



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
www.cityofmadison.com

Meeting Minutes - Approved COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Monday, February 21, 2011

4:30 PM

210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room 108, City-County Building.
Meets the 3rd Monday of the month.

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

- Present:** 6 -
Larry Palm; Steven M. Fix; Dan Melton; Lori O. Grant; James P. Bennett
and Keith W. Pierce
- Absent:** 1 -
Roger T. Bannerman
- Excused:** 2 -
Patricia A. Lasky and Reginald N. Weide

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Fix, seconded by Pierce, to Approve the Minutes. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

None

1. [21400](#) Discussion - Radon Testing

Conrad Weiffenbach, State of Wis. Dept. of Health and Family Services and head of the state's radon program, gave a brief summary of the hazards of radon exposure. Approximately 10-15% of lung cancer is not from cigarette smoke. The effects of radon are not at all immediate, but rather over the course of many years of exposure, which is part of the reason why there isn't a more widespread knowledge base (unlike lead in paint which can have a serious and more immediate health impact for children). While some argue against the seriousness of radon exposure, recent epidemiological studies indicate a direct health risk with prolonged exposure, especially if genetics and lifestyle are contributing factors.

Commission members were interested in what they could do to increase awareness of radon. Another point of interest was whether there is funding to help low income households with radon mitigation. The test kits are available for as low as \$10 through the City-County Public Health Dept (heavily subsidized), but there isn't currently any aid available to complete the necessary mitigation, which runs about \$1000 with \$100-\$200 annual

maintenance. Even if there were a grant available, at \$1000 per person, the funds would be used up quickly. There have been claims that sealing basements works, but Conrad warned that this option is not guaranteed and may not last long, as opposed to the sub-slab depressurization fix (more info on this on www.lowradon.org).

The current outreach program is funded statewide through an EPA grant. The focus is during the month of January, dedicated as Radon Awareness Month. Outreach within the City of Madison is fairly limited, however.

There is currently no regulation of businesses that do radon mitigation. Building contractors don't seem to take it seriously. There have been previous, though unsuccessful attempts to require radon testing when a property sells (required in some states) as well as integration of mitigation systems with new construction. One possible first step could be to require apartment owners to do testing. Alder Palm agreed to speak with the the Apartment Association. Conrad suggested apartment owners perform one test, and if it is high, wait a year to repeat before installing mitigation. Requiring private homeowners to test for radon and/or do mitigation may cause more of an uproar since it is their choice and they are not impacting their neighbors. The City of Madison cannot enact stricter building codes for new construction than the State Dept. of Commerce (or what was the State Dept. of Commerce), so the city would be limited to public outreach and possibly requiring testing at property turnover or that apartment owners to do regular testing.

2. [20903](#) Adopting and confirming amendments to the Madison General Ordinances as set forth in attached Exhibit G pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 66.0103 to repeal and recreate Chapter 37 entitled "The Public Stormwater System Including Erosion Control."

Greg Fries, City Engineering, went over the major changes to the City's Chapter 37 Ordinance, indicating it was being revised to be consistent with the State Administrative Rule Chapter NR 151 (Runoff Management), and in one case to be stricter than state requirements. Old Chapter 37 (and NR 151) language called for 60% of pre-development infiltration for non-residential and 90% for residential. New language (stricter than state) calls for 90% of pre-development infiltration for all land use types, which is consistent with CARPC requirements. Other major changes include revising language for total suspended solids control in redevelopment to be compared to no controls as opposed to existing conditions, which is how it has been recently interpreted (e.g., land use change such as parking lot to roof, is not sufficient to meet this requirement). The final major change is ordinance wetland setback language updated to be consistent with state requirements.

A motion was made by Palm, seconded by Fix, to Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval to the BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

3. [18528](#) Discussion of Environmental Impacts of Fireworks Residue

Commission member Jim Bennett put together a proposed sampling plan for fireworks residue at Warner Park (attached). The plan would consist of one baseline study and a follow up series of event studies (following a fireworks display). The baseline study would require approximately \$25,000, and the

event study would be another \$31,000. These figures do not include labor expenses. More work would need to be done prior to a study that would pinpoint which plant species should be sampled and where soil should be sampled. If there is interest from the Mayor's Office in pursuing this, Jim would work with Health Dept. staff to create a more specific sampling procedure.

A motion was made by Fix, seconded by Melton, to support moving ahead with a baseline study of fireworks residue in 2011, with the understanding that an event study be completed the following year, by requesting the necessary funds from the Mayor's Office through correspondence from Chair Grant with assistance from Commissioner Bennett. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

4. [19947](#) Discussion of Future Items

Future items shall include the 2010 Road Salt Report, done annually by the City-County Public Health Dept., continued discussion on the fireworks residue study, updates on radon discussions, and possibly an update on the draft City Sustainability Plan.

5. [08477](#) REPORT FROM BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

One major item has been a discussion on whether an agriculture credit for stormwater utility rates should be continued and for how long. The Board voted against a 10 year phase out of the credit.

Staff has recently analyzed the issue more thoroughly and will be taking it to the Dane County Land Conservation Department to determine if the credit could be tied to the requirement of implementing an approved conservation plan, which would need to be reviewed annually.

6. [08478](#) REPORT FROM WATER UTILITY BOARD:

It is likely that VOCs will need to be mitigated at Well 15 at some point in the future. The Eastside group is still productively meeting. Chromium 6 testing will be extended by the Water Utility; mitigation is not obvious at this point, but it may involve reverse osmosis (though others disagree).

9. [13375](#) STAFF REPORT

1. Staff will be reviewing the current draft of the City Sustainability Plan; any pertinent updates will be included with next month's agenda.
2. The director of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association has offered to come speak to the COE if there is interest. There was not.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Melton, seconded by Bennett, to Adjourn. The motion passed by voice vote/other.