



City of Tacoma Sustainable Tacoma Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: April 21, 2022

Commission Members Present:

Brett Marlo, Lexi Brewer (Co-Chair), Nikie Walters, Katin Kendrena, Matthew Benedict, Laura Svancarek, Tony Ivey, Evlondo Cooper (Co-Chair), Elly Claus-McGahan, Margaret Schwertner (joins 6:05pm)

Commission Members Excused:

Gabe Moaalii, Adam Reichenberger

Commission Members Absent:

Emily Pinckney

Others Present:

City of Tacoma Commission Support Staff: Patrick Babbitt (Commission staff liaison), Kristin Lynett, Jim Parvey

City of Tacoma Planning and Development Services (PDS) Department Staff Presenters: Elliott Barnett, Beth Jarot, Zoë Whidden

Guest Presenters: Kierra Phifer (Puget Sound Energy), Niece Weatherby (Puget Sound Energy)

Members of the Public: Larry Leveen, Kyla Wilson, Charla Neuman, Claudia Riedener, Steve Nicholas

Call to Order & Roll Call

This meeting was called to order by Commission Co-Chairperson Lexi Brewer at 5:03pm, including an acknowledgement of the traditional indigenous lands this Commission conducts its business on. The Chair welcomed Commissioners, staff, and members of the public and shared virtual meeting practices and requirements.

Approval of April 21, 2022 Meeting Agenda

Motion: To adopt the agenda as written with one modification: moving the Home in Tacoma Phase II presentation to sixth in the agenda. Motion made by Nikie Walters.

Seconded by: Tony Ivey

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Emily Pinckney, Gabe Moaalii, Adam Reichenberger, Margaret Schwertner

Approval of March 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To adopt meeting minutes as written. Motion made by Tony Ivey.

Seconded by: Nikie Walters

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Emily Pinckney, Gabe Moaalii, Adam Reichenberger, Margaret Schwertner

Public Comment

Larry Leveen, Executive Director of Forever Green Trails, introduced himself and the organization, which works to connect all communities in Pierce County by trails. Forever Green Trails is pursuing a Congressional funding request to develop a federal sustainability grant program and is asking community members to contact their representatives to support this. He also asked the Commission to consider advising Tacoma City Council to support this.

Staff Updates – Patrick Babbitt, Office of Environmental Policy & Sustainability (OEPS), City of Tacoma

Commission staff liaison Patrick Babbitt recounted the Sustainable Tacoma Commission's (STC) March 2022 meeting activities and then delivered brief notices to the Commission, including COVID-19 safety guidelines from Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Climate Action Plan implementation process timelines, and reminders about potential Commission strategies to engage the City about Climate Action Plan implementation. He also noted staff support provided to subcommittees around this meeting. Other notices were delivered by email to the Commission.

Subcommittee Updates

Staff communicated ongoing support for a Home in Tacoma Phase II subcommittee and Green Economy subcommittee, the latter which will meet in early May. In addition, staff will prepare to support a subcommittee to discuss annual Sustainable Tacoma Commission recommendations for Tacoma City Council and management.

Lexi, Evlondo, and Adam contributed thoughts to a draft letter of recommendation from the Commission regarding the second phase of the Home in Tacoma project. Elly communicated that the Puget Sound Regional Council is conducting its 2050 planning process.

Commission Business Items

Home in Tacoma Phase II Project Update – Elliott Barnett, Beth Jarot, Zoë Whidden, PDS, City of Tacoma

Elliott, the project lead, introduced the second phase of Home in Tacoma. Elliott began the presentation by establishing a common baseline understanding of the problem and opportunity: housing is a fundamental need, 40% of Tacoma households are "cost burdened", and housing costs and supply are not keeping up with incomes and demand. In addition, housing supports high-quality, livable neighborhoods, workforce access to jobs, aging in place, access to services and other opportunities, a tool for financial stability, and more. In addition, with the need to preserve working farmlands and forests, cities are the right place for growth. The first phase of Home in Tacoma project work culminated in policy direction to shift from exclusively single-family zoning to low-scale and mid-scale residential zoning; focus growth around shopping and transit; address design and other standards; strengthen regulatory tools to promote

affordability; and prioritize affordability, anti-displacement, and anti-racism more generally. He also noted that housing goals can complement other City policies related to sustainability, urban forestry, open space protection, environmental justice, and resilience against climate change.

