



**Minutes of the  
Environmental Affairs Advisory Board  
Wednesday, January 3, 2024  
Avon Lake Public Library, McMahan Room**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. with Chair Naumann presiding and 13 others in attendance.

### **1. Welcome/Attendance/Minutes**

Present: Chair Sam Naumann, Ward-1 Councilman and Ex-Officio Member Rob Shahmir, Citizen Members Rita George, Jen Miller, Terry Robison, and Terry Wyrock; and Industry Members Barb Hall (proxy for Mike McCormick, Applied Specialties), Tom Sulzer (Avient™), and Scott Cameron (Charah Solutions).

Also Present: Deputy Clerk of Council Ramona Boggins and Residents Tom Cizmar, Katelynn Hall, Greg Palmer, and Malachi Witt.

Absent: Mayor and Ex-Officio Member Mark Spaetzel, Citizen Members Kayla Goodwin and Marty Patton, and Industry Members Mike McCormick (Applied Specialties), Michelle Hall (Ford Motor), and Ron Spears (Lubrizol Corp).

Approval of Minutes: December minutes will be approved at the February 7 meeting.

### **2. Administrative**

- Board Vacancy

Three applications were received, and the candidates need to be interviewed; one will be appointed by Council to fill the vacancy.

Action: Members agreed to hold interviews on Monday, January 8, from 3-5 p.m., at the Avon Lake Public Library. Chair Naumann will handle the details of setting up interview times for the candidates.

- Budget

The 2024 budget has been temporarily approved. There is time for members to think about what they want the Board to accomplish and where the funds can be applied.

### **3. Residential Accountability**

- 2024 Environmental Program Ideas

Chair Naumann said, *“Nothing happens in a meeting; everything happens in between the meetings, and the meetings are where we discuss what happened.”* To be more productive between meetings, it was suggested that each citizen member pick a project, focus, or idea and bring that to each meeting. Each member would be responsible for soliciting volunteers and taking action, then updating members at each meeting. Ms. Miller liked the idea. Ms. George mentioned the potential of being overwhelmed by all the (mis)information out there, including social forums, such as [Avon in the Know](#) on Facebook; coyotes were mentioned as a possible focus.

Mr. Shahmir asked for clarity on the long-term goal of EAAB. Chair Naumann referenced the survey, where it was learned that the community was almost equally interested in water quality, the deer issue, and the Power Plant Redevelopment Project, to name a few topics. He'd like the Board to get more specific, to be measurable, but not get tunnel vision and only achieve one goal. Mr. Robison mentioned creating a vision statement for the future of Avon Lake, specific to the environment. Mr. Shahmir would like to see EAAB have a seat at the table when it comes to economic development.

Chair Naumann shared that Jesse Itzler makes a calendar, [Big Ass Calendar](#), with all 365 days visible. The idea is to set a year-defining goal and come up with six activities to support it and use the different colored sticky notes to help map out goals and plans.

Action: Members were asked to develop their version of a vision statement for the EAAB and three things that can drive, coordinate, or make that happen. Combining these ideas at the February meeting, the EAAB can agree on a strong vision statement to communicate to Council.

Ms. George mentioned that the Council representative on the Board was who communicated detailed information and goals, on the Board's behalf, at Council meetings. Mr. Shahmir confirmed this happens, and will continue to happen, but added there needs to be a voice present at the Council meetings to hammer the issues at hand home. He said someone from EAAB needs to be at the Community Improvement Corporation's (CIC's) table, and it cannot be the councilperson. He said that just as there are community members on CIC, there should be EAAB members on CIC because that is where the conversation is being held about development.

The power plant and a seat at the CIC table for EAAB, when it comes to economic development, are high priorities for Mr. Shahmir. If people don't show up and make comments, everything else will go away. For example, showing there was a violation of the Clean Water Act at the power plant put everyone on notice. That triggered the discovery of the connection of the Coal Ash pond that is now being discharged into the lake. EAAB should continue to be actively questioning and challenging environmental issues. Mr. Shahmir read from [Chapter 274 of the Codified Ordinance](#) on the purposes of the Environmental Affairs Advisory Board to remind everyone what the roles and responsibilities of the group are:

(a) To study and advise courses of action which the Natural Resources, Environmental, and Public Media Committee of Council may take to formulate and promote general and broad codes of land, air, and water management for the City; and

(b) To study and investigate other environmentally related concerns and issues of importance to the Council and residents of the City and to report its findings and make appropriate recommendations to residents of the City and Council at the regularly scheduled meetings of the Board.

Ms. George added that Mr. Shahmir's credentials, as a subject matter expert and being top in his field, make him better qualified to ask the right questions at Council and/or CIC meetings. Conversely, she is not confident in what information she can disclose, for example, that has been gleaned from conversations because facts may not have been verified. Someone who feels comfortable and well educated enough to be able to speak on the topics that Mr. Shahmir is so well versed in would best represent the Board.

Mr. Shahmir offered his time to help anyone willing to step up. He mentioned Mr. Witt had emailed him on Thanksgiving Eve to make him aware of the Clean Water Act violation, expressing that there is no "correct" communication. Reach out to him at any time if you need information or help.

After attending many recent Council meetings, Mr. Witt noticed that things bubble up from committees, where most issues are discussed for months. Decisions about issues often originate at committee meetings and then are reported at Council meetings where they get voted on. If EAAB wants to give further input or ask questions, they need to start showing up at Council meetings. Committee members don't need to be experts to take actions that make a difference. Chair Naumann agreed and encouraged members to think about three things they can take action on.

Action: Use Chapter 274.03 of the ordinance as our mission statement and come up with three activities you will do to support that.

