Public Engagement Planning and Survey for Stoughton Sustainability Committee, 2022

Prepared by UW-Madison Extension Dane County (Sharon Lezberg, Community Development Educator)

Introduction

The City of Stoughton Sustainability Committee was established by Council and began meeting in September, 2021. The City of Stoughton strives to create a sustainable future – one that balances economic resilience and growth, environmental protection, and social equity to meet the needs of the City in the present without compromising the resources available for future generations. To that end, the Sustainability Committee will conduct research on what other municipalities are doing to assure future sustainability and will develop recommendations for the City of Stoughton. This research, coupled with deliberation and community input, will inform the development of a ***Sustainability Plan*** to guide City efforts to improve sustainability of internal (municipal) operations and to engage the community in resource conservation, energy efficiency, and environmental improvement.

Sustainability Committee members have developed a **vision and mission** to guide their work:

> *A sustainable community requires a new ethic of living on our planet; an ethic that considers the long-term impact of actions and policies on our community, our region, our country, and the world. The Stoughton Sustainability Committee will confront pressing environmental, social and economic concerns facing our community through:*
> - *Development of a Sustainability Plan to guide the efforts of city departments, committees, and commissions*
> - *Collaboration with city staff to generate an annual report that measures sustainability progress against established benchmarks in the sustainability plan*
> - *Identification of and collaboration with local and regional partners to promote sustainability efforts.*

The Sustainability Plan will develop goals, actions, and indicators for six focus areas: (1) Energy usage; (2) Transportation; (3) Water quality and use; (4) Solid waste management; (5) Land use, development, and buildings; (6) Community engagement, education, and health.

Community input is essential to developing and vetting a sustainability plan. The Sustainability Committee has approached UW-Madison's Division of Extension, Dane County for assistance with community input related to developing the plan. The draft proposal outlined below presents a menu of options for community input. Extension Educator Sharon Lezberg will work with the Sustainability Committee to determine the extent, timing, and process for community input.

Working with Extension

The approach that we take, as Extension Educators, is different from that of the "outside expert" consultant approach. This effort is a community-led initiative in response to a local and global issue that affects the community in the present and future. Local residents have volunteered to be members of the Sustainability Committee and are actively involved in information gathering, deliberation, and decision-making. Resident leadership and engagement is essential for assuring that the processes utilized and recommendations made are appropriate to and respectful of the people of the place.

Sustainability Committee members will assist in designing public engagement processes as well as survey questions and distribution. Committee members will review and interpret the results of both the survey and public engagement.

Extension Educators facilitate the process by providing:

1) expertise in survey development* (draft questions, survey administration, survey data analysis),
2) guidelines and suggestions for public engagement processes,
3) facilitation of public engagement efforts,
4) assistance with recording public comments and analysis of public engagement responses,
5) facilitation of discussions to interpret and consolidate survey and public engagement findings.

*Survey expertise will be provided by Dr. Kristin Runge, UW-Madison Extension Community Economic Development Program; Principal Investigator for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center.

Plan of Work and Responsibilities

The following menu of activities are possible components of community engagement activities led by both the Sustainability Committee and UW-Madison Extension Dane County.

Component	**Primary methods**	**Responsible Party & anticipated timeframe**
Resident Survey	- Develop Qualtrics survey draft to understand resident interest in sustainability, willingness to support City initiatives, and support for recommendations of the Sustainability Committee - Assist the Committee with survey distribution - Prepare report with survey responses - Assist Committee with survey analysis	UW-Madison Extension team (Lezberg, Runge, Probst) & Committee Timeframe: - Survey design: July, August 2022 - Survey release: Sept 2022 - Survey analysis: Oct-Nov 2022
Design & implement community conversation(s) (sessions that include some education but mostly community members talking about the issue in small groups)	- Determine format of community conversations & discussion prompts - Develop introductory presentation (about the committee and about municipal efforts toward sustainability) - Identify means to publicize event across diverse populations/ages - Line up interpretation services if required - Identify and train note-takers and table hosts - Consolidate, review table notes - Record and share findings - Share findings with public	Extension Dane County (Lezberg, Probst) & Committee Timeframe: - Community Conversation design: July 2022 - Invitation logistics; August 2022 - Sessions: Sept-Oct., 2022 - Data consolidation and analysis: Nov-Dec., 2022
Focus Groups (for specific audiences, such as business community,	- Determine focus group questions - Identify venue and process details - Develop invitation list and invitation letters; follow-up to assure participants attend	Extension Dane County (Lezberg, Probst) & Committee

faith community, public officials, city staff)	- Identify and train note-takers and focus group leads - Consolidate and review notes - Record and share findings	Timeframe: - Focus group design: July 2022 - Invitation logistics; August 2022 - Sessions: Sept-Oct., 2022 - Data consolidation and analysis: Nov-Dec., 2022
Education Sessions, events, tours	- Identify topics where public education would be beneficial - Identify speakers and venue - Publicize sessions - Evaluate sessions	Sustainability Committee leads, with support from Extension Dane County (Lezberg, Probst) Timeframe: - Potentially after community conversations and survey (Jan-April, 2023)
Public input on final report and Sustainability Committee recommendations	- Publicize recommendations (committee) - Design public input session to present recommendations (Extension) - Prepare presentation (committee) - Recording of comments - Revision of recommendations based on public comments	Sustainability Committee leads, with process support from Extension Dane County (Lezberg, Probst) Timeframe: - After Sustainability Committee has drafted recommendations to the City
Report on public input	Written report on process and results of public input	Extension Dane County (Lezberg, Probst)

