CITY OF FAIRBORN
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
June 16, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
Fire Training Room

COUNCIL MEMBERS	Present	Absent
Dan Kirkpatrick, Mayor	☒	☐
Clint Allen, Councilman	☒	☐
Sylvia Chess, Councilwoman	☒	☐
Adam Fritzsche, Councilman	☒	☐
Rodney McCubbins, Councilman	☒	☐
Mary Reaster, Deputy Mayor	☒	☐
Tana Stanton, Councilwoman	☒	☐

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Browning, E. Gay, Gebhart, McNamee, Petty, Taylor, and Wellbaum.

FAIRBORN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

Mike Gebhart, City Manager, had one item before they got started. The Executive Session will be back in the Fire Training Room at the end of the Council meeting. Just because there are two monitors in the room and they will be zooming in with the labor attorney.

Mr. Gebhart stated that when Tana and he talked about this they were going to have the new board members for the Fairborn Environmental Advisory Board here to introduce and then have a discussion. After Tana goes through that process to spin back around, he knows Tana sent an email to everyone with items that the FEAB has been working on. He would also like to start a discussion about updating the MOU with the FEAB since it is two years old and usually, we renew MOUs every 12-24 months.

Councilwoman Stanton was not sure if everyone had a chance to read it all as it was a little long, she sent the following documents: Fairborn Environmental Sustainability Resilience City Council Goal Update. She originally made it a week ago for herself so she can provide updates at the Council meetings, but after this meeting got readjusted, she thought everyone could use the summary from day one and all the work that has happened since then.

As Mr. Gebhart said they were planning on trying to come to the work sessions. Initially what the FEAB requested was because they are having such a hard time getting one meeting like this to go through the entire update from where they took the comments from everyone here and reworked the plan. Part of the plan what they were trying to do was Mary Reaster made some really good points the first time they presented the plan. Every goal should have had a number associated with it so they would know the cost of it and then they would know what they were asking of the staff. That was one specific question, and it was related to this document. Some of the other questions were more about

technology and the risk or are they reaching too far. So, the FEAB took a step back and made them less aggressive. The goal was to come back with the updated presentations where they would have a total estimated hours of what they estimate on the City staff to be involved in, what the FEAB would be involved and then what any expert consultants what their hours would be like. It was a high-level estimate. Just to meet with the City and see if it was reasonable. She met with Emily Gay and talked about one of the items on it is the City web page, so they sat down and talked about all the different projects and who could provide a template. PCFO is going to provide a lot of templates. They talked through the hours. She explained that is where they are on a lot of the projects where it is just a scheduling issue between the FEAB members who are assigned to lead the projects. Some of them they know who their City person is and some of those meetings have occurred. Some meetings have already happened with Waste Management and Recycling with Terry Adkins. The introductory SOPEC which was one of the topics for tonight had happened. We are at a point now where they really need to finish those to be able to make a presentation so Council can review the updated draft. They are having a challenge with getting everyone together to get these done to be able to finalize that plan.

The FEAB is not meeting every month anymore because this is really all that needs to be done to update the plan. There is no point in them having meetings because it all needs to be with the City at this point. All the meetings are related to the subcommittees wanting to come to talk to their related counterparts in the City. Audrey and Ben who are here tonight thought they were going to be presenting on SOPEC and Sol Smart which we will postpone but they had experts lined up and had meetings ahead of time. They thought that since we don't work sessions that are big enough to have one large presentation, and it is overwhelming so they would like to come for 15 minutes of each work session and spread them out over a couple of months until all the topics have been discussed. That way people would have time to look at it and bring forth questions and then they would get to some point three months down the road where everyone would have seen it and given feedback. Then they would be at a point where they would be ready to do a Resolution on it. That is where they thought they were going to be tonight, but then they hit a glitch with a miscommunication about the topic. She provided a high-level view of activities the FEAB would like to pursue. She provided a list of the current FEAB members as well.

