

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING
Inver Grove Heights City Hall – Council Chambers
February 28, 2019

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Trenzeluk

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Chair Ted Trenzeluk, Robert Heidenreich, Nichole Boehmke, Ken Johnson, Lauren DiGidio, and Aditya Jayam.

Commissioners Absent: Joan Gabriel (resigned 9/27/18); Patricia Todd and Sarah Brass (excused)

Staff Present: Ally Hillstrom, Environmental Specialist

4. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Johnson moved to approve the minutes from January 24, 2019 as submitted, Commissioner Heidenreich seconded the motion. Motion to approve carried unanimously.

5. Applicant Requests

6. Other Business

a) GreenStep Cities Best Practice #15: Sustainable Purchasing. Review progress and discuss feedback.

Ms. Hillstrom stated the purpose of the meeting is to discuss GreenStep Cities Program Best Practice #15: Sustainable Purchasing in order to progress to Step 3 of the program. She stated she has completed background research on the topic and will present it to the Environmental Commission to receive feedback prior to presenting to the City Council. Ms., Hillstrom described Best Practice #15 as defined by the program.

Chair Trenzeluk requested Ms. Hillstrom state where the policy differs from other cities' policies when she reviews the policy.

Ms. Hillstrom stated at Action 15.1: Sustainable Purchasing Policy is the only required action for Best Practice #15. The City can consider completing the other optional actions. Best Practice #15.1 requires that the City adopt a Sustainable Purchasing Policy or set of administrative guidelines and at minimum include a requirement to purchase energy efficient equipment and recycled content paper. Ms. Hillstrom stated that the Finance Director recommends the City approach this by adopting a formal policy instead of adopting administrative guidelines. Because purchasing has budgetary impacts, a formal policy provides more structure than guidelines will.

Ms. Hillstrom presented the draft Sustainable Purchasing Policy developed from resources provided on the GreenStep Cities website including other cities' policies. She noted these policies are referred to as Sustainable Purchasing or Environmental Purchasing. Sustainable Purchasing

Policy has been selected to better reflect the City's commitment to sustainability which includes environmental, social and economic stewardship. Ms. Hillstrom noted that sustainable cities consciously avoid depletion of natural and financial resources in order to meet the needs of the community in the future.

Chair Trenzeluk stated he is in agreeance with including the financial component in the interpretation of sustainability. Ms. Hillstrom responded that some cities focus these policies on environmental stewardship more than the other factors discussed. Ms. Hillstrom stated if the policy is adopted for the City of Inver Grove Heights it is important for the City to make sure it does not exceed its financial ability to fund capital and operational costs of the sustainable purchase.

Ms. Hillstrom reviewed the policy purpose. The City does not currently have a purchasing policy and purchasing is decentralized. This policy is intended to provide structure and resources to those making purchases while promoting sustainable practices.

Commissioner Boehmke suggested when the policy lists example products it state "but not limited to" so that future product types are not excluded from the policy.

Ms. Hillstrom reviewed the policy scope. All departments and employees would receive education and would be responsible for upholding the policy. The Environmental Specialist would be the resource for staff.

Chair Trenzeluk asked how the purchases would be policed. Ms. Hillstrom stated that staff will be asked to submit their purchase data to the Environmental Specialist to track and evaluate the City's sustainable purchasing efforts. Supervisors may need verify the purchases first and then her data collection is followed.

Commissioner Jayam asked for a description of the City's purchasing process. Ms. Hillstrom stated that based on her position, her supervisor and grant requirement specify what she can and cannot purchase. She is required to submit invoices to the Finance Department who then pays the invoice. She said that she will verify if other purchasing processes are used.

Commissioner Jayam asked if a supervisor's approval is required for purchases over a certain amount. Ms. Hillstrom stated that all purchases are coded to an account number and only those with authority can expense items to the code. That employee and employee's supervisor receive an account summary to keep track of expenses and ensure the purchases are within the annual budget constraints.

Commission Jayam suggested that the policy's scope requires supervisors receive an annual review of the policy. He suggested the Environmental Specialist review the department's purchases and provide feedback on their purchasing behaviors.

Commission Jayam asked if there is a limit on how much more money can be spent on sustainable purchases. Ms. Hillstrom stated that the way the policy is currently written, all required products listed, aside from recycled content paper, should be purchased if the product is cost-effective; when the life-cycle costs are lower or equal to those of the non-sustainable product.

Chair Trenzeluk stated that recycled content paper does not meet the purpose to lower overall costs as stated in the policy. Ms. Hillstrom stated this is true. She stated this is the only state mandated requirement within the policy. The Minnesota Statue 16C.073 states that public entities

shall purchase 30% recycled content paper, if it is within a ten percent cost range of existing costs as defined by Minnesota Statute 16C.0725. Ms. Hillstrom noted that other cities have added constraints to this guideline. The City of Burnsville requires City Manager authorization for any purchases where the ten percent difference in cost exceeds \$1,000. Ms. Hillstrom stated this guideline would only apply to the recycled paper purchasing requirement as the other requirements have cost-effective defined as the purchasing guideline.

