

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FRANKLIN SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

August 11, 2023
Development Services
Conference Room
8:00 am

Members Present: Mike Cassity, Anna Timme, Keith Gordon, Christina Christiansen, Alderman Beverly Burger, Eric McElroy, Al Pramuk

Members Absent: Brian Stone, John Brevard

Staff Present: Andrew Orr, Trevor Hannon, Brittney Perez,

Citizens/Guests: Lindsey Gardner (Tennessee Wildlife Federation), Horace Tipton (Tennessee Wildlife Federation), Ned Dannenberg (Bike/Walk Franklin)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Mike Cassity welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves and gave a brief introduction.

Approval of June Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the June 2023 minutes as presented, by Keith Gordon, seconded by Eric McElroy. The motion carried with all in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Native Grasses – Andrew is keeping this on the agenda for any future updates or discussions. Beverly asked about possible sites going next and Andrew mentioned John Brevard and Brian Walker were looking at a few places in Pinkerton but it seemed they were going to try and focus on a 10-acre project at Harlinsdale. Beverly then inquired about the interchange at I-65 and Cool Spring Blvd. and Andrew noted that it could be a heavy lift because TDOT will need to get involved; but that Steve Grubb may be able to help advance it. Beverly mentioned she already had a meeting set up with Steve and would bring it up at the meeting.
- Honeybee Glass Recycling – Neil Whitney with Honeybee Glass Recycling, the recycler out of Westhaven, met with Andrew Orr (Planning), Mark Hilty (Public Works) and Jack Tucker (Sanitation). Mr. Whitney has a proposal for the city to seed his business in the realm of \$60,000 per year and had some targets for ramping up glass collection. There is still a lot of additional information needed from Mr. Whitney. Additionally, Mark Hilty will talk to City Manager Eric Stuckey about the proposal. If it can get through the City Admin, maybe we can get it to a BOMA work session and get the Board's input. There will be more to come on this arrangement, as there are things that still need to get ironed out.
- Envision Franklin – The update is in full swing and expect to have a public draft in the next couple of weeks.



- September 26, 2023 is the Annual Board of Mayor & Alderman Session Update. Andrew Orr and Teresa Anderson plan to meet with Mike Cassity to put a few slides together for the Board.

Tennessee Wildlife Federation CLEAN ACT Overview

Ms. Gardner and Mr. Tipton introduced themselves as members of the Tennessee Wildlife Organization and explained that the Tennessee Clean Initiative is an initiative primarily centered around trying to prevent litter in the state of Tennessee. To give some history, the Tennessee Wildlife Organization was established in 1946 and is the oldest and largest wildlife conservation organization in the state of Tennessee; and is also affiliated with the National Wildlife Organization.

Their involvement with litter prevention stems from their concern with the sound use and wise management of our natural resources. The Organization has addressed all different types of pollution over the years that affect the land, the air, and the water; but it was back in 2019 that they started to delve a little deeper into the issue. It came to their attention, as they did their work across the state, that the people who were trying to enjoy our Tennessee lands, whether public or private, were confronted with litter that was negatively impacting their nature-based experiences. They started to take a deeper look into this issue and educate themselves about what was happening. They spoke to people at the state level who worked in the purview of litter. They talked to TDOT, TDEC, and reached out to solid waste managers who were really in the trenches at the city and county levels to address the litter situations and solid waste management. They also spoke to people in the recycling business. After doing their research they learned that, despite tremendous amounts of efforts, resources and over \$22 million annually in state funding, there is still litter everywhere you look. They did point out that Franklin did not seem to have any issues with litter, which was great to see. At this point they presented a video about their Initiative:

“Tennessee has a problem. There is litter everywhere you look. It’s more than an eyesore, litter pollution measurably damages our nature, our agriculture, our entire economy. The Tennessee River, that ribbon of nature and economic activity winding from Knoxville to Paris, contains more microplastics per gallon than any other studied river in the world. More than rivers that travel six times farther or are surrounded by ten times the people. Back on land, our farmers pay the price for our litter every day – an estimated \$16 million dollars each and every year. A single plastic bag blown into a field can ruin a bale of cotton and damage costly equipment. Livestock is injured or lost when debris is ingested. But no one escapes the cost of litter. Tourism takes a hit when visitors are repulsed by our mess. Businesses looking for a new home with a high quality of life view litter as a clear signal to keep looking. \$19 million dollars in tax revenue goes towards litter clean up and education each year. But the problem is bigger than \$19 million, and local governments are left with the tab. Meanwhile Tennessee manufacturers are desperate for recovered plastics, aluminum, glass, cardboard and more to make their products and create jobs. That’s the reality the Tennessee Wildlife Federation has come to see: litter presents incredible costs and incredible potential. As one of the oldest and largest non-profits dedicated to the conservation and sound management of Tennessee’s great outdoors, the Federation is leading the effort to make cleaner landscapes for the economy, agriculture and nature. We call it, Tennessee Clean. After studying this

