SUSTAINABLE LA CROSSE COMMISSION
Thursday, September 17, 2015
Administrative Center, Room 3220, 400 N. 4th St., La Crosse
4:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Giese, Harvey Bertrand, Tom Thompson, Rob Tyser, Dave Niemi, Dorothy Lenard, Martin Gaul, Jai Johnson

MEMBERS EXCUSED: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: Keyla Rosa

OTHERS PRESENT: Nick Nichols, Jason Gilman, Joyce Cielecki, Marilyn Pedretti, Mike Herro, Amy Peterson, Maureen Freedland, Brad Williams, Alice Sorenson

CALL TO ORDER
Mike Giese called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF JULY 16, 2015
MOTION by Niemi/Gaul to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2015 meeting. Motion carried unanimously with 1 absent – Rosa.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

STAFF REPORTS/INFORMATIONAL UPDATES
Nick Nichols from Solid Waste reported on activities:

- The Solid Waste has a Diversion Program at the Landfill where they take bicycles out and give to the Logan Middle School. Logan took the bicycles and taught the children how to rebuild them. Since Logan lost their storage area, the LaCrescent community is doing the same program and the Landfill is now diverting all of their bicycles to them. 500 lbs of bicycles have been diverted to them in the last several months.

- Hank Koch did a presentation to the Hochunk regarding trails and converting a sedimentation basin into a bear mound. Next step is to talk to their tribal court to see if there is interest.

- A boardwalk in the wetland has been constructed. It was an Eagle Scout project and there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony sometime in October.

- Nick did an interview with the local news and television on the EPA Clean Power Plant, Wisconsin Environment Campaign, which is a non-profit organization reporting on the value of water and what it means to tourism in the state.

- Nick toured Harter's Recycling facility with staff members. Harter's does all the recycling for the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska. An intern did a study and reported that the recycling rate in the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska had gone up 137%.

- Nick toured Green Earth Composting where all garden and leaf waste at the Landfill goes.
Solid Waste was approached by Xcel Energy concerning a community solar project. The landfill doesn’t have the land needed to do a project but possibly Lakeview does.

Nick met Chad Pegracke at the International Wild Conference. Chad is a National Geographic recognized award winner and CNN Person of the Year. He has made it his life’s work to clean up the Mississippi River and other American waterways with a tug boat.

Nick attended the State Farm Technology Show in Sun Prairie, WI. Ag bags are a real issue and can’t be sent to the Xcel Energy Plant because when it gets into their processing system, it gets wrapped up in their conveyor belts. There is a pilot program in Green County where this company is supplying dumpsters to individual farmers for placement of this material. A local hauler picks it up and it is shipped to Alabama for processing.

Nick met with a group doing a raptor project from Decorah, Iowa who got a tour of the landfill. They will be helping with more Eagle Scout projects.

The Dirty Jobs Program was held on Tuesday, September 15, 2015. It is a program at the landfill where the operations on many different programs are shown.

The Bioblitz will be held on Saturday, September 19, 2015.

Nick attended a waste audit at the Tomah VA where a sample amount of material is taken out of a dumpster, dumped on a table, and gone through to see if there is anything that is recyclable. The audit was to get a feel for the type of waste that is disposed of.

Monday, September 21, 2015 is the Wisconsin Counties Association Conference in La Crosse. Solid Waste Department will have a booth there.

CITY OF LACROSSE SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS REPORT UPDATE

Amy Peterson from the City of La Crosse emailed a draft of the Indicators Report to all committee members. Amy asked the committee to review the report and get comments back to her within the next 2 weeks. The report covers the years of 2013 and 2014. Rob Tyser suggested that a short presentation concerning this report be given to the City Council and County Board for information purposes as well as placing it on the website once it’s finalized. Chair Giese agreed with that suggestion and would like this commission to be involved with the presentations. Discussion ensued. **MOTION by Tyser/Thompson to submit the final version of the Indicators Report to this Commission by November 1, 2015 and place the report on the agenda of the 3rd Thursday of November meeting of the Sustainable La Crosse Commission. Motion carried unanimously with 1 absent – Rosa.**

Amy Peterson indicated that the City of La Crosse is a Green Tier Legacy Community. There is a meeting scheduled with the Mayor and City Department Heads next week to discuss this program. The City signed on as part of a Sunshot
Grant and as part of that grant, the city could do some policy, zoning and permitting to look at those processes. The Green Tier Communities have a large benchmarking program and are looking to hire one position that would service 14 counties. If approved in the Operating Budget, the City of La Crosse will fund approximately $8,000 towards that position. Hopefully with Green Tier allowing Counties into their program, the vision would be that the City and County could start benchmarking together and expand the Indicators Report into a much larger report in the future.