The second phase of Home in Tacoma Project work will involve consulting stakeholders; soliciting consultant services to study and assess policy options or other topics that need to be better understood; and engaging with the public and key decision-makers in the process, including the Planning Commission and Tacoma City Council. Engagement and analysis work is already beginning, including the discussion happening at this meeting. While a policy direction was set in the first phase of work, Phase II is meant to make more policy decisions; these decisions might be developed around incentivizing density, such as through floor area ratio or height bonuses; street tree and tree retention standards; integration of cost-effective green building and/or electrification standards; evaluation of impervious surface maximums; workforce preference policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled or protect water quality; promotion of reusing existing structures or salvaging materials; and energy conservation methods to reduce ongoing household expenses. Engagement, analysis, proposal development, and public hearing and decision-making processes will continue through June 2023.

Staff presenters responded to questions raised by the Commission, inviting input in particular around (1) which topics need to be studied; (2) how should the City structure engagement; and (3) what are the biggest opportunities to meet housing and sustainability goals? Commissioners encouraged staff to prioritize the planting, maintenance, and retention of trees; transit-oriented development; and density. In addition, they asked staff to look into regulations of short-term rentals as an opportunity to increase long-term rental stock available. The Commission is preparing a letter of recommendation regarding this project and invited Elliott to return again with project updates and to seek Commission input.

Puget Sound Energy Natural Gas Services Decarbonization – Kierra Phifer, Niece Weatherby, Puget Sound Energy

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) staff presented its study on decarbonizing its services, including discussion of electric customers outside Tacoma and Pierce County. PSE Staff shared the utility's aspirational goals to reduce its own carbon emissions from utility operations to net zero by 2045; make its electricity supply net zero by 2030; have a 100% carbon free electric supply by 2045; reduce natural customer end use carbon emissions by 30% by 2030; and make its natural gas customer end use emissions net zero by 2045. PSE proposes a hybrid approach to decarbonization, relying on its existing fossil fuel energy resources mixed with electric appliances, like heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and induction stoves. PSE does not provide electricity to Tacoma residents; all electric utility services are offered by Tacoma Power. PSE also presented renewable natural gas and synthetic natural gas as options with less greenhouse gas emissions; however, it is unclear whether these options can replace a significant amount of natural gas and related emissions. PSE staff communicated that fossil fuels provide assurance that peak energy demands are met across the region and that decarbonization must be carefully planned.

Commissioners expressed their appreciation that PSE had set aspirational net zero goals. Commissioners asked that PSE be careful to engage the Tacoma community about service decisions, particularly after the public concerns raised during the Liquefied Natural Gas plant built in Tacoma's tideflats. Commissioners also asked for more information about assumptions

about the renewable and synthetic natural gas resources, including what quantity they might be available in and how much they might reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Commission asked whether PSE would consider supporting fuel switching to enable Tacoma and Washington State to more rapidly electrify its systems to address the climate crisis. PSE staff communicated that the utility is considering its position on this issue. The Commission communicated its intent to seek further updates from PSE in the near future.

Home in Tacoma Phase II Letter – Patrick Babbitt, OEPS, City of Tacoma; Lexi Brewer and Evlondo Cooper, Sustainable Tacoma Commission

Patrick introduced the draft letter regarding the second phase of Home in Tacoma project work. Patrick, Lexi, and Evlondo discussed the subcommittee’s draft recommendations, which build on the Commission’s recommendations for the project during its first phase of work in 2021. The Commission determined additional work is needed and moved letter drafting to another subcommittee meeting before the May 19 Commission meeting.