Chair Naumann would like to keep the momentum generated by Mr. Shahmir's involvement. His goal is to have these meetings be about reporting on what has already happened, rather than what's intended to happen in the coming month(s). By March, he'd like to see the EAAB already completing things. *"Don't let analysis paralysis creep in, resulting from fear of not having full buy-in from the Board."* The problem with that is we're not moving forward. Take ownership and be empowered enough to run with your idea, said Chair Naumann. The goal of the Board should be delivering on what we promised the community that we're going to do, reflected in the bylaws.

Mr. Shahmir said the synergy between the top three important issues of the Board, the power plant, civic engagement, and education and partnership with our city schools, is going to bring forth the necessary community involvement component.

#### **4. Industrial Accountability**

- Industry Reports

Applied Specialties: Ms. Hall reported on the repair of a water main leak, the hosting of a toy drive, and the hiring of a plant engineer who is finding ways to make their company better. They clean water for power plants all over the United States; they have plants in Texas, Arizona, Louisiana, and the Avon Lake headquarters. They make lime cure, the main cleaning ingredient, which has to be done indoors here because of the cold weather, or else it would freeze. In warmer climates, it can be done outside because the steam can just evaporate.

The April 8 Solar Eclipse is attracting campers to rent campsites, and there is concern about the environmental impact of the added trash/litter, sewage, traffic, and use of energy. [There are Solar Eclipse 2024 meetings scheduled for January 24 and February 22 at the library.](#) There will be discussions, including from the Fire Department, on the City's plans for safety/security, traffic control, and communications among other things.

Avient™: Mr. Sulzer reported that there are talks about the upcoming eclipse, and they haven't decided yet if they are closing or staying open. They are considering collaborating with their Family Readiness/Employee Resource Group and science/STEM groups, through Lorain County Community College, to get their employees' children involved/excited in doing some science, maybe by utilizing take-home science kits that can be done in the yard at home.

Charah Solutions: Mr. Cameron clarified a possible misunderstanding from last month about discharging nine times. He stated that they used to discharge every day of the month, up to three million gallons a day. There was only one violation, not nine. They never exceeded their daily limit, only a monthly average limit.

Mr. Cameron disagreed with the name of the pond mentioned by Mr. Shahmir earlier. It's called Coal Ash Pond in some places and Coal Pile Runoff Treatment Pond in others. The location; that it was runoff from around the old coal pile; and, after filtration, that it discharged into the lake were agreed on.

Mr. Shahmir wanted to know who's going to sample this point before a storm event. It's a stormwater retention pond now and won't be sampled, as far as Mr. Cameron knows. Mr. Shahmir said when that discharges, the City should be able to sample it 30-60 minutes after flow, per their permit, but they don't have access to it because it's on Charah's property. Mr. Cameron said it could be sampled up at the road where it ties in. There was more discussion and some questions from Mr. Shahmir about where a sample can be taken, permits, liner removal, and leakage concerns. The original rubber liner was on the sidewalls, above the water table, and has been removed; the bottom was shale. It had been inspected daily by Mr. Cameron.

Referring to an image on his computer, Mr. Shahmir mentioned he had a long discussion with Verdantas, and they had not seen any of the data. They were not aware that this area was filled or that their cross sections, which were provided by ALERG, tied back into this. ALERG shows undisturbed/overburdened in areas K-39, K-40, and K-41. There's an agreement that Verdantas will be more actively involved in the program, and Mr. Shahmir

is going to follow up with them later in the week to see when they plan on being actively engaged.

Mr. Shahmir asked if the violation was reported to the CIC. Mr. Cameron said Dan Rogatto probably reported it at the previous CIC meeting, where someone asked about the mercury exceedance. This was supposed to be reported to the EPA. Mr. Deagan was said to have sent out a letter saying that was part of the reason the portable activated carbon treatment units were brought in, to treat the low-level mercury. Mr. Cameron said they brought in a carbon treatment system in October and are waiting for a permit to install (PTI) approval by the EPA to put it into operation. Mr. Shahmir wants to know who they presented this to at the past two CIC meetings, as was referenced in the letter, because he attended both meetings and doesn't recall hearing anything about this.

Mr. Cameron reported that the fly ash in Unit 9, except for one small silo located in the center around Unit 8, has been sent off on December 21. It's all off-site now, except for one old silo that hasn't been used in 20 years. It had some residual fly ash in it that will be cleaned out before it is demolished and taken off-site. Otherwise, all coal, hazardous chemicals, acids, caustics, ammonia, fly ash, and asbestos have been removed. Multiple EPA inspections verified the removal of these materials. Chemtron removed sulfuric acid, caustic soda, and ammonia, using different crews for each chemical. They cleaned and flushed the tanks; recovered the waste; cut and flushed the lines; took the product out of the lines, put it in containers, and took it back to their treatment site.

Removed and remediated are not the same thing. The source has been removed, but what has seeped into the subsurface has not been remediated. Charah Solutions has only done decommissioning work. Breaking it down into phases, you have site investigation, which includes evaluating your overall structures and potential sources; then you go in and decommission, by removing the waste source, cleaning up the vessels, and tearing down or removing them from the site; then you go and clean up, do the environmental work, dealing with groundwater contamination.

Ms. Miller reported that on January 18, the first Environmentally Speaker Program will be held at the library. She is also recording a podcast with an expert on the topic of coyotes on January 4, and that will air in mid-January. These could be posted on the *Avon in The Know* Facebook page.

Motion: Mr. Robison motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. George. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully yours,

*/s/ Ramona K. Boggins*

Ramona Boggins, Deputy Clerk of Council