**XCEL ENERGY CONTRACT EXTENSION WITH LA CROSSE COUNTY, REPLY TO SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT REPORT TO SUSTAINABLE LA CROSSE COMMISSION**

As a follow-up to Hank Koch’s report from last month, there were a number of suggestions in the minutes for the Sustainability La Crosse Commission to become better informed and engaged in this Xcel Energy Contract Extension process. Chair Giese indicated that he feels the Commission needs to continue to give Hank feedback as they go forward on this contract and other initiatives. Nick Nichols stated that they are looking for basic feedback on whether or not to move forward with the negotiations with Xcel Energy or look at something else. Nichols indicated that they have received 100% positive feedback to continue with Xcel Energy and would like this Commission’s support with that decision. **MOTION by Tyser/Gaul to support negotiations for continuation of the Waste-to-Energy Plant on French Island and encourage an effort to negotiate an extension of the contract. Discussion ensued. Motion carried unanimously with 1 absent – Rosa.**

**REPORT FROM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ON BIODIVERSITY GROUP**

Joyce Cielecki, Biodiversity Educator, from the County Health Department gave a power point presentation concerning Outdoor Nature Exposure as a Public Health Strategy: Connecting with Nature as an Upstream Health Promotion. A grant was initiated by the Biodiversity Task Force, an ad hoc group of community members who are dedicated to the environment and to the health of our community. The 3 year grant was funded through the La Crosse Community Foundation. The purpose is to help all people of La Crosse County, regardless of age, income, or disability, achieve better health through connecting with nature in a meaningful way. The benefits of connecting with nature are:

- Psychological well-being
- Cognitive
- Physiological
- Social
- Spiritual
- Tangible
REPORT ON PROPOSED SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS: EXCEL ENERGY AND TOWN OF HOLLAND

Mike Herro from Xcel presented some facts and figures about Xcel Energy and indicated that solar energy is starting to increase at the utilities scale. Xcel will be putting in more solar in years to come particularly in programs in Minnesota, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas which are very good solar areas. Xcel Energy WI filed a proposal for a community solar garden pilot program with the PSC. The proposal is for up to 3 MW total of solar. Each solar garden will be no more than 1 MW in size. Subscriptions will be offered to customers in 200 watt increments, up to a maximum subscription of 400 KW and limits any single subscriber to 40% of a single garden. Customer subscribers will participate in SolarConnect with upfront payments designed to cover the cost of the program. In exchange, customer subscribers will pay a separate amount per kWh for the solar generated by their subscribed share. The solar amount per kWh may be lower than their current rate. Xcel will solicit solar garden bids from solar developers for power purchase agreements (PPAs) and Xcel plans to interact directly with customers to deliver the program. A solar garden will only be developed if there are enough subscribers for the garden’s capacity. The plan is to have several “regional” solar gardens, approximately 500 kW to 1 MW each, located throughout the Wisconsin service territory in 2016. Mike gave an example of how the program would work for a customer.

Marilyn Pedretti indicated that the Town of Holland has been impacted with the CapX 2020 going through the township and has upset many citizens. A committee was formed in September of 2014 to study the possibility of installing a solar farm on Town property. This project is on hold due to Dairyland Power’s announcement of a 1-megawatt solar farm bid request. Discussion ensued.

MEETING SCHEDULE/NEXT MEETING DATE: 3rd Thursday in November, November 19, 2015 at 4:30 p.m.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:
Indicators Report

ADJOURNMENT
MOTION by Johnson/Lenard to adjourn the meeting at 6:01 p.m. Motion carried unanimously with 1 absent – Rosa

Approved November 19, 2015, Alice Sorenson, Recorder