Sustainability Small Grants Applications Review & Award – Patrick Babbitt, OEPS, City of Tacoma; Lexi Brewer and Evlondo Cooper, Sustainable Tacoma Commission

Patrick provided an overview of Sustainability Small Grant applications received during the first quarter of 2022. Five applications were submitted. Patrick discussed applicants’ project descriptions, proposed benefits to Environmental Services department utilities, requested and matching funds, and other considerations. The Commission discussed the merits of each application, with concerns around the Anderson St. Rain Garden project in particular. The Commission expressed concern about funding a project on private property, which City staff confirmed that the City rarely if ever does. In addition, Commissioners expressed that there was not significant detail provided to demonstrate public benefits, whether through raingarden installation or education and engagement after its installation. Commissioners considered conditions or advice to provide to this applicant.

The Commission voted as outlined below:

Sustainability Small Grant Application Decision – Downtown on the Go’s “Tacoma Waterfront Walk” Project

Motion: To award this grant application with full funding (\$2,000) with standard Sustainability Small Grants program requirements, including that any in-person activities follow COVID-19 health safety protocols from public health agencies, including Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Washington Department of Health, and Centers for Disease Control.

Motion made by Elly Claus-McGahan.

Seconded by: Evlondo Cooper

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: Laura Svancarek

Absent: Emily Pinckney, Gabe Moaalii, Adam Reichenberger

Sustainability Small Grant Application Decision – Center for Food Preservation Arts’ “Center for Food Preservation Arts” Project, Johnathan Loritsch’s “Anderson St. Rain

Garden” Project, Pierce Conservation District’s “Green Stormwater Outreach Materials” Project, and Tacoma Tool Library’s “Tool Lending Expansion” Project

Motion: To award the Center for Food Preservation Arts, Pierce Conservation District, and Tacoma Tool Library applications with full funding (\$5,000 each) with standard Sustainability Small Grants program requirements, including that any in-person activities follow COVID-19 health safety protocols from public health agencies, and additionally to deny funding to Johnathan Loritsch’s application. Motion made by Elly Claus-McGahan.

Seconded by: Evlondo Cooper

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion we declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Emily Pinckney, Gabe Moaalii, Adam Reichenberger

Recognize New and Departing Commissioners – Patrick Babbitt, OEPS, City of Tacoma

Patrick and Commissioners thanked new members, Brett Marlo and Laura Svancarek, for their commitment to serving the Tacoma community through the Sustainable Tacoma Commission. In addition, the Commission thanked Katin Kendrena for her dedicated service to the Commission and Tacoma community over the past two years.

Public Comment

Larry Leveen announced Forever Green Trails’ Pierce County Trails Day event on July 30, 2022. The event, organized with a coalition of government and nonprofit partners, organizes activities throughout the county for all ages and abilities to promote various outdoor activities from birdwatching, hiking, skateboarding, biking, park cleanups, habitat restoration, and trail maintenance. He provided an event webpage (<https://www.forevergreentrails.org/pierce-county-trails-day>) and last year’s event report (https://www.forevergreentrails.org/files/ugd/047eee_8b4c7d4a5a1340f8b849a0881ada35a2.pdf).

Objectives for or before the Next Meeting

- Staff Updates, including CAP Implementation
- Subcommittee Updates: Home in Tacoma Phase II, Green Economy, 2022 STC Recommendations
- Solid Waste Utility Climate Action Plan Implementation Update – Presentation
- Annual Commission Recommendations – Letter
- Home in Tacoma Phase II – Letter
- Wastewater Pollution Prevention in Commencement Bay – Presentation (tentative)
- Green Economy Study Scope of Work – Presentation (tentative)

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned at 7:31pm.

Adjournment of April 21, 2022 Meeting

Motion: To adjourn the meeting. Motion made by Matthew Benedict.

Seconded by: Nikie Walters

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion we declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Emily Pinckney, Gabe Moaalii, Adam Reichenberger

The next meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be held virtually on Thursday, May 19, 2022, at 5:00pm.

Lexi Brewer and Evlondo Cooper, Co-Chairs

Patrick Babbitt, Staff / Note Taker