



**Minutes of the Oberlin City Council Work Session**  
Held on Thursday, January 28, 2010  
6:00 P.M.

Purpose: to discuss and consider participation in the Clinton Climate+ Development program.

Presiding officer Kenneth Sloane called the Work Session to order at 6:27:11 p.m. All members of Council being present with the exception of Vice President, Soucy.

Others present included: David Orr, Oberlin College Professor; Eric Norenberg, City Manager; Eric Severs, Law Director; Belinda Anderson, Clerk of Council.

1) OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND.

Norenberg advised that the Clinton Climate+ Development program was a subset of the overall Clinton Climate Initiative. The two are almost interchangeable except the Climate+ Development program was specifically related to Development. This program consisted of 16 plus cities across the planet working on making their developments climate positive: to reduce emissions, and be a positive benefit to the environment. Recently the College and the City have been recognized for their commitment to a sustainable future and for that reason they were considered by the Clinton Foundation to participate in the Climate+ program, a privilege usually reserved for much larger organizations.

Following introductory remarks Norenberg turned the discussion over to Oberlin College Professor David Orr.

2) INFORMATION ABOUT PLANS THAT SUPPORT THE CLINTON CLIMATE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

Oberlin College Professor, David Orr advised that with the decline of the automobile and steel industry those communities in and surrounding the Rust Belt have found themselves in a declining district. The point being made is that Oberlin cannot be an island: it must take full recognition of where it is and do something about it. Twenty years ago when he came to Oberlin there was talk about the need for a new hotel, student housing and what is now being called the Green Arts District. In the past several years several goals have emerged.

The first goal is to develop a thirteen acre Green Arts District that will be used as a driver to future sustainable economic developments. The second goal is to build energy security into the City. Orr advised that they clearly lived in a different energy world, where they were at the end of an era of cheap portable fossil fuels: gasoline was not going to stay cheap it was going to go up in cost, and as it did everything that depends on gasoline would go up as well. The point of this was could they do a development here in Oberlin that changes the energy situation and builds energy security into the future of this City, its residents, and people in the surrounding area. The third goal was to create a Green Belt around the City;

that was designed to take ownership over the City's production. It would resuscitate 3 to 4 local small scale agriculture, perhaps forestry businesses, and add new businesses like bio-fuel and carbon sequestration. Farmers will be paid to sequester carbon in soil, trees, and vegetation.

Orr noted that more than likely these goals would have to be considered at some point anyway given the state of the global economy. The choice is whether they should consider these items as a series of run-off projects badly conceived and badly integrated, or begin to think about how these items fit together successfully in a system's context.

There will be a number of different outcomes.

Orr remarked that the question they wrestled with is how they might use development starting with the 13 acre (owned by the College) Green Arts District as a driver for the local economy. So they talked about designing an incredibly well designed block, powered by sunlight. Rather than just look inward so that the College can say look at what we have done, the focus now became look at what we have done as a community, to use that as a driver for economic development. The architectural team that is working on the overall master plan for the block had two big assignments. One is the Green Design Movement: to make this a well designed block powered by sunlight emitting no waste product. The second assignment was to figure out how to use the Green Design Movement to revolutionize the downtown economy, so that every business that it could help to support and every new business that it could help to generate did a lot better in the Downtown District because the Green Arts District was developed in a certain kind of way. Orr advised that no one had tried this in the same way before. We were not the first to do green design, but we are among the first to use green design as an economic driver.

They put together an educational consortium and as they make a transition to a very different kind of economy, the question becomes what do our kids need to know to participate in that economy? They have Roy Church at Lorain County Community School, John Mullen at the Lorain County Joint Vocational School, Oberlin City Schools Superintendent Geoff Andrews, and the Oberlin College Dean Sean Decatur joined together in a subgroup to help think through a green education for a green economy.

Orr said what do young people need to know, so that they don't have to get up and leave the community? This is more related to joining the arts and the sciences together into a very different kind of conversation about the human future. How does the community build a decent prosperous and durable future and make a model of that here in town. As a result of those discussions, what is taken place is a development - corridor that stretches about a mile and a half through the heart of the City. Orr remarked that Geoff Andrews is talking about developing a carbon neutral school and unifying all the school buildings into a single campus – like Oberlin College's Lewis Center- and making it educational, powered by sunlight, and pouring a lot of advance technology into it.

There are four goals:

1. Goal 1: Economic Revitalization for Oberlin.

The Green Arts District can be used to go after income disparity and create jobs and business so that when you fast forward 5- 7 years down the road, this will be a vital downtown that has drastically reduced its poverty level in the community. The driver here is necessity. We are right in the middle of the Rust Belt. Can we help be a revitalizing agent throughout the larger region; for Elyria, Lorain and Cleveland? If so, then there is an opportunity to do a lot of things.