From the time that they started meeting as the FEAB in February 2023 Dan Kirkpatrick came on shortly after that because he was the Chamber Executive Director and they wanted someone on the Chamber included, then Tana Stanton was the Chair of the FEAB, and he became the Vice Chair. They continue to recruit from within and so two of their recruits in the last year are Audrey McGowin, who has been with the FEAB for at least a year, working specifically on Waste Management as the lead of the subcommittee. They did an election to see who would want to continue this they have a milestone achievement that it is no longer led by Council people. It is now led by Audrey McGowin is the new Chair and Ben Sutter is the new Vice Chair.

Audrey McGowin introduced herself and provided a brief background. She is retired from Wright State University, as a Chemistry professor. Her specialty is Environmental Chemistry and analytical Chemistry. She is a 31-year resident of the City of Fairborn. She loves Fairborn. This is why she wants to be involved. Now that she has a little bit more time, she would like to learn how the City works and get a sense of how she can contribute

what she knows. This was a good fit for her. Tana and the committee have worked very hard to find opportunities for us. She just came back from Delaware and was reading the newspapers that cities are meeting and talking about their plan. They are talking about sustainability. Every City has its challenges. Cities are having substantial conversations of what does sustainability look like for us. We have power outages here. It is not just about flowers and trees. They are talking about what happens to Fairborn when the grid goes down. She wants to look at those things and be a part of that conversation. What she thinks is as a committee she would like to help facilitate that conversation in our town. How will we deal with these things? She would like to collaborate with the Air Force Base in some way. The Air Force is making a lot of energy upgrades in some of their buildings. She has also been participating in the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission meetings, their Environmental groups, so she is learning what the other towns are doing in our area. She feels like Fairborn is a little behind. She is asking where is Fairborn? The committee and Tana Stanton have put together some options for them to consider, but she does not think that is the entire picture. We need to have sustainability plans. She purchased her own solar panels, and her electric bill came, and it is zero dollars. Not everyone can afford that, so how do we help people in our city to do sustainability for themselves if they are renters in an apartment? If they have a small home, how do we help them get on board? There are a lot of things they need to look at, not just the high level you can afford it kind of thing.

Ben Sutter introduced himself saying he is a lifelong Daytonian but has lived in Fairborn for about 11 years now. He loves Fairborn. He grew up going to Stivers for high school and then he got his graphic arts degree at Sinclair, afterwards he continued his education getting a Chemistry degree at Wright State University. He now works at Yellow Springs Instruments where for about eight years he worked on Environmental apparatus. Basically, helping other people do things for the environment, participating in trash clean ups, river clean ups and sustainability efforts. He joined this group because there are a lot of common-sense things that Audrey alluded to that he thinks the City can do and the only reason it has not been done is because no one has done it yet. He did not realize how much it sometimes takes just a little push for someone to be there to do it. He is more than happy to assist with that. He looks forward to working with the City.

Mike Gebhart, City Manager, stated from his standpoint he needs direction from Council. He has so much coming at him not only from this but from other things as well. That is why he thinks it is important that Council re-examine the MOU and make sure it is how we need things to move forward so that this can go forward. He felt like the 2023 document was large. He would like to see it refined. He just needs clarification on what the priorities are from Council for sustainability. It is his hope that they can start to have that discussion tonight and then add on to it as they move along. One of his big concerns is staff time. Only because even with him, he doesn't have a lot of free time. He gets bogged down doing other things and he can't dedicate himself to things like this and other things. He thinks some clarification would really help. He does not expect that to be done totally tonight, but he thinks there are going to be additional work session discussions about this. He did print out for everyone the Resolution that approved the current MOU plus a copy of the MOU for their reference moving forward. His main question to start the discussion is where we go from here.

Councilman Allen thanked Tana Stanton for the read a head and for working hard o this particular topic. He thanked Audrey and Ben for coming in and being a part of the

sustainability effort. He understands what Mr. Gebhart is saying about the size of it. Tana has been in front of Council a couple of times now just to figure out what we really want to do from the sustainability standpoint. He appreciates the fact that it has been all citizen led for the most part. How do we, in terms of money and expenditure and time and all those other things, formalize this group and make it a City Board or a City-led entity or something to that effect? He thinks based on the work that they have done from his idea that is the next logical transition. How do we do that and not disrupt the apple cart. There are some things that have already been expressed by Audrey that we can consider and tease out. Nothing is hard core and nothing is hey, you have to do this. Nothing is a forced entry on anything. He does think if we are going to be serious as a City we need to formalize a Board or Committee or group so we can start to move forward with some of these considerations.

