First Unitarian Universalist Society of Marietta

Green Sanctuary Committee Meeting

12:30 p.m., Sunday, July 18, 2021

Hybrid meeting: Dawn Hewitt's home and Zoom platform

In attendance: George Banziger, Mike Bailey, Adeline Bailey, Rebecca Phillips, Maggie Meyer, Andrew Clovis (board liaison), Roger Kalter, Dave Ballantyne, Shari Ballantyne; and participating via Zoom: Cindy Taylor, Chris Jacobs, Kelcey Jacobs, and Ginnie McNeil; and Dawn Hewitt, co-chair.

Dawn called the meeting to order at 12:43 p.m. The group thanked Dawn for hosting the meeting.

**Minutesof the June meeting** were approved.

**DuPont Grant Pollinator Habitat Project: Update from Rebecca Phillips**

Rebecca noted that a watering schedule needs to be set up.Her report, as sent to the Green list via email, is below, interspersed in red with discussion/decisions from the meeting:

***Pollinator Habitat Update:***

a. Status - Going well. Have shared pictures on FB. Getting good support from neighbors. Hose storage at the Mark Swaney house; volunteer help from Harmar neighbors.

b. Schedule of volunteers - Right now, Tuesday is our regular work day. (Not sure how it turned out to be Tuesday, just what happened.) We will be spreading more mulch and weeding this Tuesday at 7:45. The good news is the weeds are getting under control as the plants spread.

We do need a watering schedule, or at least a schedule to see if the site needs watering. The mulch is helping, so I am guessing that we may be able to move to a twice-a-week schedule. (I had been checking every other day in dry spells.) Since we already have volunteers onsite on Tuesdays, does Friday seem the logical second day? Friday agreed upon; preferable to water in the morning, but other times acceptable. 100 ft. hose, ground spigot near plum tree on site. Schedule for July and August: July 23 - Dawn Hewitt; July 30 - Roger Kalter; August 6 - Maggie Meyer; August 13 - George Banziger; August 20 - Dawn; August 27 - Roger.

c. Harmar Days volunteers

Questions:

* Since I am also volunteering with Main Street West, the bridge company has put us together in the Maple Street green space, upwind (we hope) of the steam engine but several hundred feet from the site.
* Should we have two tables, one at each location? Maple Street table definite; perhaps schedule tours "on the hour" depending on number of volunteers to staff table.
* Should we put a table just at the site and hope for foot traffic?
* If we go with just the Maple Street table, might we want to schedule tours—someone to take interested people down to the site and point out what's blooming and what pollinators are visiting? Yes, to scheduled tours! Andrew Clovis suggested signs to identify plants to aid tour. He will ask to borrow them from his work.
* Festival hours: specific times have not yet been announced, but I am guessing Friday evening, most of Saturday, and Sunday afternoon. How long should our shifts be? Volunteers: Shari and Dave - Friday or Sunday; Maggie - Saturday; Andrew Saturday or Sunday. Others suggested: Claire and Moon Mullen, Sandra Kolankiewicz, Vic Elam.

I will have talking points for anyone who needs reminders about specifics of the project. Questions were raised about reasons for native plants. Rebecca, Andrew, and Dawn shared information about the decline in bird populations in large part due to the loss of insect populations that the birds rely on for food, and that loss due to the lack of native plant habitats - many very specific species - that the insects (and pollinators) rely on to reproduce and feed their larvae. Perhaps this info will be part of the script and handout material.

1. Signs

I have ordered one 18x24-inch two-sided sign with a stake for $28. (As Cindy Taylor noted in a conversation, a properly-placed two-sided sign will be visible from both Fort Street and the river trail.) At some point, we may want something larger and more permanent than a yard sign with a wire stake, since those are easy to steal or vandalize. Rebecca mentioned that Josh Schlicher (Marietta's mayor), and Steve Wetz (Marietta's safety services director) were pleased that the sign would indicate the city as a collaborator on the project.

I am creating an information sheet about both our planting and the Homegrown National Park program and will get copies printed to distribute.

e. Bulk plant purchase and potting?

Caroline of Passiflora (who will be placing a wholesale order for us and the Maple Street greenspace project) is ordering for delivery in September, so the plugs should not need to be potted. We can plant them directly in the ground this fall.

I received unexpected cash donations for the project and took advantage of a trip to a native plant nursery with Cindy Brown to acquire two flats of plants, currently being babysat at my house.

f. Future plans

We need to arrange a planting day in the fall. The church plant sale will probably be the third weekend in September, so perhaps the fourth weekend?

**DuPont Grant Solar Charging Bench Project: Update from Rebecca Phillips**

***Solar Bench Update***

a. Where are we?

Michael Chisholm has been able to negotiate a price of $5,000 plus tax (probably around $300) from EnGo for the bench design approved by the city. I spoke with the safety services director; we are not responsible for installation costs, so this amount fits our budget. Roger Kalter said we are eligible for tax exemption and should apply that to the purchase. The group agreed.

b. Where do we go from here?