When the Clinton Climate people visited, what they were most impressed by - in speaking to Oberlin College President Marvin Krislov; Oberlin City Manager, Eric Norenberg and Oberlin City Schools Superintendent, Geoff Andrews - is the fact that the makings of a pretty incredible project was already right here. There was an opportunity that they saw in Oberlin that they hadn't seen in other communities. The Clinton group reviewed several hundred proposals from other organizations and Oberlin was 1 of 17 selected. This is a collaboration that is really quite extraordinary: can we develop models where public entities (the City and school district) and a private entity (Oberlin College) band together and do something that none of them could do alone.

## 2. Goal 2: Energy Security.

Orr advised that they have approached the end of the cheap era of oil. All the cheap oil that was easy to get at was gone. The oil that remained was deeper down, further out, and located in places where people didn't like to go. Orr advised that possibilities existed to bring science and economics and some really smart planning together to create a very different energy future. Those possibilities included the following:

- Demand Side Management
  - a. How do we deliver efficiency?
  - b. How do we begin to pay for energy efficiency?
- Landfill 30 MW of Potential right in Oberlin
  - a. Fairly good reservoir
- Federal funding opportunities are being explored for Solar and wind.

The driver here is the end of an era for many reasons: whether through market mechanisms or government mandate, carbon is going to be priced. It will also be the end of an era due to opportunity, because technology has changed pretty dramatically making efficiency more accessible.

The agent here: for investors that go into landfill gas, the "internal rate of return", after taxation for Oberlin's landfill is about 22% which is a good investment - especially the long term market. You have an appreciating asset in a highly competitive market. The higher estimate they received from another business study was in the low 60's, so some drive to this is going to be local investments, but in this case there is a good bit of money out there for investors, because this is a capture market and we will see a lot of money available in the State of Ohio for these kind of developments.

## 3. Goal 3 – The Green Belt.

The Green Belt has been talked about a long time. The Secretary of energy in California said agriculture in California is gone due to the climate change. Even if you were able to grow food, due to the increased cost of fossil fuel it would be difficult to haul food like you once did, from California to Oberlin, Ohio. The food bill in Northeast Ohio was about \$7 billion dollars a year. We grow about \$200 million dollars locally, so this is an amazing economic opportunity. What they want to do is work with a private land market - and using the techniques of purchasing

development rights and market transactions and so forth - help to encourage a Belt of 20,000 to 40,000 acres around the City of Oberlin, perhaps linking up with other green belts in Cleveland, to develop a Green Belt where viable, robust, market driven agriculture could reoccur. Also wood products could be purchased in this Belt as well.

The driver here is economic renewal: with the development from the downtown area which is what would be the market for what is grown in the Green Belt. The plan is to have a 4 star hotel in Oberlin with a restaurant featuring local foods but grown locally, which would be a pretty good long term income.

The agent here is the land conservancy, private markets, and private owners. This is something that the College and the City will have no financial stake in, but a huge stake in its successful outcome. Imagine a Belt of very prosperous farms selling locally around here. Farmers will be changing because they can take sunshine and convert that to income in four ways:

- They can sell animal flesh.
- They can sell plant tissue: vegetables
- They can sell electron
- They can receive a bonus if they sequester carbon.

Orr noted that Marcy Kaptur was especially interested in seeing how the farm economy can join into this new energy economy and make money.

#### 4. Goal 4: Education

How do we prepare young people for jobs in this kind of economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The Clinton Climate people thought that we were an incredibly good laboratory for that part of project, due to the alliances that have been formed between the Oberlin School District, Lorain County JVS, Oberlin College and Lorain County Community College.

Orr advised that a good many things will happen as a result of this initiative in the downtown area. This will drive the property values up, which will give an added incentive to resuscitate buildings, invest in buildings and the equity value should increase here for downtown business owners as well. In five years we should hear about new businesses coming to Oberlin. The idea is to make the town prosperous and attract people here to see it and enjoy it.

He advised that in order to make this collaborative effort happen, they will rely on a group of leadership teams in a variety of areas. Details for how this will be done will be forthcoming.

Burgess asked how transportation would fit into this idea of redeveloping our downtown into a vibrant business district. Orr advised that he didn't have the answer for that, but he would suggest that they get a group of people together, who really cared about this project, with Marcy Kaptur, Sherrod Brown and their staff and map out a plan that would work. In the next three – four years they should be able to figure out how to move people around on rails rather than in cars.