Deputy Mayor Reaster agrees with a lot of the points made; however, she still stands on her position and she loves a lot of things that they are working on, and she is by no means criticizing that. She does see a lot of LRP projects that are going to be big dollars that we budget out five years. They have to start looking at what does that look like and start planning for that down the road. She used to put solar panels on the building as an example. If we are going to do that what is that going to look like and obviously with inflation that will change but we have to plan for that as we all know we have a five-year budget. We can't just throw a wrench in there and say here is a big expenditure especially when we have crazy things coming at them that were not anticipated. However, she has great apprehension on making it an official Boar of the City. Because as she said the last time it was discussed where do we draw the line? The next organization that comes along and says we want to be an official board of the City and then the next one says we want to be a board of the City. How do you determine who you say yes to and who you say no to. She thinks we can support the goals as a City without it being an official board. Councilwoman Stanton stated it was not as if this board formed as a citizen group and came to Council. There were four people here who got elected on sustainability and are trying to deliver what the voters want. They tried it without it being a board and she understands the City is busy and even the way they made the MOU last time it was the City will maintain a page on its website with information and the Environmental Board can request the presence of city employees at their meetings and then the City will work with the FEAB on the development and implementation of the Fairborn Sustainability and Resilience Plan. Honestly, because it is not assigned to anyone at the City that is where they run into it. Deputy Mayor Reaster stated that it doesn't change with it being an advisory board with a direct report to the City. You are still advising. Here are some things we would like to do and take Council of it and the City can say we can't afford that it is not in the LIP. Councilwoman Stanton stated that is the part where they are running into the issue. They are trying to have conversations about the plan. Deputy Mayor Reaster asked to back up a second when they did all of that they had a different City Manager. We have a new City Manager who has his first year under his belt. She gets the impression that he is committed to supporting these things financially as long as we can afford them. She understands the hitch in the get along as far as the commitment request from the staff. She understands it as she sees it in her own organization drawing parallels between apples and oranges. She gets the impression and correct her if she is wrong, Mike, that based on what he said now and before he is committed to supporting this and Council is supportive of this with limitations obviously because of the dollars attached. That is her push back on this. She is all in on a lot of these things other than the big-ticket items that we can't afford to write the check for. Councilwoman Stanton stated she

did not bring the detailed list of those, but they did rework those two items, the energy efficiency and the solar based on Council's comments and we actually made it with a bunch of exit ramps. First learn about technology. Is it to high risk then we can exit, not more project. Then do we want to proceed to see what it would look like financially, let's bring it so they can talk about that. They made it a project where Council would have several decision points after they learn from experts that they can cancel at any time. So those two projects don't have money assigned to it. Because the final decision is just do you want to proceed with doing an RFP for it at some point. The project itself is to explore and learn. Those two items would be zero budget.

Deputy Mayor Reaster asked what difference they envision in being how they are as an advisory board now versus a City official advisory board. What changes? Councilwoman Stanton stated because if you have a City Board you have one person from the staff assigned to come to all the meetings and then it is a partnership then between the City and the group. That is what they are struggling with is accessing the City to get this over the finish line. Deputy Mayor Reaster said that is the only difference between point a and b for her. Councilwoman Stanton stated it is the accountability from the City's side. Deputy Mayor Reaster stated so even if you have that point person and we stay at point a and someone says they will be that point person and put that time in on their personal time. Councilwoman Stanton said no that's not how boards work. Like the Parks and Recreation Board is like Chris Barker or someone from the Parks and Recreation Department goes and then they get to flex their time. Mike Gebhart, City Manage, stated no, as a Director doesn't flex his time. He is just because he is here, he is here. Councilwoman Stanton stated it is the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and it does have a staff person assigned to it. Mr. Gebhart stated to him it is kind of a double-edged issue because Chris supports two separate boards, one that is not a City Board, the Parks Foundation and he also supports the City Parks and Recreation Board. Both boards, whether they are an official board or an unofficial board of the City, have the ear of staff. Councilwoman Stanton stated they are on the website. It helps recruit members. There is visibility. Mr. Gebhart stated the one thing they will discuss with the Capital Budget in August. Hilary and he have talked about this, and they are going to go super lean on capital projects in 2026 and 2027 to pay down debt we currently have. Then they will go back with a more robust program in 2028 based on those paydowns. Just so everyone has that base knowledge. He will be honest, if he had a staff member to dedicate to be for the board he thinks that would bring information back to him, but Chris is already supporting two boards. Being that Chris oversees buildings and grounds which would be the solar panels take place we are piling more on his plate. If he does a project manager or an assistant City Manager could work with the FEAB more regularly, so at that point he does not know if it really matters whether it is an official board or an unofficial board because they will have a staff member dedicated to them more than an intern.