Fee Structure

UW-Madison Extension Dane County charges a reduced fee for services. For City government, we charge a flat fee of $300 for planning time; $65/hour for facilitation time; and a flat fee of $300-$500 for report preparation.

Below is a table of anticipated expenses:

Component	Estimated time	Estimated cost
Survey development & administration	40 hours	$300 (Dr. Runge is able to offer her support free of charge)
Survey report	10 hours	$300
Facilitation of committee discussion/deliberation to analyze survey findings	2 hours	$130
Community Conversation(s) planning & preparation	40 hours	$300
Community Conversation training of recorders and table hosts	2 hours	$130

Facilitation of Community Conversations – anticipating 2 sessions at 2.5 hours each plus 1.5 hour set up/clean up	8 hours	$520
Focus Group preparation	20 hours	$300
Focus group facilitation – anticipating 2 sessions (1 hour session; 1 hour set-up)	4 hours	$260
Report from Community Conversations and focus groups	20 hours	$300
Total anticipated cost		$2,840

Inclusive Engagement

A primary goal of public engagement is to increase the transparency of government processes of decision-making, so that all residents are aware of the issues addressed and of the decision-making process. Inclusive community engagement prioritizes community involvement, particularly by those community members most impacted by decisions around an issue, and by those who are under-represented in decision-making due to disenfranchisement or lack of access. UW-Madison Extension values inclusion and is intentional in our efforts to ensure equity and fairness. We will encourage the Sustainability Committee to identify audiences that are hard to reach or less engaged, and to develop outreach materials to reach these audiences to assure their participation.

Proposed Timeline

Recognizing that the Sustainability Committee hopes to move their work forward within the year, we have proposed an ambitious timeline (in that Extension educators have numerous projects ongoing simultaneously). We can extend the proposed timeline out into 2023 if that works better for the Committee. Shortening the timeline beyond that suggested above is not feasible, given our work commitments.

University of Wisconsin Extension Personnel associated with this proposal

Sharon Lezberg, PhD.
Community Development Educator, Extension-Dane County

Sharon Lezberg's primary areas of focus include organizational capacity building, participatory engagement, community economic development, leadership development and sustainability. Over the last eight years, Dr. Lezberg has worked with numerous non-profit organizations on strategic planning, program development, and evaluation. She spearheded the Edible Startup Summit for five years, and is working with colleagues to develop the Nonprofit Peer Learning Program. Previously, Dr. Lezberg worked as an Associate Scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on research and outreach projects addressing community, local and regional food systems (food security/food access within local food systems), bioenergy training, and women in sustainable agriculture. Dr. Lezberg's work brings together research, outreach, and community engagement. Dr. Lezberg holds a BA in Anthropology from the University of Michigan, an MA in International Development and Social Change from Clark University, and a PhD in Environment and Resources from the Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Contact Information: Sharon Lezberg; lezberg.sharon@countyofdane.com; 608-224-3719
http://dane.uwex.edu

Michelle Probst
Natural Resources Educator, Extension-Dane County

Michelle supports community organizations, committees, and departments in navigating complex issues, facilitating challenging conversations, and making informed decisions that protect our environment. Michelle develops educational programs around home composting, climate adaptation and mitigation, water resources, PFAS, pollinator protection, and more. Prior to becoming the Natural Resources Educator at Extension Dane County, Michelle was a regional Natural Resource Educator with UW-Madison Extension.
Contact Information: Michelle Probst; Probst.michelle@countyofdane.com; 608-224-3696
http://dane.uwex.edu

Kristin Runge, PhD.
Center for Community & Economic Development
Communication Research Specialist

Kristin Runge's primary areas of focus are: communication research, economic development, community branding, placemaking, and the development of public opinion related to controversial issues. Previously, Dr. Runge worked as a lecturer in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and held several marketing positions for non-profit organizations including the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society and Community Blood Center of Appleton. As a quantitative social scientist, Dr. Runge's work focuses on individual media use and personal predispositions as filters for attitudes related to controversial issues in both emerging technology and economic development. Dr. Runge holds a B.A. in communication arts from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, an M.S. in marketing from The Robinson School of Business at Georgia State University and a PhD. in mass communication from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Contact Information: Kristin Runge, Kristin.runge@wisc.edu; 920-851-0213;
https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/eda-university/