Chair Trenzeluk suggested this structure be added to this part of the policy and the City Council would be able to adjust the parameters.

Commissioner Boehmke asked if the City can seek out vendors that sell sustainable products at lower costs. Ms. Hillstrom stated that the State of Minnesota has sustainable purchasing goals for state departments and develops purchasing contracts. The City can purchase from these contracts which includes green purchasing contracts. The contracts tend to reduce costs of the items. Ms. Hillstrom stated there are other contract opportunities available to the City as well.

Commissioner Boehmke stated that staff with purchasing authority would have the flexibility to use these resources to find the most sustainable product at the lowest cost.

Commissioner Jayam suggested the alternative would be to allow purchases of sustainable products up to an amount based the remaining funds in the base budget. Ms. Hillstrom stated that selecting a specific dollar amount as a cap may require revisions in the future.

Chair Trenzeluk ask the Commission if they are in favor of a cap being set. Commissioner Heidenreich and Commissioner Johnson stated they are in favor. Ms. Hillstrom stated that as the policy is written, aside from recycled paper, sustainable purchasing products can only be purchased if they are less than or equal to the cost of the existing product.

Ms. Hillstrom stated based on the current usage and costs of paper, the City's cost for copy paper would increase by twelve percent if thirty percent recycled copy paper was purchased. The purchase would not be required based on how the policy is currently written because it exceeds a ten percent difference in current costs. The cost difference is \$771.75, which is less than the \$1,000 cap the Commission was discussing. The City could decide to allow for purchases under a specific dollar amount instead of the ten percent difference in current cost if the City thought this was a priority.

Commissioner Heidenreich suggested the policy require cost reduction strategies. He suggested Environmental Commission agenda packets are no longer printed and instead displayed on electronic devices. Ms. Hillstrom noted that other cities have implemented cost reduction strategies after adopting a Sustainable Purchasing Policy. Printers can be defaulted to double-sided printing and black ink. The City can educate staff to print only when necessary to reduce the paper usage. Ms. Hillstrom stated that reducing the environmental impact of meetings is a best practice within the GreenStep Cities Program, Best Practice 15.7.

Commissioner Boehmke noted that if the City is going to adopt a Sustainable Purchasing Policy the City will have to budget according. An additional expense needs to be added to the budget if this is required by the policy.

Commissioner DeGidio noted that costs would be reduced by printing less. Ms. Hillstrom responded it can be a cost-neutral change however it is unknown how much printing will be reduced by. The City can compare current printing behavior to the printing behavior after staff is

educated to determine how much printing was reduced. She stated this is an example of the data collection required by the policy as its currently written. She noted that cost reduction strategies can be added to a procedure section of the policy if the Commission feels this would be a critical component to making the efforts financially feasible.

Commissioner Heidenreich suggested showing the Council projected cost savings along with the recycled paper usage and cost data.

Commissioner Jayam noted that allowing for purchases within a ten percent cost difference or under a specific cap allows for a conversation to happen with staff. This could result in reallocating unspent funds from the base budget for the sustainable purchase. Ms. Hillstrom stated that other cities have created a similar process, where a Sustainability Fund is budgeted for and applied to selected sustainability projects throughout the year that need additional funding. The projects are selected based on their environmental benefit.

Chair Trenzulek stated conceptually a Sustainability Fund may be workable but he would not recommend this at this point in the process based on its budgetary impacts. He suggested Ms. Hillstrom update the draft policy with the thoughts presented this far.

Ms. Hillstrom stated that this is an internal policy that can be updated as needed by the Environmental Commission and City Council.

Commissioner Boehmke stated that the policy's financial parameters can be reviewed for update considerations by the Environmental Commission. Ms. Hillstrom suggested adding City Staff and the Environmental Commission will be responsible recommending policy revisions to the City Council for final approval.

Commissioner Jayam suggested noting that state laws supersede this policy.

Commissioner Johnson asked what chemicals would be looked for within cleaning products. Ms. Hillstrom stated green cleaning products would be selected based off certification standards so long as they effectively serve their purpose. She recommends City Staff research product effectiveness before purchasing.

Commissioner Boehmke asked if the policy should require contracted cleaning services to purchase green cleaning products. Ms. Hillstrom said she will research this. Chair Trenzulek suggested this could be added to the cleaning services contract instead of the policy.

Ms. Hillstrom noted the only requirement of the GreenStep Cities program for the Sustainable Purchasing Policy is to require purchases of energy efficient appliances and recycled paper content. Other items are listed to raise awareness of the products. These items would be purchased so long as they are equal to or less than the cost of the typical purchase.

Chair Trenzulek recommended Ms. Hillstrom update the draft policy with the thoughts presented. This will be reviewed at the next Environmental Commission meeting.

7. Adjourn

Commissioner DiGidio moved to adjourn at 8:05 pm. Commissioner Boehmke seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.