



City of Tacoma Sustainable Tacoma Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: June 16, 2022

Commission Members Present:

Margaret Schwertner, Lexi Brewer (Co-Chair), Nikie Walters, Evlondo Cooper (Co-Chair), Matthew Benedict, Kendra Stauffer, Laura Svancarek, Casey McManus, Elly Claus-McGahan (joins 5:05pm), Brett Marlo (joins 5:48pm)

Commission Members Excused:

Adam Reichenberger, Emily Pinckney

Commission Members Absent:

Tony Ivey

Others Present:

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

Other Presenters: Stephen Antupit, Carl Metz, Joel Baker

Members of the Public: Heather Jauregui

Call to Order & Roll Call

This meeting was called to order by Commission Co-Chairperson Evlondo Cooper 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. Evlondo administered roll call.

Approval of June 16, 2022 Meeting Agenda

Motion: To adopt the agenda as written. Motion made by Margaret Schwertner.

Seconded by: Nikie Walters

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

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Adam Reichenberger, Emily Pinckney, Tony Ivey, Brett Marlo, Elly Claus-McGahan

Approval of May 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To adopt meeting minutes as written. Motion made by Matthew Benedict.

Seconded by: Casey McManus

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

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Adam Reichenberger, Emily Pinckney, Tony Ivey, Brett Marlo

Public Comment

No verbal comments were given in meeting and no written comments were submitted to the Commission before the meeting.

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

Commission staff liaison Patrick Babbitt and staff member James Parvey recounted the Sustainable Tacoma Commission's (STC) May 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, Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability 2023-2024 budget proposals, and reminders about potential Commission strategies to engage the City about Climate Action Plan implementation. In response to a Commissioner's question, Stephen Antupit explained the basic purpose and geographic scope of the Pacific Avenue Subarea Plan, a project in the planning and development stages.

Subcommittee Updates

Evlondo and Patrick recounted subcommittee meetings in June, which focused on preparing Commissioners to meet with Tacoma City Council members and the City Manager to discuss the Commission's strategic and budget-focused recommendations. The Green Economy subcommittee is scheduled to meet in late June.

Commission Business Items

Design Review Program – Stephen Antupit and Carl Metz, Planning and Development Services Department, City of Tacoma

Stephen and Carl introduced the Design Review Program scope and timeline for work. The program's goal is to improve overall development design quality, consistent with Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, reflective of community vision, and supportive of administrative efficiency to promote development. The program focuses on design standards, which deal with how a development is built, including parking location, site connectivity, ground floor features (windows, storefronts, weather protection), mass reduction (upper story stepbacks, façade widths), and street orientation. It also focuses on design guidelines, which deal with how a development meets urban design objectives, including site planning, connectivity, architectural composition, public realm, climate responsiveness, character, culture, heritage, and open space considerations. Project work will be conducted through the summer, with public engagement and staff recommendation to City Council planned for late 2022.

Wastewater Pollution Prevention – Joel Baker, University of Washington and Puget Sound Institute

Joel explained the state of scientific knowledge about water quality, specific related to dissolved oxygen levels, in the Puget Sound. Currently, the Puget Sound is on the Clean Water Act's list for impaired water bodies due to low oxygen levels. Joel emphasized the science is complex, explaining where in the Puget Sound and how often (on a measured and projected yearly basis) dissolved oxygen levels are deemed too low. Human causes of low dissolved oxygen is due in

part to wastewater treatment plants and other watershed activities, especially agriculture. These human causes contributed nitrogen to the water, which leads to more phytoplankton growth and reduced dissolved oxygen. Dissolved oxygen-depleted ocean water also contributes significantly to regions of the Puget Sound not meeting dissolved oxygen requirements. There are different potential approaches to increasing dissolved oxygen levels, including reducing nitrogen from point sources (such as wastewater treatment plants) or watersheds more broadly; or, natural nutrient removal mechanisms could be pursued.

Overall, Joel emphasized the following points:

- The Puget Sound is a highly complex system which is part of a rapidly changing environment.
- The Pacific Ocean water that enters is enriched in nitrogen and depleted in oxygen, resulting in a naturally dissolved oxygen-depleted system.
- Anthropogenic point sources are not trivial and add to the dissolved oxygen depletion. Even complete elimination will not completely 'solve' the dissolved oxygen impairment.
- The technology exists to reduce nitrogen levels in effluent from wastewater treatment plants. There may be co-benefits of improving this technology, but it will require money and energy and likely emit greenhouse gases.
- Nitrogen is one of many water quality issues and a more holistic approach will be more efficient, effective, accepted, and sustained.

Tacoma Renewable Natural Gas Plant – James Parvey, Environmental Services Department, City of Tacoma

James introduced the development of Tacoma's Renewable Natural Gas Plant, which uses refined bio-gas from Tacoma's wastewater treatment system. Located at the City's Central Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Renewable Natural Gas Plant removes everything but the methane from bio-gas, which can then be used to fuel vehicles. Methane production is an unavoidable result of wastewater treatment. Previously, the City flared bio-gas, wasting an equivalent of 1,000 gallons of diesel per day and contributing carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. While diesel fuel prices are volatile and rising, with no clear end in sight, renewable natural gas produced in this manner is reliable and can be sold by the City as renewable fuel credits. These revenues can contribute to wastewater or climate work. The project has a positive net cash flow that will increase significantly in 2034 when project debt service costs end.

Public Comment

No additional public comment was delivered during this agenda item.

Objectives for or before the Next Meeting

- Staff Updates, including CAP Implementation
- Subcommittee Updates: Green Economy (including Rain Incubator)
- Sustainability Small Grant applications – outreach; review and award
- Commission meetings with City Council and Management
- Commission annual report drafting

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned at 7:02pm.

Adjournment of June 16, 2022 Meeting

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

Seconded by: Elly Claus-McGahan

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

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Adam Reichenberger, Emily Pinckney, Tony Ivey

The next meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be held virtually on Thursday, July 21, 2022, at 5:00pm.

Lexi Brewer and Evlondo Cooper, Co-Chairs

Patrick Babbitt, Staff / Note Taker