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION



issue for years, it's undeniable that there is incredible anti-litter work being done across the state, but it's piece meal, under-resourced, and can't keep up with the growing volume of litter covering our land and burdening our city and county budgets. Tennessee needs a unified, comprehensive, state-wide solution to make progress. This year the Federation and the Tennessee Clean Coalition made the first fresh progress on the statewide litter control in a generation. Tennessee Clean secured a unanimous vote by TACIR to begin a comprehensive study of litter pollution in the state, because if we're going to fix this problem, we have to understand it. As the research arm of the Tennessee General Assembly, TACIR will look to topics like the sources and the composition of litter, financial and environmental costs, economic opportunities and recovering waste, and so much more. This study will inform how to achieve the four goals of Tennessee Clean: 1. Recover at least 85% of the certain plastic, glass, and aluminum containers that are valuable to our manufacturers and economy when recycled. 2. Reduce use of single-use carry-out bags, which are a major polluter of our waters, cause damage to recycling and agriculture equipment, and injure fish and wildlife. 3. Implement a statewide program that comprehensively addresses litter prevention and reduction for this and future generations. 4. Evaluate existing state laws and rules pertaining to litter for their effectiveness and make recommendations on how they may be improved. Our process through Tennessee Clean is designed to be collaborative from start to finish. Right now, any person can add their voice to say we need to clean up Tennessee. Go to tncleanact.org and click on Act Now and take action. Tennessee has a problem, and it's hurting our water, wildlife and wild places. The solution can't wait. Let's get started."

After the video, Lindsey Gardner explained that they've been talking to a lot of key businesses and industries and there really is an interest in the clean and consistent supply of recycled material. There is a lot of opportunity for Tennessee to benefit economically, socially, and otherwise. They've spoken to large companies such as Owens Corning, Ball Corporation, Strategic Materials, Patagonia, and many others. Lindsey specified that these companies are really the tip of the spear in the Tennessee Clean effort. Not only does it help them attain their sustainability goals, but also is key to their manufacturing processes and all that they need to make their businesses work.

Mr. Tipton elaborated, saying that the crux of the Clean Initiative is to bring together the Clean Commission, a group of both conservation and industry stakeholders, by getting them all at the table to figure out what is the best way to make recycling and this Clean Commission work for Industry, but they must get them to the table in order to do that.

Mr. Orr asks about a previous law to ban plastic bags, and if this issue will grow out of the TN Clean Initiative. Also, why did that one fail and how will this succeed?

Mr. Tipton answered saying that there have been numerous proposals about plastics, and that it's been a recognized problem for a while. As to why they failed, he can't really speak to that, but this is solving a similar problem, but not necessarily grown out of it.

Ms. Gardner added that Senator Briggs has been a longtime supporter of the Bill on the Senate side, that it's been a particular interest of his. She and the Chairman were speaking earlier about the proliferation



of plastic bags everywhere you look, they seem to be an unnatural form of a tumble weed. They're in our bushes, they're in our trees, they're in our waterways. More than that, they're a key contaminant of recycling globally, which is a real problem and why they focus on single-use carry-out bags. A lot of other businesses like Kroger and Publix are recycling the plastic bags which is a really good thing; even H&M, the clothier here in Cool Springs, is charging a 10 cents offset fee if you want a bag. Just kind of looking at a customized, tailored solution for Tennessee that could help minimize those.

Alderman Burger asks what was in the Bill that Senator Briggs was behind.

Mr. Tipton responded that it was to create the Tennessee Clean Commission and he names the different people that will stay on and he sets a few goals, which Lindsey will expand on.

Alderman Burger asks if the Bill was passed and Mr. Tipton responded that, no, it has not passed.

Ms. Gardner said in considering a policy approach to this, they took a page out of the playbook of the Lottery Commission and the processes that they set up, and really tucked into how they worked. Their process would be setting the table like Mr. Tipton alluded to, but also bringing in a diverse, non-traditional, group of stakeholders - 15 members in the latest version of the bill would be appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the House and the Speaker of the Senate. There would also be a couple of Legislators imbedded within the General Assembly for accountability purposes. These members would have to report back to the General Assembly with their findings. They would be tasked with looking at the four different primary goals within a four-year period. Those goals consist of an 85% recovery of common containers like glass, aluminum and plastic that we know there's a need for within the market. They would then be looking at the single-use carry-out bag issue and they would need to develop a comprehensive, statewide, plan that is tailored to Tennessee's needs. This would involve input from the stakeholders that represent business and industry, agriculture, conservation, and a wide variety of others, as well as some ex-officios from the state like TDOT, the Department of Agriculture, TDEC, etc. Next, they would take a comprehensive look at the existing rules and regulations at the state level and see how those can be improved.

