

Climate Action Task Force
Minutes of Meeting
October 27, 2015

Present: Chad Rittenhouse (chair), Tim Vadas, Laura Cisneros, Don Hoyle, Gary Bent, George Rawitscher, Joyce Rawitscher (guest), Bob DiQuattro (guest), Virginia Walton (staff)

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm by Rittenhouse.

Introductions were made.

Bent announced that there will be a presentation on the upcoming climate summit in Paris at the First Church of Christ on Friday, October 30, 2015 at 7 pm.

The September 22, 2015 minutes were approved on a motion by Rittenhouse/Hoyle.

It was decided to organize the climate related actions from the Mansfield Tomorrow Plan into two categories - actions to mitigate direct impacts of climate change and actions to mitigate or adapt to the risk of climate change. Task force members identified the climate related items from the summaries of the Plan's chapters 1 through 7.

They are as follows:

Chapter 1 – MANSFIELD TODAY

Introductory chapter. Not applicable

Chapter 2 – NATURAL SYSTEMS

To be discussed during the next meeting. Actions to include:

- Stormwater infrastructure for extreme rain events (Noted: new storm water management regulations are coming out in the spring)
- Forestland protection

Chapter 3 - OPEN SPACE, PARKS, & AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Impacts to farmlands, generally negative

- More intense rain events at beginning of crop cycle
- More droughts
- More floods

Actions:

Protect existing farmland

- Protect agricultural soils
- Restore farmland
- Protect farmland viewsheds
- Implement agricultural easements

Conservation land

- Open space acquisition program
- Land trusts
- Conservation easements
- Public Act 490 (tax abatement program)

Adopt soil conservation practices

- Crop rotation: plant a sequence of species through the years to reduce soil loss but meet farm needs
- Crop residue management: tillage practices that leave residue on top of the soil rather than bury it
- Contour farming and strip-cropping: tillage and planting across the slope, following the contours of the land, and planting crops in alternating bands of species that permit more or less erosion
- Contour buffer strips: permanently planted strips along the contoured field
- Cover crops: temporary, fast-growing species that protect the soil between main crops

- Suggested – avoiding tillage

Chapter 4 - COMMUNITY HERITAGE AND SENSE OF PLACE

Actions:

- Implement Smart Growth – which develops compact patterns in designated mixed use centers and compact residential areas
- Advocate for Natural Resources Protection Zoning (NRPZ) – which promotes compact patterns of residential development in new subdivisions rather than as scattered 2-acre plots arrayed along roadsides

CHAPTER 5 – COMMUNITY LIFE

Actions:

- Raise public awareness on best practices for building and property maintenance.
- Consider best options for storm water management, septic systems, low impact development
- Develop and implement a community education program on preparing for natural disasters.
- Prepare a Disaster Recovery Plan. (What is the relationship to hazard mitigation plan?)
- Raise awareness about town's energy consumption.

CHAPTER 6 – DIVERSIFYING THE ECONOMY

Actions:

- Promote locally grown produce and growing your own food. Promote community gardens.

CHAPTER 7 – HOUSING

Actions to expand diverse transit and more concentrated housing development:

- Expanding town bike lane or sidewalks may facilitate less car use in existing neighborhoods where residents live.
- The town should consider options for expanding the utilization of mass transit, including use of WRTD and buses from the transit center.

Noted: Walkable housing development will have a limited impact in meeting current resident demands unless residents relocate. This seems improbable. Of course, the priority of walkable design in attracting potential new residents is an important consideration.

Noted on residential energy use: Though not mentioned in the report, residential energy savings and transformation offers perhaps the largest opportunity to increase environmental sustainability in the town.

What are the methods for gathering residential energy emissions that will be useful to Mansfield residents?

The committee will continue highlighting climate related items from chapters 2, 8, 9 and 10 at the next meeting. Vadas will rework his summary of chapter 9 prior to the meeting. It was asked that each member write down their personal climate related priorities, which may not relate to the Mansfield Tomorrow Plan, to discuss at the next meeting.

Walton stated that there is interest within the Town to actively promote the commercial solar lease program offered through the Green Bank. The Climate Action Task Force was asked if they will endorse the Green Bank program. On a motion by Bent/Hoyle, it was approved to endorse both the commercial and residential Green Bank solar programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Walton