I recommend that we place the order as soon as Steve Wetz gives me the address to which the bench should be shipped. As of Thursday, he had not decided which warehouse should house the bench. The purchase of the EnGo solar smart bench was approved unanimously; details of payment were discussed and information will be referred to Michael Chisholm as soon as possible.

**Applying for more funding from DuPont**

Dawn recommended that we apply again in next year's grant period, after we have results to report from the current grant (mostly unspent at this time). The group agreed. Since Michael Chisholm and family will be leaving the area in coming months, we may need to make contact with another DuPont employee to champion future applications.

**Enforcement of municipal parking atop Marietta water supply well fields**

Parking is still not properly enforced, per Roger Kalter's observations. He has recommended to the mayor that signage indicate the Indian Acres lot as the parking area for the ballfields, since the grassy areas over the well fields continue to be used illegally. Roger says additional pressure on the city to enforce parking restrictions would be appreciated by water superintendent Jeffrey Kephart. ***More phone calls and letters to the mayor are suggested.***

**FACT Ohio Update**

**Ginnie O'Neil** reported that FACT continues to work on developing online registration for their registry connected with health issues related to any phase of shale development. Since SE Ohio is an at-risk population with both production and injection wells and brine transport, she suggested using FUUSM members and friends as a kick-off point to raise awareness about registration in Washington County. Dawn suggested that an article in the *Confluence* would be a good way to start, and Ginnie agreed to send something for the September issue.

Ginnie also announced FACT's event “Connecting the Dots: Planet, People, Power,” a discussion featuring panelists Dr. Sandra Steingraber, Annette McCoy, and Jocelyn Travis. The presentation is on Zoom on Saturday, August 7th, from 10-11:30 a.m. Adeline Bailey will include the information in the August *Confluence*, and she will also send the announcement with the registration link to the Green list. George said he had done so as well.

**Injection Wells update**

**Letter to ODNR regarding Interested Party Review - Oil and Gas Waste Facilities**

George Banziger drafted a letter on behalf of GSC and presented it for review and approval (letter attached to these minutes). Submission was approved by the group. Also related to injection wells and regulations in Washington County, George said his April testimony to the Ohio EPA had not been submitted as yet.

**Citizens Climate Lobby update**

George reported that the Marietta group will meet on Zoom tomorrow, Monday, July 19, at 7 p.m. Topics on the agenda include reviewing the Re-Imagine Appalachia goals and proposals and discussing with Rep. Johnson's aide Sam Hattrup, which of them Rep. Johnson might support. George said the next meeting with Mr. Hattrup will take place in August.

George also asked that calls be made to Senator Portman, asking him to support legislation to address the climate crisis. He said phone calls are more effective than letters or email.

**MOVCA Update**

**Adeline Bailey** and **Cindy** reported on activities recently passed or upcoming. In lieu of their own programs on Zoom, the group will be promoting and attending the **Summer 2021 Fair Transition Webinar Series: “Putting Together the Pieces of a Fair Energy Transition – Leaving No One Behind,”** sponsored by WV Center on Climate Change. The hourlong webinars are presented on Zoom from 7 - 8 p.m. on second Tuesdays; the next presentation will be offered on August 10. Registration is required, but if not able to view live, registrants will receive a link to a recording of the session. The July presentation suffered from technical difficulties (Adeline, Mike and Cindy were not able to log on successfully), and will be rescheduled.

MOVCA is also looking at other “home grown,” in-person public presentations if restrictions permit. At present, their business meetings will continue on Zoom. The group tabled at recent area events, including Pride in the Park on June 25th, and the WV Summer Jam for the People: Democracy, Jobs, + Care-a-van celebration at Parkersburg Point Park on July 5th. Their Climate Corner column in the *News-Sentinel* continues, including George as a contributor. The New Jobs Appalachia program headed by Jean Ambrose has had success in reaching out to Wood County Commissioners with a resolution based on Re-Imagine Appalachia’s suggestions. Cindy noted that much information is available on the MOVCA website, including the local columns.

**Additional items**

**Rebecca** suggested that she would set up a Facebook page for the pollinator habitat, giving the project additional visibility, and creating an avenue for people to volunteer. **Cindy** suggested that DuPont employees might also be invited to help with the projects. It was noted that Michael Chisholm might be aware of ways employees could be approached.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03 p.m., after which Dawn offered tours of her new home.

Next meeting: August 15, 12:30 p.m., location/Zoom information forthcoming.

Respectfully submitted,

Adeline Bailey, scribe

**George's letter to ODNR:**

July 18, 2021:

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management

2045 Morse Road, Building F-3

Attn: Mark Bruce, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693.

