

**MEETING OF THE ELK RIVER
ENERGY CITY COMMISSION
HELD AT ELK RIVER CITY HALL
ELK RIVER, MN
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2009**

Members Present: Vance Zehringer, Maureen Griffiths for Deb Walters, Bruce Sayler, John Setala, and Mayor Stephanie Klinzing

Members Absent: Todd Berreman, Denny Chuba, Martin Gagliardi, Stephen Rohlf, Susie Overholser, and Ron Touchette

Staff Present: Jeff Gongoll, Community Development Director
Rebecca Haug, Environmental Administrator
Nicola (Nicki) Blake-Bradley, Environmental Technician

The regular meeting of the Energy City Commission was called to order by Chair Zehringer at 1:31 p.m. Due to a lack of a quorum, no actions will be taken at this meeting.

1. **Consider ECC Agenda**

Environmental Administrator Haug added two updates to "Other"... discussion of a company named Energy Cost Cutters and discussion regarding Cushman/Zenn.

2. **Consider November 19, 2008 ECC Minutes**

No changes or corrections were given regarding the minutes.

3. **Project Conserve Update**

Environmental Administrator Haug stated that a brief summary was attached with the meeting reminder. She added that blower door tests and infrared scans are currently being done. Three participants are having infrared tests done because they are not Centerpoint Energy customers. The next set of meetings has been changed to February 26th (a Thursday) and 28th (a Saturday) from later this month due to the blower door tests not being complete. The results will be discussed at the next set of meetings. Many of the participants are still really enthusiastic and they seemed to like the Saturday morning meeting time best so future meetings may need to follow this pattern. Those who have had their blower door tests done already have stated that they were very impressed with the detail and also found them to be informative. Building inspectors will be attending the next meeting as speakers.

Chair Zehringer stated concern that the auditors have not asked for energy usage histories yet. He will be checking into that and will cover that at the meetings. Commissioner Setala stated that GRE has historically done audits without histories and explained their methodology.

Environmental Administrator Haug stated that a third set of meetings will likely be held in June or July with inclusion of the children. Information regarding the organics program will be available at that time as well. Currently, she is trying to figure out how Project Conserve will fit into the Energy Expo (booth, speaker, etc.). Environmental Administrator Haug stated that she has spoken with Joni (from Star News) and, although she's on other assignments at the moment, Joni does still have Project Conserve down as an item on her "to do" list.

4. **2009 Energy Expo**

Environmental Administrator Haug stated that there are seven confirmed exhibitors at this time. Twin Lakes Elementary will be the location. The subcommittee will be calling to see if others will be coming. A script is being made for the callers. There will be no keynote speaker so the gym will be used for exhibitors. A bus tour of the City's demonstration sites will be held rather than individual site tours. Childrens' programming will be held in the same rooms they were for the first Expo. Energy Ennys and Energy Innovations contest results will be handled in the Library.

Mayor Klinzing arrived at 1:48 p.m. Environmental Administrator Haug requested that the Mayor do an introduction. Mayor Klinzing readily accepted the invitation.

Environmental Administrator Haug added that the principal for Twin Lakes Elementary was very excited to be part of the event, again, and requested that the "Earth Day Expo" held last year be held all day on the 17th for the students. Environmental Technician Blake-Bradley organized the Earth Day Expo last year. She gave an overview of the topics covered and invited any commissioners who might be interested in participating to put together a "booth" regarding environmental issues. Students rotated through the various stations and learned different conservation lessons. A possible tour of the Elk River Landfill was discussed as well for the 4 – 6 graders on the 17th. Deb Walters may cover the cost of the bussing to have this happen.

Chair Zehringer commented that Waste Management has been advised to not give tours of the energy generation facility and they have suggested that ERMU adopt a similar policy. This may mean that the facility will not be able to be viewed, although the Environmental Learning Center will be able to be used yet. Chair Zehringer will check with the insurance companies about this. A suggestion was made to open the garage doors for a view of the engines if the policy is adopted to stay out of the electrical room where the window for the engine room is.

