

## CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

January 5, 2011

9:05-10:00 am

140 West Pine Street

**Members Present:** Marilyn Marler (chair), Pam Walzer, Bob Jaffe, Renee Mitchell, Ed Childers, Jon Wilkins (9:50), Dave Strohmaier, Stacy Rye, Dick Haines (9:15),

**Members Absent:** Lyn Hellegaard

**Others Present:** Ben Schmidt, Ross Keogh

### I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

#### A. Approve minutes.

Minutes of December 15, 2010 were approved as submitted.

### II. FINAL CONSIDERATION AGENDA ITEMS

### III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

### IV. REGULAR AGENDA

- A. Appoint one member to the Conservation District for the term beginning January 1, 2011 and ending on December 31, 2013. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Kelly Elam) (Referred to committee: 12/13/10) (**Held in committee**)

The candidate was not available for an interview and the interview will be rescheduled for a later date.

- B. Update from the Greenhouse Gas Conservation Energy Team. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Marilyn Marler) (Referred to committee: 09/13/10) (**REMOVE FROM AGENDA**)

**MOTION: The Committee recommends Council adopt the recommendations as provide by the Greenhouse Gas Energy Conservation Team for the City Council to support at the 2011 Montana Legislative Session and direct the Mayor to advocate for these issues in this session.**

Ben Schmidt provided the committee with a list of recommendations the Greenhouse Gas Energy Conservation Energy Team would like to see the City and its legislative lobbyist support during this year's legislative session.

The committee members discussed how best to communicate with the GGECT during the session as the process for bill review and voting moves quickly and the GGECT only meets once a month. The process for Council to review bills through the web will be discussed at the Committee of the Whole meeting later in the day. There is a web site dedicated to the legislative session on the State web page as well. Council will get weekly updates.

The following were recommendations from the GGECT:

1. Continue support for the Renewable Power Production and Rural Economic Development Act (also known as the RPS), with a goal of 15% by 2015.
2. Increase net metering cap.
3. Prioritize transportation projects that help reduce or minimize GHG emissions.
4. Support rules that allow cities to procure funding for energy retrofit projects.
5. Advocate for legislation that supports comprehensive waste disposal program.
6. Promote legislation that supports or provides incentives for sustainable development and oppose legislation that reduces or hinders sustainable development.

Ben Schmidt – these are the general recommendations that the GGECT would like the City to support during this session. Ben included a brief description of each item. He and Ross Keogh answered questions related to each of the items.

#### 1. Continue support for the Renewable Power Production and Rural Economic Development Act (also known as the RPS) with a goal of 15% by 2015.

In 2005, the Montana Legislature passed the Renewable Power Production and Rural Economic Development Act (also known as the RPS) which required regulated utilities, primarily NorthWestern Energy, to procure renewable energy at increasing increments with a goal of 15% by 2015. To meet those requirements, NorthWestern Energy entered into a long-term contract

with the 135 MW Judith Gap wind farm to purchase wind energy at an average rate of \$30 per MWh (3 cents per KWh), and is currently evaluating several offers to meet future standards. Renewable energy has obvious benefits from other energy sources; it enhances rural prosperity by investing in Montana communities, does not require fuel, and produces effectively no carbon emissions. Many other states, notably California and Nevada, have set even more aggressive standards for their utilities, requiring up to 33% of their energy to come from wind. Given Montana's abundant wind resources (the state is 1st in untapped potential), and the other attributes of renewable energy, it is hereby the policy of the Missoula City Council that the current RPS be maintained in its intent, and that efforts be taken to expand the RPS and increase the amount of renewable energy in North Western Energy's portfolio.

**2. Increase Net Metering Cap.**

Current Net-metering laws cap project eligibility at 50 kW, which excludes many people, businesses and municipalities from taking full advantage of the law. We recommend that the City of Missoula support an increased net-metering cap, such as 200 kW. Other states have taken similar actions, such as Colorado, where net-metering is set at 120% of a customer's load.