Councilman Allen stated that is how he views an official board is that there is a work assignment of one hour a month, two hours a week whatever that assignment is in that person's statement of work. He does not see it as a full time eight hours a day type situation. He thinks a lot of the heavy lifting and the work and ideas that come from the ground floor is already there. What they don't talk about here are some of the other experts that they brought to the table to help build some of this infrastructure into the plan. The Miami Valley Regional Planning and some other agencies that talked through what sustainability looks like. It is more than just solar panels. They rise to the top quickly, but it is more than that. There are other examples of what we are doing to sustain what are

we doing to help regenerate? What are we doing to help move the dial on the environment just for Fairborn to make it clean. To make it clean and livable for what our residents want it to be. He does not think there is an initial outlay of money. Anything that talks about money comes back to the City for discussion. One more point is a plan is our best strategy to move forward. He thinks it is longer than three years. Councilwoman Stanton stated what they learned from the experts is if you look at some cities if you look at Dayton, they have a humongous, long document. Then they have a separate one with projects. We don't have a Sustainability Department. We didn't have time to put together research all this plan, so they met with people. What they are doing is probably closer to a Sustainability memo which is when you pick six projects and say over the next three years or whatever we are going to do them. What they did was a Sustainability plan from 2025-2027. They are at the point where the team has met with all the experts, and they have the plans, and they have touched base a little bit with the City, and they are just having a hard time getting this final piece. It is not even much that needs to happen. It is just this little conversation that needs to happen on each one just to say really what it is going to cost. She is not talking hundreds of thousands of dollars. She is talking about material to put pollinators in the park. Does that get covered in the normal budget? Do we think no mowing is going to offset the cost of not having to mow that area?

Councilwoman Stanton stated the Tree City USA folks have already done the expensive part they have gone to the training. They found out the City is basically already doing everything they need to do to be a Tree City other than having the Tree Board which could be if it became a formal Board. They don't need money. They thought at first, they did need to allocate $68,000 in the budget to meet the per capita requirement, but it turns out you can offset it with things they are already doing. We already do a good job with parks. They did not want to go into as a big budget thing. She discussed how Grove City and Dayton did their plans.

Mayor Kirkpatrick stated he has given a lot of thought to this, and he thinks from where they started and where they are now, they have made some significant progress. His fear is if they become a City Board is that it is just a City Board. He would like the FEAB to be bigger than the City Board. He would like to see Wright State University and the Base actively involved. He would like to see the downtown Fairborn businesses involved. He would like to see some neighbors involved as well. He wants it to be bigger than the City. His fear is if they make it a City Board then the other groups are going to say well it is a City Board. He wants this to become the culture of the entire community. He believes the City to be a big part of this absolutely, but he personally does not think it should be a City board because to him that says to other people that it is a City Board let them deal with it. He said that they have Audrey who is from Wright State who is now the chair that takes it out of the City. When he and Councilwoman Stanton were the chairs, it identified it as a City thing. He loves the fact that she is from Wright State. The fact that Audrey has that background from Wright State he would love to have her pull in some more people from Wright State and Ben to pull in some people from his background and his area. He wants it to be bigger than just the City. He would like to see people from different youth groups, the Boy Scouts, Fairborn City Schools, to have that representation on the Board. Councilwoman Stanton stated she heard what he was saying, and it sounds beautiful, but they have been waiting a year just to pass the meager little plan. They need to draw a line in the sand and get something done. She disagreed with Mayor Kirkpatrick respectfully. She was on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and they had subcommittees that reached out to Wright State, and they did involve the other people.