5. **Other**

Energy City Commissioners: Mayor Klinzing stated that the City Council would like to know who the commissioners are and who aren't. They asked that the paperwork be cleared up since some people listed are no longer on the commission. Environmental Administrator Haug stated that Ron Touchette is now the representative for the EDA, Jeff Gongoll would be taken off since he's now staff, and Steve Rohlf is the representative for the Chamber of Commerce. The County Board representative is no longer going to attend the meetings since the County will not reimburse the representative for the meetings. Environmental Administrator Haug suggested changing the bylaws to allow anyone from the County to participate, since John Exner (Planning and Zoning Department) would be interested in being more involved with Energy City. She felt the same regarding the School District commissioner since no one from District 728 has come forward, but Spectrum High School has expressed interest. Staff will go through the list and propose changes.

State and National Energy Policy Committee: Mayor Klinzing also added discussion regarding a State and National Energy Policy Committee that she is aware of. The Committee is centered elsewhere but has retained council here in Elk River. They provide a local, grass roots effort at creating an energy policy. Representatives will be coming on Tuesday, January 26th for a meeting at Beaudry Oil on Proctor Avenue at 6:30 p.m. The Mayor will attend and invited the commissioners to join the meeting. Staff suggested that the Uppertown Conference Room be volunteered for the meeting. Chair Zehringer stated he'll try to attend and Environmental Administrator Haug stated she will plan to attend.

Energy Cost Cutters: Environmental Administrator Haug discussed a new company in the area named Energy Cost Cutters. They do free energy audits and might be interested in partnering with Energy City. Chair Zehringer feels that there may be more experienced companies that Energy City could partner with, since this one has only been in business for a few months. Community Development Director Gongoll stated that this company also has installed solar floor heating units that will possibly help lower air conditioning costs in the summer as well for \$10,000 - \$12,000 total. They stated they were able to cut costs in half through rebates and grants. Energy Cost Cutters is also a Chamber member so they're local. A suggestion was made to bring them to a future meeting.

Faith in Action: Mayor Klinzing added a comment that Faith In Action is looking at working toward doing low cost rehabilitation projects on homes. She discussed that they are hoping to do something toward collecting furniture for re-use and hope that this may qualify for landfill abatement funds. Environmental Administrator Haug suggested they apply for a grant through the County.

Cushman/Zenn: Community Development Director Gongoll discussed this idea with the fleet committee. Discussion followed regarding having the representatives come to an ECC meeting to talk about electric vehicles. This company has sold other electric vehicles to other counties within Minnesota. They may be invited to the May meeting. A question was asked if they might come to the Expo. An invitation will be extended.

Regarding electric vehicles, Commissioner Setala may be able to bring GRE's electric hybrid vehicle(s). They converted a hybrid Prius to a plug-in vehicle (it has a bigger battery pack). Commissioner Setala discussed that he has contacted the MN Electric Vehicle Association as well. Discussion followed that a "myth buster" poster or display could be put up near the cars for educational purposes.

Foreclosures: Chair Zehringer discussed the fact that a number of foreclosed homes have been experiencing frozen and burst pipes and wanted to discuss how to deal with them from a "wasted resources" point of view. Discussion followed concerning notifications that go out when services are shut off, funds available, and the neighborhood stabilization program which shares funds with Otsego. Chair Zehringer stated that Countryside Realty is taking care of some homes in Elk River, but there are currently 229 foreclosures in Elk River alone. Otsego has many foreclosed homes as well. There is currently no procedure for informing anyone when services are cut off. Discussion of placing liens on the property followed. It costs \$600 - \$1200 to winterize a home and the funds must come from somewhere. Assessments can be made to property for water/sewer fees but not for electricity.

6. Schedule next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the energy city commission will be on February 18, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. in the Uppertown Conference Room. Topics for the meeting include updates on foreclosures, energy policy committee, Project Conserve, and the Energy Expo. Other topics will be the Energy City Ordinance for members and Energy Cost Cutters.

7. Meeting Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Tina Allard
City Clerk

Vance Zehringer
Energy City Commission Chair