlook Discussion

Sponsors:

Mr. Orr. The next meeting in February will discuss Bee City USA.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Cassity asked if there was any further business. There was none.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Brevard, to Adjourn. The motion carried 6-0.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM.


Chair


Date