They have reached out to Wright State and the schools about the natural wildlife habitat. They have asked other people to join this board, and they have not. Councilwoman Stanton stated they just keep kicking this down the road and not accomplishing anything. Her reflection on it is that she wished she had fought for it to be a City Board because then there would be more ownership from the City. She thinks this would have been done if that was the case and she guesses that is why she is pushing for that to happen. If Council can come up with another alternative that gets this done within the next couple of months so that they as a City with the four of them that ran on sustainability can deliver for our citizens and vote to approve a plan that is what she wants. She wants to approve either this plan or a modified plan with everyone's input so they can start implementing it.

Mike Gebhart, City Manager, stated an MOU update would be a good thing. They also have to understand there is a guilt by association. A lot of people don't hold the City in high regard so if you become a Board of the City that is where Dan Kirkpatrick comes in and says, eh. You have to understand, and he has to understand people don't have the same passion as the FEAB members do and that is why he thinks they don't see people jumping. There is an educational component to get our residents interested in it. Councilwoman Stanton stated that is part of the plan. There is education in the Tree City and the National Wildlife. They have done a great job of making the plan and all we have to do is finish it and implement it. Mr. Gebhart asked Councilwoman Stanton is how does the City finish that for them other than providing eight hours of staff time. The committee will still have to do the educational part. Councilwoman Stanton agreed saying they have projects for each plan that lists things like that out. All they need is to finish out getting the estimated hours for the City staff. They already have the estimated hours for the FEAB people and the experts that are going to help with community engagement. This cannot be done without the City cooperating. Mayor Kirkpatrick stated the City should be a huge part of this. Councilwoman Stanton stated that is what they are stumbling on. He agreed. He wants the whole community involved. This is very important to him. Our environment is our future. He would like to see a way to get more of the community involved. Councilman Allen asked if they get there from just the ask or is he talking something organic. Deputy Mayor Reaster sees it as being organic. Such as the event the FEAB had the event, and a gentleman came out and talked about composting and such. Having those kinds of things and getting to school and coordinate with them. A lot of people are starting to garden at home because goods are so expensive. Maybe small, more grass roots bringing them in and starting the dialogue starts that. She thinks if we just throw it at the citizens, they are going to be like I'm not putting a solar panel on my house. It is bigger than that, it is way more than that. If you look at the socials our citizens don't read past headlines. All they see is Sustainability and they think this is going to cost me a lot of money. So, what if we just start in the grass roots and we start having more of those types of events to garner the buy in from the citizens. Councilwoman Stanton stated she is so sorry but four of them got elected on sustainability on their literature and she received the most votes in the last election and she was the boldest and that was what they got elected on. Mayor Kirkpatrick said they were not ignoring her. Everything everyone is saying is awesome and they are all things this board has said.

Councilwoman Chess had an opportunity to look at the data that was given to her and she was not here when all this began, but from what she has read there has been a lot of work going on with this. There have been a lot of experts who have given advice on what we should do. It looks like to her that the City is constantly just kicking the can down the road to make it someone's responsibility to be able to take care of this. She is in total

