

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Sustainability, Energy & Environment Committee

July 5, 2022

Members: Mary Nichols-Rhodes, Chair
Meika Penta
Susan Spinner
Frank Stams
Adam Miller

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. All members were present.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Res. A-71

Discussion:

Temp. Res. A-71

A resolution authorizing the City of Cuyahoga Falls to become a Power a Clean Future Ohio community, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Cassandra Clevenger, Deputy Director, Power a Clean Future Ohio, presented Temporary Resolution A-71 to Council. Power a Clean Future Ohio is an expansive, diverse coalition engaging with cities and local governments across the state of Ohio to build a clean future for our communities. Local governments have the unique opportunity to achieve energy efficiency and carbon emission reductions and cost savings through building and facilities management; land use and transportation planning; and through economic and community development. Efforts to address energy and climate issues provide an opportunity to move toward energy self-reliance and greater community resiliency and quality of life; provide environmentally healthy and cheaper-to-operate public buildings; encourage new economic development and local jobs; and support local renewable energy production; Power a Clean Future Ohio assists in facilitating technical assistance for the implementation of clean energy policies. Power a Clean Future Ohio provides cost-effective sustainable development policies in the following four categories: (1) Renewable Energy; (2) Energy Efficiency; (3) Transportation Electrification; and (4) Land Use.

Council will be asked to vote to express its support to join in Power a Clean Future Ohio (PCFO) so that the City can be recognized as a Power a Clean Future Community. If approved, Council will appoint Parks and Recreation Superintendent Sara Kline and Council Member Mary Nichols-Rhodes, or their designees, to serve as the City's PCFO co-coordinators for implementation of the plan.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes enumerated a number of measures the City has taken to reduce energy use, such as replacing 3,000 street light bulbs with LEDs and hybrid vehicles in the Police Department, which are making Cuyahoga Falls a leader in environmental sustainability.

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Mrs. Spinner stated that she was excited to know that the initial buy-in is zero dollars for the services provided by Power a Clean Future Ohio. She stated that she is proud of her neighbors, Ben and Becky Stein, who have powered their home with rooftop solar panels. That is a daunting project to undertake, so educating people on how it is an easier option or providing resources would be great.

Mr. Gorbach thanked Ms. Nichols-Rhodes for arranging this presentation and Ms. Clevenger for addressing Council and the Administration. He asked if their organization provides an overall assessment of the community so that they would have a focus of to where to start once a community signs up.

Ms. Clevenger stated that it is a survey. The things they offer are a consulting service and all the technical support. The purpose of that survey is to determine where the community is in its sustainability and where it wants to go moving forward. It covers a lot of city departments. After getting back that survey, they set up a meeting with their technical assistant and develop a plan and work at this plan at the community's own pace.

Mr. Balthis stated that the City has a lot of good things that they are trying to do. One thing that he thinks would be helpful is some guidance as to the amount of work something would take and what type of impact that would have. That kind of data would help prioritize and make these initiatives that the Administration has been pushing for years a bit more organized, so they can make progress. He asked if that were something with which Power a Clean Future Ohio would help.

Ms. Clevenger stated that that is exactly what they do. Within that inventory, there is a series of recommendations that they can take. They will tell them if they are low or high impact and if they are going to be hard or easy to do, and then they can start using those different elements to put together where the community's plan will be and on what they can focus.

Mr. Balthis stated that this type of work is important not only from a sustainability and environmental perspective, but because the City has common-use electrical usage, which, as a public power company, flows into residents' electrical bills. Anything they can do to save the cost trickle-through and save residents money in addition to the important environmental needs is important. He asked how Power a Clean Future Ohio is funded and how they have the resources to do this important work.

Ms. Clevenger stated that their fiscal sponsor is the Ohio Environmental Council, of which she is an employee. They are funded through philanthropy. One of their big donors is the Gund Foundation.

Mr. Brillhart stated that he strongly supports this resolution, because it shows leadership on their part and sets a good example to the community for not only providing a clean environment, but also saving money and resources.

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Mr. Austin Rau, 830 Jefferson Avenue, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 44221, spoke in favor of the resolution.

Mr. Tim Ricks, 3043 Timber Brook Drive, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 44223, spoke in favor of the resolution.

Ms. Savannah Snyder-Mack, 2530 Valley View Drive, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 44223, spoke in favor of the resolution.

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Stein, 1408 Falls Avenue, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 44221, spoke in favor of the resolution.

Mr. Miller moved to bring out Temp. Res. A-71 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Penta. Motion passed (3-0).

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.