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Green forum attracts 55 people, more ideas

Ideas still being collected on Brentwood Web site

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BRENTWOOD — Transportation was a big topic last week during the Environmental Quality Coordinating Committee's first open forum.

Resident Patty Shultz suggested utilizing mass transit for residents who work outside of Brentwood. Residents would park in church parking lots along Franklin and Hillsboro roads and hop on a bus that would take them to Nashville.

Others suggested a heavier focus on Brentwood's plans to connect bikeways so residents can ride their bikes or walk to the grocery or other venues in the city as opposed to driving.

"I think it's fantastic to do that. The way that Brentwood is set up, currently we're conducive to using your car to get anywhere in the city. There are possibilities to improve the bikeways to change the way they are where people can get on the bikeways and ride or bike to the store," said Skip Heibert, a member of the sustainability committee.

Those suggestions and more came from the estimated 55 residents who attended the committee's first public forum. Ideas in the areas of recycling, water preservation, rain gardens and street light options were mentioned. It was even suggested that the city opt for ways to reduce the number of light bulbs in the city offices.

Members of the Citizens for Brentwood Green Space also were there to advocate for open space preservation and to endorse the suggestion to continue expansion of the bikeway system.

There were big discussions about ways to get the community educated on the state of the environment and ways they can help improve it. Getting kids and high school students involved was recommended.

"Our children are required to do community service hours any way, why not get them involved. It's for them. It's their way of life. If they haven't developed bad habits yet, then they're going to be better stewards of the environment," said Joe Herrud, chairman of the committee.

Attendees vote on ideas

After the public-comment session closed, the attendees along with committee members were divided into five groups. They were asked to brainstorm and develop ideas and ways the city can become more energy efficient and protect the environment. After leaving the group, the ideas were listed and everyone voted on what they thought were the best ideas and practices. The top five recommendations will be woven into the recommendations that the EQCC already has on the table as they prepare their list of recommendations for the City Commission.

Many of the ideas were not new to the commission that has been meeting for four months. Alex Noble, the mastermind behind the committee, says the forum was not so much about getting new ideas as it was about getting the public to support what the city is doing.

"That was the good thing that I saw, was getting a bunch of people involved," Noble said. "Anything to get people involved. Obviously those folks are interested or else they wouldn't have showed up. Any interest is good."

The committee is still soliciting the public's input. An online survey will remain available on the city's Web site at www.brentwood-tn.org. Residents are asked to log on and submit their ideas.

Herrud says a steady stream of an average 25 surveys were coming in when the survey was first posted but that number has picked up. Residents are also welcome to offer public comment during the monthly commission meetings that start at 6 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month in the Brentwood Municipal Center, at 5211 Maryland Way.
