

Kansas City – “America’s Green Region”?

By Elaine Giessel, Environmental Justice Chair, Kanza Group

A number of key organizations in the Kansas City area have begun work on an exciting new sustainability project. According to Tom Jacobs, Director of Environmental Programs at Mid-America Regional Council, this endeavor follows the “extraordinary level of activity in the region on issues related to sustainability and the environment.”



There can be little doubt that the efforts of the Sierra Club, on both sides of State Line, have played a large part in raising public awareness on environmental issues, particularly pertaining to choosing sustainable energy solutions.

Described as a work still in progress, the “Strategy to Become America’s Green Region” includes the vision to create and support a sustainable region that increases the vitality of our society, economy, and environment for current residents and future generations. Non-governmental organizations such as the Sierra Club are now being invited to help refine the strategy and discuss how the sustainability efforts might best be coordinated.

Initial development of the concept was accomplished in six weeks of meetings facilitated by Bob Berkebile, a local architect recognized as one of the nation’s leading authorities in the field of sustainable design. Included in the meetings were the Kansas City Area Development Council, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Civic Council, Bridging the Gap, Johnson County, Kansas City, Missouri, and Mid America Regional Council.

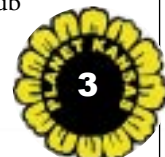
These organizations agreed to endorse the following resolution

See Green Region on page 11

contents

- Kansas in Global Warming Cover*
- Crosshairs in Future*
- Pen Pals.....2*
- Kansas City - “America’s Green Retion”?3*
- Holcomb Expansion Not Needed for4*
- Wind Power Transmission Lines*
- 10th Annual Exhibition of Farmers5*
- Consultants: Coal-Fired Power6*
- Imprudent Investment*
- Where’s the Cheap Coal?8*
- Coal Plant Permit Not Like a Driver’s8*
- License*
- What’s a Legislator To Do8*
- Remembering Nancy Jack9*
- Ernie Miller Nature Center’s First9*
- Annual Backyard Bird Count*
- Where Climate Change is Concerned,10*
- Every Day Matters*
- Wakarusa Group Spring Service Outing ..10*
- in the Wetlands Events*
- Carey Maynard-Moody Testimony11*
- Supporting Climate Protection Task Force*
- Chapter & Group Leaders.....12*
- General Meetings13*
- Sierra Club Outings14*
- Committee Meetings15*
- Calendar of All Events16*

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Carey Maynard-Moody

Testimony Supporting Climate Protection Task Force

January 15, 2008

Good evening, Mayor Hack and Commissioners,

My name is Carey Maynard-Moody and I am chair of the Wakarusa Group KS Chapter Sierra Club. I am also coordinator of the KS Chapter Sierra Club Cool City campaign. I speak to you on behalf of these entities tonight re the matter of a mayoral appointed climate protection task force.

Some of you may have visited the Sierra Club's Cool Cities website: www.coolcities.us.

For awhile Lawrence was a feature city on the home page of this website. Then we got bumped. Other Cooler Cities usurped that honor. Why were they deemed cooler than Lawrence? Because they allocated resources necessary to get with the program of measuring GHG emissions, designing an emission cutting program and implementing it.

Most of you, as commissioners, authorized the signing of the Mayoral Agreement for Climate Protection. Mayor Highberger at that time, directed city staff to reduce the city's GHG emissions with recommendations from the Sustainability Advisory Board. My organization was encouraged by this decision on your part. We have struggled to be patient as staff worked with new appointments, with the SAB, and considered, rejected and reconsidered ICLEI membership. Two years have passed. Tonight you hear that more is needed

Green Region, continued from page 3

in support of the strategy:

"To Become America's Green Region as a mechanism to coordinate, monitor and promote sustainability activities throughout the Kansas City region, commit to cooperate in refining and implementing the strategy, and encourage others in the region to embrace and support the attainment of the strategic goals." The plan is to share the idea at the Governor's Summit in mid February.

It is important that the Sierra Club participates in the community dialogue on this promising project. Among our members are individuals with expertise and experience in virtually every environmental field. Furthermore, as a leader in the area of environmental justice, the Club can play a critical role in ensuring that the issues of equity in all three facets of "sustainability" - economic, environmental, social - are identified and addressed.

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to get a clear picture of where the city has been as an emitter of Green House Gasses, how much it wants to reduce them by, and how to achieve this reduction in emissions.

The Sierra Club supports the SAB recommendation of a Climate Protection Task Force. If you agree to establish this task force, we encourage you to be thoughtful in your appointments to it. From our observations of the Governor's appointed KS Energy Council, the primary qualification that a task force member must have is that they have the greater good at heart. Each member must be authorized and supported by their employers or boards to put this devotion to the greater good before company or institutional gains. Before making your appointments to this task force, please study why the KEC has been an abysmal failure. Please do not replicate their foot dragging because, honestly, where the issue of global warming is concerned, every day matters. We simply don't have the luxury of wasting more time before making changes necessary to protect the climate.

The Sierra Club and my Cool Cities Committee support this recommendation of a climate protection task force. We look forward to its forthcoming recommendations. We look forward to finding Lawrence back on the home page of www.coolcities.us as the featured city that is seriously taking the global warming bull by the horns and becoming part of the solution, not part of the problem. 