Existing net metering laws only allow solar, wind and micro-hydro generation. Absent are other forms (geothermal and bioenergy) that are particularly pertinent to Montana and are the only 2 forms that can provide 24 hour, 7 day/week service. Language should also be incorporated to permit aggregating individual citizens into a larger community energy project, thereby taking advantage of economies of scale, minimizing installation costs and allowing for optimal project siting.

**3. Prioritize transportation projects that help reduce or minimize GHG emissions.**

In the United States, transportation accounts for around 1/3 of the greenhouse gas emissions, more emissions than any other country except for China. We urge the City to advocate for a method which would determine greenhouse gas impacts from specific projects. These impacts should be incorporated into the funding mechanism and projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be given priority. Examples of projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions could include a community wide traffic light synchronization project, public transportation, non-motorized trail systems, appropriately placed traffic circles and roundabouts, electric vehicle infrastructure, or other relevant projects.

**4. Support rules that allow cities to procure funding for energy retrofit projects.**

Currently local governments in Montana do not have the authority to issue energy bonds. Bonds would help with upfront cost which are frequently cited as one of the reasons for not pursuing energy upgrades. In the long term the community will get a positive financial return on the energy efficiency upgrades. We recommend that the city of Missoula support changing state law so that local governments can support efforts to enhance the City of Missoula's capacity to fund energy retrofit projects.

**5. Advocate for legislation that supports a comprehensive waste disposal program.**

Between 2003 and 2008 the rate at which waste material was recycled in Montana increased from 15% to 19.6%. These values are well below the national average and because of our low population densities, and distance from industry that can use the recycled material, it will take a concerted effort by the state and individuals to increase the recycling rate. We urge the city to advocate for legislation that supports a comprehensive approach to diverting waste from the landfills. Part of the comprehensive approach could be to look for markets and local uses for recycled material.

**6. Promote legislation that supports or provides incentives for sustainable development and oppose legislation that reduces or hinders sustainable development.**

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The State of Montana constitution protects a healthy environment for Montanans. This is a broad category that is hard to pin down precisely until the bills are posted. Areas that may need to be watched include energy development, energy pricing, bio-fuels, building codes and transportation. Tax credits for building energy efficiency improvement projects or renewable energy heating sources should be maintained.

The Committee discussed on the whether or not a vote was needed to support these recommendations. Pam Walzer moved that the Council adopt the recommendations for the City of Missoula to support at the 2011 Montana Legislative Session and direct the Mayor and the City's lobbyist to advocate for these issues.

All members of the committee voted in favor of the motion. The Committee Chair elected to have the item discussed under committee reports and not under consent agenda.

The committee members also recommended to Ben Schmidt who works with Air Quality to provide better communication on notifying citizens during air alerts including a telephone number to contact for information.

**HELD/REFERRED OR ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS –**

1. Information on Trail Projects ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Marilyn Marler) (Referred to committee: 08/23/2010)
2. Reorganization of conservation lands advisory committees. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Marilyn Marler) (Referred to committee: 11/08/10)
3. Consider a new ordinance that will create a process and criteria for the naming of public parks, trails, open space, and recreation facilities. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Jackie Corday) (Referred to committee: 10/25/10)
4. Approve an agreement between the City and Garden City Harvest (GCH) to allow for community gardens on City owned properties that will be identified in the future. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Jackie Corday) (Referred to committee: 10/25/10) (Item tabled in committee 12/08/2010)
5. Budget update on aquatics. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Lyn Hellegaard) (Referred to committee: 11/08/10)
6. Appoint three members who are qualified electors (registered to vote) and either reside in the city limits or within a four and a half mile radius of the city limits to the Open Space Advisory Committee. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Kelly Elam) (Referred to committee: 12/20/10)
7. [Resolution](#) revising City of Missoula Parks and Recreation Fee Schedules for Parks, and Recreation programs, facilities and concessionaires. ([Memo](#)) ([Cons](#)) (Returned from Council floor: 01/03/11)

**V. NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

**ADJOURNMENT** - The meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.