agreement with Councilwoman Stanton and the people that stand on this because she feels like it should be done. She believes what they have in front of them is a wonderful plan, something that they can start. If there are any revisions to be made, they can make those revisions as they go along. She thinks that the can has been kicked down the road long enough. Memorandums and MOUs are just not good enough. It is time to decide what they are going to do about it. Councilman McCubbins stated this same Council just set here when they passed the budget and said Mike Gebhart doesn't need an assistant. There are things that he needs to get done that are not getting done because he doesn't have an assistant because we wanted to save money. Mr. Gebhart's point is who is going to do it. Councilwoman Chess stated she understood what he was saying. He is overworked right now. Councilwoman Chess stated her understanding is that FEAB does not meet every month. How many times do they meet? Councilwoman Stanton stated they originally met every month when they worked with the experts to design this plan, but her recommendation now would be that it is a quarterly meeting because now all they have to do is follow the progress of the plan. They need to look at the draft documents. Councilwoman Chess asked how many hours that would take within the month or year. Councilwoman Stanton stated if they had a board and it met quarterly which is what these people were planning to do it would be an hour meeting so it would four hours of the meeting part and that would be the communication of updating back to the City and the projects themselves are disbursed through the City. Councilwoman Chess stated so right now they are looking at zero budget, right? Councilwoman Stanton stated they are waiting because there may be very minor budget things. Councilwoman Chess asked what it would take to get the meeting with the City. Mike Gebhart responded the meetings with the City are with him and he would just have to find time. That is what he is saying he does not have enough time to do all of this stuff. When someone comes to him and says they need 8 to 12 hours here, it is either him or Chris Barker as the Parks and Recreation Director. There are things they can do right now. The Sol Smart would be easy enough. They need to look at the NWF to see the amount that would be needed per park. They could do a few of those. The question is when he gets in of a morning and he is out of the office most of the day because he already has meetings where he finds the time to do this and then people perceive this as him not being interested. He was honest and this is a priority for him, but it is not a passion. He applauds them for their passion. He has to fit in the day-to-day operations of the City also. Councilwoman Chess stated she understood that. Mr. Gebhart stated that is his frustrating point. He would want a clearly defined role. He would want to know if they agreed on certain items and they move forward on those. The overarching document was huge. He felt like the initial plan he was given was multiple pages and there is no way he can tackle that. Councilwoman Stanton stated that was a presentation that was meant to create a lot of detail, but the thing she provided them today is all of it really. They have been ready to do Tree City for three plus years. We could have had the legislation in place in 2023 they just didn't. They didn't have the board set and done the legislation they just didn't. Councilwoman Stanton suggested having one big work session to go over the plan. Hilary Browning, Finance Director, stated she was one of the authors of Dayton's plan. What she thinks is important to know about it is that it took them three years and it took endless staff hours into it and then a community board was established. The sustainability office did not come until well after the plan was created. One of the things they said they would do was identify the low hanging fruit first. They would identify the least expensive and pursue those things first to see if they were successful and then move on. Just because she has done this work before she would recommend identifying two or three low hanging fruit that everyone can agree on. It was not until there was momentum for the plan that

they could start the plan. The other thing is just on the volunteers is the need for a grant writer and that was a critical piece that the City of Dayton had. She would recommend finding a volunteer who could write grants. Then you would be better able to solve some of your financing issues. As the City's Finance Director, we cannot afford to issue bonds for large capital projects at this time. This must be taken into consideration. Councilwoman Stanton said they received the same type of advice from Meg Maloney.

Deputy Mayor Reaster stated she is in favor of having a Special Meeting just to hammer this out. Councilwoman Stanton stated that would be awesome. Mayor Kirkpatrick agreed. Deputy Mayor Reaster stated if it takes three hours fine, just not before a Council meeting so we can hammer it out. Mayor Kirkpatrick asked that they look into setting up a separate meeting for this. Mayor Kirkpatrick wants this to be the schools, the university, the Base, the neighborhoods, and the downtown people. His fear is if they make it a City Board it is just a City Board.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

Mike Gebhart, City Manager, stated when they go down to the meeting there is a proclamation tonight for Emma Miller to be the Mayor for the Day on July 4th. This came from a gentleman who is 1975 was the Fairborn Park Hills Mayor for the Day. He rode in the 25th anniversary 4th of July parade and the 50th and now he is riding in the 75th. He wanted to know if we had Mayor for the Day. This is a request that came from the schools. Emma Miller is the Senior class president for the class of 2025. She will not be joining us tonight, one of her relatives will be accepting the proclamation on her behalf.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Kirkpatrick stated on Ordinance 15-25 during the regular meeting involves the Veterans Memorial so he will actually step out of the room and Deputy Mayor Reaster will coordinate that and then he will return to the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Fritzsche moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Stanton seconded. Yeas, seven: Fritzsche, Stanton, Allen, Chess, Reaster, McCubbins and Kirkpatrick. Nays, none. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

MAYOR

CLERK, CITY OF FAIRBORN