



**JOINT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
MEETING
MEETING MINUTES**

REGULAR

June 28, 2023

The Joint Sustainability Committee convened in a hybrid meeting via videoconferencing and at PDC.

Acting Chair Kaiba White called the Board Meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

Board Members in Attendance in Person: Kaiba White (Chair), Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Rodrigo Leal, Christopher Campbell

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Lane Becker, Alice Woods, Yure Suarez, Melissa Rothrock, Jon Salinas, Heather Houser, Frances Deviney

Board Members Absent: Kelsey Hitchingham, Diana Wheeler, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Anna Scott

City Staff in Attendance:
Zach Baumer, Rohan Lilauwala, Daniel Culotta

CALL TO ORDER

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

The speakers who registered in advance for public comment have three minutes each to address items on the agenda at this time.

- **Ben Suddaby – President AFCSME** (Speaking on telework policy)
 - Transportation costs, energy for buildings.
 - City showing a lack of respect for employees by forcing people to show up to a workplace they don't want to travel to or be at.
 - Travis County has won awards for telework policy, and saved million of dollars in heating/cooling costs and office space.
- **Carlos Soto – Community Advancement Network** (speaking on work CAN has been doing)

- Partnership of public, private, non-profit, faith based resources, leverage mutual resources to advance social, economic goals.
- Data is available in dashboard – 18 different indicators that assess community health/well-being.

1. Approval of minutes from the May 24th meeting of the Joint Sustainability Committee.

- Motion by Qureshi, seconded by Davis. Approved unanimously (10-0) (Deviney, Campbell off dais)

2. Refresher on JSC Attendance and Conflict of Interest Form

- Form needs to be signed if in person
- If attending remotely – form must be signed before the meeting, otherwise you don't count towards quorum and cannot vote.

3. Innovation Office support of Austin Climate Equity Plan Implementation Presentation – Daniel Culotta, Innovation Office (Discussion and/or Possible Action). (Discussion and/or Possible Action).

- Green Workforce Accelerator (GWA) – training next gen climate/sustainability workforce
- Qureshi – lots of existing climate/sustainability accelerators in Austin – engaging them would be good, especially for organizations that don't get accepted to GWA. Have you had conversations with private accelerators?
- Culotta – we fill a gap that others miss. A lot of those are focused on for-profit companies, bottom-line focused outcome. GWA focused on programs around social services, people, workers – difficult to invest in from a business standpoint. Their goals are aligned with city goals – we should be an investor in achieving these goals. One GWA participant went through Aspen Institute accelerator.
- Qureshi – should loop in ACC, etc. to create pathways to existing programs/
- Culotta – agreed, exploring further. Model of solar training program with Carpenters' Union.
- Deviney – timeline/process is unclear based on last year's website.
- Culotta – website will be updated. Contract with partner who will run program to go to council in August, then community recruitment begins. Timeline different than last year.
- White – Scale of work needed to take advantage of funding opportunities (IRA, BIL, etc) means more pathways needed. Eg. HVAC contractors to take advantage of IRA rebates for heat pumps. Is this a consideration?
- Culotta – Need to build awareness of potential connections to external programs if GWA isn't a fit. GWA is one of the only ones focused on developing partner organizations.
- Becker – how is program marketed?
- Culotta – always looking for new ideas. Primarily through community groups, equity action team, orgs that have already gone through program, partner networks, etc.
- Leal – is this funded year-by-year? Have you explored corporate or foundation funds?

- Culotta – yes, either funded by collaboration of departments or by IO budget. Hope that we can institutionalize this somewhere in city with yearly budget allocation. Only city funds now. Explored external funds but it's not sustainable. (worked with IMKO and 3M in the past).

4. City of Austin Telework Policy – Whitney Holt, AFSCME 1624 (Discussion and/or Possible Action)

- Travis County saved \$1.3 million in utilities, and 40% of buildings are not needed.
- City would save \$1 billion in 3 years on real estate.
- Davis – how many city employees are affected?
- Holt – 5,800 estimated from PIR from reporter, unclear if this includes only 100% telework or includes those with partial telework privileges.
- Salinas – if telecommuting continued, what could the city do with existing building stock
- Holt – report includes top 10 suggestions for use. E.g. office space for non profits.
- White – were results of telework study requested by council in 2022 released?
- Holt – not to my knowledge.
- Baumer – city manager supports return to office because of fairness (not fair to those who never got to telework) and productivity/collaboration.
- Campbell – research shows benefits of return to office, but is in favor of passing resolution to use data to make decisions.
- Becker – fairness argument is moot – fairness for who? Agreed that it's difficult to make relationships when remote, but not correct to say return the office is the only way to achieve this.
- White – solution to fairness is not to make everyone miserable but compensating accordingly. Should be thoroughly studied before taking a benefit away, especially given struggles with recruitment and retention.
- Qureshi – challenges are real, but no reason to think the only way to solve this is the old way. Need to be creative.
- Houser – loss of morale/burnout if return to office. Need to focus on sustainability, given the scope of this board. We know environmental benefits and Travis County is a model. Supports resolution as is, would also support a stronger resolution.
- Deviney – sees differences in staff cohesion between in person/remote employees, but this is focused on sustainability. Will support resolution based on this.
- Salinas – sustainability impacts clear, data helps. Unfairness is in commute.
- Davis – recommendation is too sprawling, would prefer a tighter scope that is clear and actionable
- White – need to decide one way or another
- Woods – supportive either way, also suggest they look at data from Travis County instead of conduct a new study.
- Houser motions to approve second. Woods seconds. Passes unanimously (12-0)

5. Austin Community Investment Budget Presentation – Daniela Silva, Equity Action (Discussion and/or Possible Action).

- Community investment budget – coalition of dozens of community orgs that create one list of community priorities that should be in the city budget.
- Campbell – are there specifics on ACEP implementation?
- Silva – in the FY24 budget
- White – JSC budget recommendations are in this
- Leal – what is timeline?
- Silva – many deadlines, but recommendation today or at next meeting will work.
- Leal – motion in support of Community Investment Budget. Qureshi seconds.
- Silva – based on state law, cities cannot reduce police funding levels to below 2019 levels.
- White – this is not a ‘defund the police’ budget.
- Leal motions to endorse CIB, Qureshi seconds.
- Passes 10-0 (Davis abstaining, Suarez off dais).

6. Updates from JSC working groups on Austin Climate Equity Plan Implementation (Discussion and/or Possible Action)..

- Sustainable Buildings
 - Adopt 2024 IECC Energy Conservation Code
 - Create a density bonus (that stacks on top of Affordability Unlocked bonus and others) to incentivize use of Passive House standard and/or Living Building Challenge
 - ECAD 2.0 – require efficiency upgrades to buildings that perform poorly on energy audits
 - Address AEGB limitations that exist because of Smart Housing (bifurcate program)
 - Explicitly promoting or incentivizing Passive House Standard, Living Building Challenge and Low Carbon building throughout the CoA RFP and building funding scoring metrics (stating preference for and/or adding points to scoring for meeting these standards)
 - Campbell – what’s the process for developing these?
 - White – outside experts working on buildings have also been part of these conversations. Next steps – engage staff and broaden circle to vet ideas. Not fully baked yet, this is initial.
- Transportation
 - Identified important strategies and the ones the group was aligned with. Still need work to do and to talk to Austin Energy before recommendations
 - Mobility hubs – intersection with resilience hubs.
 - Improve sidewalks, urban trails, and crossings – shade/climate-resilient design
 - EV needs assessment – will guide everything else
 - Equitable incentives for buying/leasing EVs
 - Ebike/EV sharing program – what is status?
 - EV charging network
 - Wait until August to hear from AE and then create recommendations. How to get answers to questions, people to talk to, case studies, etc.
 - Campbell to explore inviting new external members to group
 - White – can help connect to Austin Energy Staff

- Salinas to join Sustainable Buildings WG
- Becker to confirm with Stephanie Bazan since he is alternate for Parks Commission.
- White to follow up with Woods to identify where the need is.

7. Updates from home commissions (Discussion and/or Possible Action).

- Deviney – Food Policy Board heard from HSEM, should invite to JSC. Deviney stepping down, new JSC rep being elected in July.
- Becker – Zilker Park vision plan passed, focused on issues of sustainability
- White – EUC will reopen AE Resource Generation plan starting at July meeting, primarily because Fayette Coal Plant was not retired in 2022. Needs diverse community representation.
- Davis – RMC requesting council expand scope to advise on natural gas utilities. Currently no board that advises on this topic.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

White adjourns meeting at 9:03 pm with no objections.

ADJOURNMENT

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request. Meeting locations are planned with wheelchair access. If requiring Sign Language Interpreters or alternative formats, please give notice at least 2 days (48 hours) before the meeting date. Please call Zach Baumer with the Office of Sustainability at 512-974-2836, for additional information; TTY users route through Relay Texas at 711.

For more information on the Joint Sustainability Committee, please contact Zach Baumer at (zach.baumer@austintexas.gov or 512-974-2836).