A question was asked about how many co-sponsors they have and who's doing the principal lobbying?

Mr. Tipton responded that they are doing the principal lobbying and that, although he didn't want to show their hands too much, he could say that they're looking to get a push at some point in the near future.

Mr. Tipton reiterated that they are the principal lobbyists and that are working with other folks to gain support from, not just the conservation community, but also the industries.

Ms. Gardner adds that the coalition, not the commission (the commission is how they would execute TN Clean) but this coalition of support that is formed around the broader initiative is a very diverse coalition; again, the businesses and industries they've been talking to are supporting members of the



coalition, as well as city and county Mayors, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, academic interests, and others.

Mr. Tipton mentioned he'd like to talk about the gap that this fills. There is, of course, a TDEC division of solid waste, there's a board of solid waste, etc.; they're all focused on larger landfill solid waste problems and there is really nothing else to shine the spotlight on litter like TN Clean. And that is what is needed in order to get the regulations and policy where they need to be. There have been numerous litter-related bills passed in the last few years that focus on penalties to try to deter it. But they are hard for the law to enforce because you must catch someone in the act. That is why prevention is vital to solve the problem.

Ms. Gardner pointed out that they recognize the tremendous influence and importance of the voices of the city and county Mayors, so they put together a Mayors Letter of Support. They are pleased and thankful that both Mayor Moore and Mayor Anderson have joined in support of that letter.

Ms. Christiansen states that after a long time focusing on lower impact materials, plastics and metals, Atmos is solidly shifting away from recycled and low impact materials to reduction; so not focusing on the type of plastic, but instead the removal of plastic. There are two reasons: first, the recycling challenges that everyone's aware of, and second, the growing body of research around the adverse health effects of plastic especially in recycled plastics. She is also excited to see the efforts to reduce plastic bags and asks if there has been a discussion to go beyond plastic bags as well as take-out containers.

Both Mr. Tipton and Ms. Gardner verified that it is part of the initiative.

Ms. Gardner brings up that in the case of Tennessee's 95 counties, many of them being very rural, the disparities that exist in the solid waste infrastructure and the recycling infrastructure. Some of the rural counties and the disadvantaged communities have convenience centers but they may be anything but convenient. It's all about how to accommodate the needs of the people, create awareness, and educate. We want to incentivize the behavior change and make it easy and clear; whether its recycling or where to put your trash, or how you can have an influence on the legislature to help pass policy. A way for people to get involved is to sign the TN Clean petition via the tennesseeCLEANact.org website.

A question was asked if there is a demand for the 1 and 2 plastics in Tennessee?

Ms. Gardner responds that, yes, they are working with a global PET plastics recycler. A major issue many companies face, when looking to acquire recycled goods, is that it is hard to find uncontaminated materials, so they look for the places that do a better job at recycling. There is an untapped opportunity here.

A question was asked about the 85% reclamation statistic on ads, and that California is 70% with a bottle deposit.



Ms. Gardner replied saying places like Michigan and Oregon's numbers are higher and, of course, that number ebbs and flows but it is something they think is a realistic achievable goal. Hopefully it is not just for recovery of materials off the landscape but somehow getting the systems in place so it doesn't get there in the first place.

A question was asked if a bottle deposit would be a tool in the toolkit.

Ms. Gardner says that would be up to the commission. Michigan and Oregon have successful recycling operations. Oregon formed an Oregon Beverage Recycling Coalition and it was primarily made up of the distributors and manufacturers that were mandated to undertake deposit return systems; so they developed and put a structure in place that works for them. And it's become a demonstrative model for people around the nation.

Mr. Orr asked, in regards to the Tennessee River and the cause of microplastics, what are the main causes of the microplastics?

Ms. Gardner responded that in 2018, a German scientist participated in a study of rivers and they studied the Yangtze River and the Rhine River in Germany, places that are much more populated around them. They found that just the sheer volume of the plastic from just your common containers that wound up in the river is breaking down and causing the microplastics at a very astronomical rate.

Mr. Tipton mentioned that the study didn't cover all rivers but still shocking, nonetheless.

A question was asked if they can summarize, again, the timeline of when this maybe in a committee in the House floor and if we should try to be active about writing letters.

Mr. Tipton said that they can give updates when it goes through.

Other Topics

EV Battery Plant Tour

Al Pramuk offered to schedule a tour of the EV Battery Facility in Spring Hill. Andrew offered to help coordinate the tour during one of the Commission's meeting date/times.

Annual Board of Mayor & Alderman Session Update

Andrew reiterates the Annual Board of Mayor & Alderman Session Update and elaborates that each Commission that the city has does an annual update, and ours is on the September agenda.

The next meeting will be on Friday, September 8, 2023, at 8:00 am.