Peterson asked how they would think about negotiating a Green Belt, if this works, with the possibility of the need for new housing. Orr advised that there is a lot of open space available in the City for building

and he would recommend that they first start with infilling the space in the City and rebuild the housing stock the best that they can at this point.

Meadows asked Orr to explain the process of sequestration and how it might benefit farmers through the Clinton Climate+ Program. Orr advised that carbon was a traced element in the atmosphere. It is one of the cheap elements found in soil, trees etc., so the farmer who uses the right soil techniques, sequesters carbon, and it is sucked in by plant roots and becomes part of the soil. What has happened in American agriculture lately is the carbon content of soils has dropped dramatically from Pre-European occupation to this Country to the present, so whether it is trees, plant root or soil, in virtually all of the carbon/climate legislation, there is a way to reward farmers for sequestering or pulling carbon out of the atmosphere. Through the program one could expect to see land incentives for people who do land management in the right way to hold carbon in plant tissues and in soils; it would be priced at so many estimated tons per acre. But it was a subsidy well worth having because the carbon in the soil was an asset for soil fertility and for plant tissues and so forth. Sloane added that in the future farmers would be paid credits for producing those crops that sequester as much carbon as possible by comparison with other crops.

Broadwell asked what the strategy would be for conveying this information to the farmers. He felt that a presentation in this format would not go over well in the farming community. Orr advised that there was a lot of conservatism in the farming community and he felt that the way to address this would be as a market strategy that would show the benefits of buying from local farms. Sloane advised that one of the things in the past that was problematic in terms of keeping farmers is that they could get jobs in Lorain County that were much more lucrative in manufacturing and steel mills. Those jobs were now gone. Pilacky advised that in working with farmers what she has learned is that if they were making money it would get their attention. It may be something where they will need to start with a few acres and then increase the acreage as the need increases.

Orr said that what is implied in this project is a long term collaboration that changes the City, College and all the participants of it. That they develop collaborative mechanisms where years down the road this is a different place; one that is more prosperous, powered by sunlight, with less poverty, more community engagement, and a better place to live. He noted that the riskiest thing that they could do, sometimes, is to avoid risk. The question for them is can key people in Oberlin come together to help figure out how these things might work together to create a level of prosperity that is beyond the carbon world, that still works as a really nice town and becomes a model for what they would like to see elsewhere.

Pilacky asked if Orr would elaborate on the energy efficiency part of the program.

Orr advised that MacKenzie & Company, a business consultant firm looked at efficiency in the United State economy and globally. The point of the study was demand side management. MacKenzie realized that it could eliminate about 40% of the U.S. energy use at zero net cost. Orr remarked that Americans didn't think like this, we tend to think that we have to keep increasing supply. So most of our discussion is about how do we generate more instead of generate less. Most parents probably told their children that there were two ways to be rich one is decrease their outgo the other is increase their income. Put them both together, which California did, and you see California's energy consumption flatten out where their energy continued to rise.

California's strategy

What California did (and what we should do) was to separate the sell of electricity from profitability. You figure the more you sell something the more you make. But California showed that that was not necessarily true. They said to consumers your rates are going to go up, you will pay more, but we are going to show you how to become more energy efficient. They created a series of mechanisms whereby if a poor person in California had a refrigerator that was about 15 years old, you probably use 1200 KW/hr per year; the state of the art is 200 KW/hr per year. So what the utilities said is if we have to support 1200 KW/hr of electricity for that refrigerator then we have to go out and rent capital to build more power plants to increase supply. That's expensive and risky because it gets them in a regulatory environment where they don't want to be. California said we'll do demand side management, we will separate the sell of electricity from profitability. So when they did that California's energy cost went up, but use flattened out, or dropped and the total bill was less.

Orr commented that the cheapest, fastest, easiest thing that can be done to get the best, easiest, most affordable source of energy is efficiency; it isn't to increase supply. The question then becomes how do you deliver that?

California utilities effectively became Energy Service Companies (ESCO). What they would do is come into your home, complete an energy audit and finance the changes. So, if I am poor and I can't afford this then my discounted rate is for 20 years. An energy service company could come into my home and cut my energy consumption way down and bill me for this in several ways:

- I could pay this back over time to the utility at a discounted rate.
- I could attach this to the utilities discounted rate and pay it over time.
- An energy service company could come in and do it and payments would stay level, while the billed amount (actual charges) dropped; the energy service company would pay itself back out of the savings. So effectively you don't pay anymore, but when the ESCO has paid itself back, then you own it and your bill drops dramatically but in the meantime, the payments stay flat.

This is currently taken place in the following areas:

- Austin, TX
- Boulder, CO
- Cambridge, MA
- Seattle, WA
- Portland, OR
- California

The good news is that the technology of efficiency has gotten incredibly good. You could power a home with a fraction of the energy that we used 10 – 20 years ago. The key again is demand side management.