Dear Mr. Bruce,

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments on Interested Party Review-Oil and Gas Waste Facilities on behalf of the Green Sanctuary Committee of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Marietta. Our organization is located in Washington County, one of the 22 Ohio counites in the federally designated region of Appalachia. Washington County is one of two counties in the state with the largest number of Class II injection wells (for disposal of waste from hydraulic fracturing) as well as the location of many production wells. We are intimately familiar with the risks posed by these injection wells including spills, leaks, and accidents—one occurring as recently as January 2021, a spill which has still left us with unanswered questions posed to ODNR. Data from the Ohio Department of Health also indicate that residents of Washington County experience disproportionate health inequities such as heart disease, lung issues, and other chronic conditions that put them at particular vulnerability to harmful substances associated with oil and gas extraction. Accidents like the one cited above and the whole permitting process have given us serious concern that the state has not acted prior to this date to protect human health and safety and the environment from the dangerous threats posed by toxic, radioactive oil and gas waste, and the processing of this waste in our community.

We are pleased that ODNR is proceeding with formal rule making to establish much-needed regulation for oil and gas waste facilities throughout the state and especially in southeast Ohio. It is our position that the draft rules are better than no rules, but that they are insufficient to protect public health and the environment and to ensure accountability and compliance by oil and gas waste facility operators.

A recent article in the New York Times (July 13, 2021) has pointed out that toxic chemicals from hydraulic fracturing can transform into PFAS, a substance that has been linked to cancer and birth defects in people. PFAS is long lasting and harmful to humans, wild mammals, and birds. ODNR rules should address the risks associated with this dangerous substance and monitor and regulate how much of it is used in hydraulic fracturing. The risk of PFAS with hydraulic fracturing is in addition to the risk of radioactivity with this process.

Radioactivity levels in oil and gas waste is not monitored and regulated in a way that will protect public health, worker health, and the environment. This distinction between NORM and TENORM is totally irrelevant to human exposure to radioactivity and violates the well understood principle that radioactivity exposure should be as low as reasonably possible. Despite it being well understood that oil and gas waste contains high levels of radioactivity, draft rules do not require that all oil and gas facilities have a radiation protection plan.

Regarding regular inspections of oil and gas waste facilities by ODNR staff, inspections are left up to the oil and gas waste facility operator. This self-inspection provides no external, disinterested accountability and is irresponsible. The draft rules only require annual reporting to ODNR, and even then, some information (such as where waste originates) is only required to be reported if ODNR specifically asks for it. Reporting should take place at least quarterly and should include information such as where waste originates and be publicly available. Pennsylvania already tracks origin and final destination of oil and gas waste and makes this information publicly accessible via a regularly updated website. There is no reason Ohio cannot adopt an equivalent system, doing so is necessary for the impacted public to be able to track compliance and take action to protect themselves when necessary.

There is an important exemption in the draft rules that involves a risky exception from Ohio’s Public Records Law which would allow an oil and gas waste facility to simply label its documents as an infrastructure record and prevent public disclosure. This is another example of oil & gas companies not being accountable and transparent. Communities have the right to know about potential threats to their health and safety. Such an exemption will prevent impacted communities from accessing information that is critical to understanding a facility’s impact on public health, drinking water sources, air quality, and the environment.

The 1000-foot setback from an occupied structure does not sufficiently protect drinking water supplies, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and streams. Furthermore, oil and gas waste facilities can be located a mere 100 feet from wetlands, surface waters, developed springs, and water wells. This fails to protect important water sources, including drinking-water wells. This distance is inappropriate for adequate protection. The rules should require that groundwater monitoring wells should be installed when contamination is suspected and provide clear criteria for when contamination is a risk. Acting to prevent further contamination of groundwater should not be discretionary. The rules give ODNR the authority to require the installation of groundwater monitoring wells when contamination of groundwater is suspected. The rules do not require, however, that these monitoring wells actually be installed when there is suspected contamination of ground water nor do they provide clear criteria for when such contamination would be suspected.

Regarding the operation of temporary oil and gas waste facilities for up to one year, we think that this is too long to be considered temporary. A facility operating for this length of time should be required to go through the same permitting as a permanent oil and gas waste facility

We believe that the draft rules are unacceptably liberal in giving ODNR the discretion to make exceptions, exemptions, and waivers such as what application materials will be submitted and what testing procedures and environmental protection plans must be provided and followed. The final rules should establish clear criteria for issuing permits for all oil and gas waste facilities that cannot simply be waived by ODNR. The draft rules do not require financial assurances and bonding requirements to ensure the resources for clean-up of an oil and gas facility once it is no longer operating. These must be put in place and made sufficient to ensure that tax payers are not left with the burden of cleaning up these sites. Further, they do not require the oil and gas waste facility to submit closure, reclamation, decommissioning, and site restoration plans to ODNR with its application; but only to wait and submit that information when a facility is about to (or has already) closed. This information must be provided from the beginning to ensure sites are cleaned up and the taxpayer is not left holding the bag.

. On the matter of suspension of a permitted facility, ODNR should be required to suspend a facility if the oil and gas waste facility (1) causes or could reasonably be anticipated to cause damage to the environment , (2) does not or is not likely to perform in a manner that supports safe production operations; or (3) fails or could reasonably be anticipated to fail to protect public health and safety.

Submitted by,

George Banziger

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On behalf of: Green Sanctuary Committee of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Marietta

Located in southeast Ohio (Appalachian Ohio)