



## Office of the Mayor

Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor

City-County Building, Room 403  
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Phone: (608) 266-4611

Fax: (608) 267-8671

[mayor@cityofmadison.com](mailto:mayor@cityofmadison.com)

[www.cityofmadison.com](http://www.cityofmadison.com)

January 27, 2020

To: City of Madison Committee on the Environment (COE)

RE: Response to Recommendations from COE on January 6, 2020

Dear Members of the Committee on the Environment,

Thank you for your letter and recommendations for future environmental work in the City of Madison. I would like to update you on my intentions regarding COE and respond to your questions on how work on particular environmental topics will move forward.

As I proposed at the November 18, 2019, meeting of COE, I am moving forward with an ordinance to dissolve COE and incorporate its activities into other boards, committees, and commissions. This proposal is not out of a disregard for environmental issues, but rather is an attempt to reduce overlap between the functions of multiple bodies. I believe the environmental focus of COE overlaps with an existing environmental focus in other committees, and a growing environmental focus in additional committees that I intend to continue cultivating. In other words, I do not expect the work that COE has conducted to halt, but instead work through different committee channels.

The following paragraphs respond to the specific issue areas and topics you outlined in your letter. I think you'll find that we are in general agreement about environmental priorities for the City, and I've outlined my view of how the City will continue to prioritize these topics. In cases where numerous committees intersect with only a piece of this work, I believe the Sustainable Madison Committee can play a centralized lead role.

- 1. Role of COE:** Your letter describes a "watchdog" function for COE over other committee work. I believe environmental considerations should be embedded into each committee's work, and I will consider a candidate's environmental perspective in my future committee appointments. Your letter also suggests that COE work with Alders on an overall strategy for prioritizing environmental quality including water, air, solid waste, and land use. I agree that a strategy is important. I believe the City's Imagine Madison Plan, the Sustainability Plan, currently being reviewed and updated by the Sustainable Madison Committee, and the 100% Renewable Energy Plan collectively provide that strategy.
- 2. Water Issues:** I share COE's concern about chlorides and surface water quality. Staff are in active conversations internally and with the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) about how to increase awareness about water softeners, and snow removal crews have revised

policies about salt use on roadways and walkways. In addition, the City carries out numerous activities to improve the water quality of our lakes and streams including directing funding to the Yahara WINS program, working to keep leaves out of our streets and water bodies, increasingly considering, utilizing, and incentivizing green infrastructure like raingardens, bioswales, and green roofs, and coordinating with regional entities like the Lakes and Watersheds Commission on lake quality. The City will continue to prioritize these topics and they will have connections to numerous committees including the MMSD Commission, the Water Utility Board, the Board of Public Works, the Lakes and Watershed Commission, and the Sustainable Madison Committee.

3. **Air Quality and Fossil Fuel Use:** We need to drastically reduce and ultimately eliminate fossil fuel use to achieve a transition to a clean energy economy and respond to the climate crisis. The Sustainable Madison Committee leads work on this topic, and I will ask them to review COE's work on a lawn equipment incentive or exchange program.
4. **Land Use:** I share your commitment to flood mitigation and habitat improvement, and continuing this work is a priority for the City. City staff will continue work on watershed studies, green infrastructure investments, and habitat management in City parks and greenways. The Board of Public Works, the Plan Commission, the Habitat Stewardship Committee of the Board of Park Commissioners, the Sustainable Madison Committee, and the Lakes and Watersheds Commission will all intersect with components of this work.
5. **Solid Waste:** City staff are actively investigating options to improve recycling quality and pursue composting options. At the moment, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) would play a lead role in making recommendations on this topic. However, there is an active resolution to dissolve SWAC. If that is approved, the Sustainable Madison Committee and the Board of Public Works would consider these proposals from staff.
6. **Other Environmental Quality Issues:** Your letter highlights several other topics that are environmental priorities including transportation and access to healthy food options, electric buses, climate change strategies, pest management strategies, and environmental certification programs for businesses. These are all important issues, and we again agree that the City has additional opportunities for action on these fronts. Most of these topics are currently being worked on by City staff and committees, and I see that work continuing. The Madison Food Policy Council is working on access to healthy food and the Integrated Pest Management Policy Review Task Force is considering pest management strategies. The City is piloting electric buses with plans to increase the numbers in coming years, assuming a successful pilot. The Sustainable Madison Committee has recently decided to review and update the 2011 Sustainability Plan and I anticipate they will consider the City's climate change strategies within that effort. The City does support the MPower program for businesses, but could consider expanding that to a broader environmental certification. I believe the Sustainable Madison Committee could consider the options for doing so.

Again, I want to emphasize that we share the same environmental priorities, and I intend for work to continue on these fronts through a combination of leadership from myself, Alders, staff, and committees. I thank each of you for your service to the Committee on the Environment and to the City broadly.

Sincerely,

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway