



**JOINT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
October 23, 2024**

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

Board Members in Attendance in Person: Kaiba White, Rodrigo Leal, Marissa Bell, Chris Maxwell-Gaines, Charlotte Davis

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Amy Noel, Lane Becker, Diana Wheeler, Heather Houser, Melissa Rothrock, Anna Scott, Chris Campbell

Board Members Absent: Yure Suarez, Jon Salinas, Haris Qureshi, Natalie Poindexter

City Staff in Attendance:

Leti Alvarez
Jim Dymkowski
Daniel Priest
Naomi Rotramel

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kaiba White called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.

1. Approval of minutes from the September 25, 2024 meeting of the Joint Sustainability Committee.

Chris Maxwell-Gaines motion, Houser seconds, passes 12-0.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

2. Presentation on low-carbon concrete – Johanna Anderson, EPA

- K. White –Clarification on Federal highway/transportation departments is already utilizing concrete that's already in the top 20% of best?

- Johanna – Federal funding flows to the development of the building of highways is it goes from the federal highways department directly to state department of transportations and then they use that funding to build roads.
- Bell – Procurement, curious do you imagine people utilizing these labels without limiting fair and open competition and meeting any procurement regulations that are required
 - Johanna – Initially you might give extra points for a product that has a label. Like any new sustainable product on the marketplace, one might set up a separate agreement for the sustainable products versus the lesser. Market availability, purchasers will have to do their due diligence and provide situation-by-situation basis.
- Kaiba – Looks like this grant closes 11/25, will they be able to get something together in a month?
 - Johanna – In general grant programs there's a real interest in reaching folks that are not professional grant writers so I would assume that the federal highways grant is going that way also.
- Anna Scott – How to we implement this? And how to we implement faster?
 - Johanna – There are tools already. I would say see how the federal government is doing it. Looking at how to take the approach, prioritizing, finding partners most willing, testing out carbon concrete, see what work is being done.
- K. White – You talked about standards for the environmental product declarations, should we expect that they're automatically adhering to those standards? Are they required to follow the standards?
 - Johanna – There are some basic requirements. What we're aiming for is all EPDS that are submitted for our labeling program that they be built on PCR's that meet our PCR criteria.

3. Presentation on Austin Core Transportation Plan – Cole Kitten, Transportation and Public Works Department

- Item struck from agenda

4. Presentation on Tree Regulations and Protections – Naomi Rotramel and Daniel Priest, Development Services Department

Alberta Phillips joins meeting via Webex @ 7:31pm

- Leal – Clarification, based on data presented, does the data preserve suggest a net tree loss over the years?
 - Naomi - That can be answered by the overall canopy assessment. We lost many trees with freezes. