



**JOINT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
July 26, 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 6:13 pm.

Board Members in Attendance in Person: Kaiba White, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Jon Salinas, Larry Franklin, Rodrigo Leal

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Melissa Rothrock, Heather Houser, Anna Scott, Diana Wheeler, Christopher Campbell

Board Members Absent: Kelsey Hitchingham, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Yure Suarez

Observing: Amy Noel (not yet completed oath)

City Staff in Attendance:

Zach Baumer, Rohan Lilauwala, Matt McCaw, Amanda Ross, Jodi, Juan Espinoza, Kerstin Johannson, Cameron Freberg, Christa McCarthy

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.

6. Approval of minutes from the June 28th meeting of the Joint Sustainability Committee.

- Motion by Qureshi, seconded by Davis. Approved unanimously (11-0)

1. Parks and Recreation Department Land Management Plan Overview – Matt McCaw, Parks and Recreation Department

- Leal: does \$200/acre cost represent new costs? Where did this come from?
- McCaw: study of comparable plans. Yes, new costs. Current 2 FTEs + 1 homelessness response coordinator, 75k operating budget. In the early phases of long-term project.

- Qureshi: is there an ideal budgetary amount that should go to this?
- McCaw: to fully fund this plan, \$2 million
- Qureshi: are there particular areas of vulnerability to wildfire?
- McCaw: Generally well distributed, wildland-urban interface is everywhere. Fire behavior changes between woodland (in west) and grassland (in east). Woodland might be slower but more intense, grassland faster but less intense. Soil water availability – shallow soils in west contributes to vulnerability.
- White: how much restoration is being done now vs 1000 acres a year target
- McCaw: based on many treatments needed over time. Areas will need to be treated multiple times. 400 acres of restoration done in 2.5-3 years.
- White: Are volunteers being used?
- McCaw: Not as much as we can, beginning conversations with Parks foundation to collaborate on training and engagement with volunteers
- White: Do Creekside lands fall into this plan?
- McCaw: Riparian/aquatic areas are 5% of total. When streambank stabilization and engineering are involved, Watershed get involved. E.g. replaced a failing earthen dam in Onion Creek. Lots of collaboration with WPD.
- Wheeler: What is relationship with conservancies? E.g. Shoal Creek
- McCaw: Shoal Creek different, very narrow and built up. Official ones like Shoal Creek, Pease Park etc. have official management agreements. Volunteer groups like in Blunn Creek are engaged and active. Collaborative work plan created.
- Leal: what funding strategies have been explored to fill the gaps. Incl. outside city budgets.
- McCaw: all avenues inside/outside city are explored. Collaborative agreements with agencies, grant applications.
- White: how many staff do you need?
- Leal: 1 per thousand acres? McCaw: That's a comp from other plans.

2. Austin Civilian Conservation Corps Overview – Juan Espinoza, Parks and Recreation Department.

- Wheeler: How long has this been going?
- Johansson: 3 years in total, 1.5 in PARD
- White: Food and Product Consumption difficult part of Climate Equity Plan. Are there plans to help address waste issues?
- McCarthy: open to all options, pending resources to expand
- Johansson: regularly meet with ARR, helped launch computer waste reduction
- Houser: how to handle cultural differences and equity issues
- Johansson: difficult conversations, alignment on goals, building authentic community, equity+inclusion program managers

3. Austin Energy Support of Austin Climate Equity Plan Transportation Electrification Implementation Overview – Cameron Freberg, Austin Energy.

- Franklin: can you see where EVs are being adopted?
- Freberg: yes, we have that data by zip code

- Salinas: would bike/car share be third party?
- Freberg: bike share – CapMetro; car share – third party. Interest from multifamily properties, HACA, etc.
- Qureshi – Are CapMetro on-demand pickup buses electric? Planned to be?
- Freberg – Topic has come up, figuring out how to support charging for it. Can't speak for CapMetro
- Qureshi – what are projected impacts on grid?
- Freberg – threats to grid: significant load on grid. Optimism, because strain on grid is temperature-based, EV load is temperature-agnostic. Peak is for public charging is 10 am, when there is no grid strain. Ability to shift charging to off-peak with incentives, controls, etc.
- Qureshi – what can we do to mitigate EV taxes and regulation from the state?
- Freberg – bill analysis, active lobbying prior to bill passage. \$200 annual registration fee for all EVs
- Qureshi – where do driverless cars fit in?
- Freberg – huge potential growth sector
- Campbell – didn't mention incentives for chargers and purchase for low-income customers as a barrier – is there enough already?
- Freberg – barriers around areas of uncertainty. We're seeing money from federal govt for incentives; lots more coming over next 4-5 years.
- Campbell – what is barrier to needs assessment?
- Freberg – packaging it into one assessment. Lots of different inputs, always evolving. Still useful and needed. Need to be more organized and document intake better
- Campbell – what kind of equity-focused outreach is being done?
- Freberg – outreach has shifted over the past few years to target more diverse audiences
- Scott – where are we on charging goal, how fast are we moving? Plan calls for 226 mw and 37,000 chargers
- Freberg – currently in AE's network – 10.5 mw (private companies have way more that aren't included). Growth is rapid
- Rothrock – how can we support visitors?
- Freberg – looking at state parks, county parks + commercial, hospitality, entertainment, etc.
- Leal – any exploration of transportation ambassadors + community groups for needs assessment
- Freberg – not yet, good resource to look into further. Connections already exist with neighborhood/community groups

7. Discussion and Possible Recommendation to Council on Proposal to demote the Office of Sustainability, Office of Resilience, Equity Office and Office of Civil Rights, as described in the draft FY 2023/2024 City of Austin Budget.

- Scott approves of recommendations, Qureshi agrees
- White – spoke with city manager, rationale given is offices are small and don't have enough weight to be heard compared to departments + importance of sustainability in planning. White's read is burying offices will reduce weight.

- Qureshi – troubling that this is happening while we’re seeing state/nationwide clampdown on DEI
- Davis – supports recommendation, believes sustainability should be woven throughout city, not just planning.
- Scott – could create a staff retention issue. White – blow to morale to be demoted from independent office to within a department.
- Noel – any discussion of alignment with city goals/SD23? Any discussion of transparency + funding/priorities of offices? White – no
- White motions to approve, Scott seconds.
- Passes 10-0 (Franklin off Dais).

4. JSC Annual Report

- Potential topics based on last year’s report.

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

- Transportation
 - Group met with UT faculty Dave Sutherland, gained insight; looking into mobility hubs
 - Looking at research around land use and transportation
 - Should have recommendations at next meeting
- Natural Systems/Consumption
 - Looking into ARR draft plan, continuing to refine/strategize
- White – lets work towards getting recommendations in at the next meeting + we can make more in the future.
- Buildings
 - Useful conversations with Heidi Kasper (AE GB) around adopting building/energy codes

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

- Amy Noel – Economic Prosperity Commission new member
- AE resource plan - AE wants to do it internally and report. EUC creating a working group anyway. Looking for members of group.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Resolution in support of land management plan

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](mailto:zach.baumer@austintexas.gov) or 512-974-2836).

The minutes were approved at the August 23, 2023 meeting on Commissioner Qureshi's motion, Commissioner Davis second on a 12-0 vote.