Sloane advised that OMLPS did have an efficiency program which promoted demand side management; it just didn't have a way of financing the program. It was his hope that the Clinton Climate+ program could help to identify funding resources that could help to finance these services in the future.

### 3) REVIEW OF THE CLINTON CLIMATE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.

Eric Norenberg walked Council through the Memorandum of Understanding and addressed the Q & A sections of the January 27, 2010 memo titled Clinton Climate Positive MOU. (Copies are on file at the Clerk's office.)

City Manager Norenberg said they have been looking at the costs involved in participation. He felt technology such as webinars, emails and websites should be used as much as possible, in order to reduce the cost of travel expenses. Staff is excited about the opportunity to pursue this initiative. It was viewed as a way to stimulate the economy and provide more jobs in our community.

Sloane asked the Law Director to comment on the MOU as it is written.

Law Director Severs advised that the MOU as written at this time was fine. The only issues they have to be concerned about in the future is certain prohibitions of lending aid or credit to a private entity which Oberlin College is. There are ways to structure collaborations but they would have to confront those issues when they knew what the specific projects would be and what role the City would play; at that time documents would be drafted to ensure they didn't run afoul of any prohibitions either by statute, or in the Ohio Constitution.

#### 4) CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Sloane said it is his intention that this would be placed on the agenda for the next Council meeting. He suspected that they could vote on the legislation and pass it on emergency. There is some degree of timeliness so that they can get this information back to the Clinton Foundation.

Burgess said that depending on the public feedback that is received and the discussions that might arise at the next Council meeting, it may be appropriate to pass it on first reading at the next Council meeting and then perhaps pass it on emergency at the following meeting. This was such a big decision and as much as he supported it, he would like to involve as much public input as possible.

#### 5) PUBLIC COMMENT

David Sonner, Oberlin resident asked what would happen next in the event that an agreement is reached by Oberlin College and the City, with the Foundation, and will anyone pay attention and why would it matter.

Orr said this would put the spotlight on Oberlin. He explained that the question for the City is why does anything that happens here matter anywhere else? In competition for resources and technologies we labor at a disadvantage, we are in a state that is declining relative to states like Texas and Arizona and so forth.

The first thing it does is:

- It makes his job, Bill Barlow, and Eric Norenberg's jobs easier to pull in federal and state money, and private philanthropy. It makes it a lot easier to say we are one of the projects selected to represent the Clinton Climate+ program because of who we are and because of our potential. The second thing it does is:
- It helps internally. It causes us to step up by putting the spotlight on us. The expectation is that we must perform. The third thing it does is:

- Makes Oberlin a more interesting community. The program will result in more dollars, more people and more resources.

Tony Mealy, 328 S. Professor Street, supports going forward with this project. He advised that he questioned some of the things that he saw in the MOU and hoped that as Council became further involved in the initiative that it would rely on the advice of its chartered commissions (i.e., planning, open space and public utilities).

David Ashenhurst, Oberlin resident said the initiative sounded very good. But he had hoped that this would go at least two – three readings. He also hoped that OMLPS Director Steve Dupee and today's presenter, David Orr could be present at those meetings. He recalled that Dupee, during his brief tenure with Amp Inc., was going to be running an efficiency appliance rebate program through all Amp member communities. He wondered what had happened with that program and why the public hadn't been updated on its status. Norenberg advised that the program is called Efficiency Smart. It is a demand side management program spearheaded by Amp Inc. that will be submitted to the Public Utilities Commission and upon approval will be forwarded to Council for further consideration.

Steve Morey, President of Team Lorain County said when he first heard about the Clinton Climate+ Program he got very excited. In his profession he attends tradeshows and talks to site selection consultants all the time where he witnesses people expressing that they are the best place for advance energy companies, but when they are asked what is an example of energy efficient companies, currently in your City, or what are some initiatives that you have taken on, it falls apart. The Clinton Climate+ program is a differentiator; it allows Oberlin and those communities in the "rust belt" to stand out from the rest of the world.

Sean Cain, 121 East College Street asked if the MOU was a legally binding document. Severs advised that it was but that it didn't provide for any specific initiatives as such. It provided for a framework to discuss and possibly implement initiatives that haven't been crystallized at this point.

Scott Medwid, resident 160 Morgan Street encouraged the City to participate in the program.

6) FURTHER COUNCIL DISCUSSION: None

7) ADJOURNMENT

Being that there was no further business to come before Council the Work Session adjourned at 8:33:32 p.m.

**Attest:**

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BELINDA B. ANDERSON, CMC  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

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KENNETH SLOANE  
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

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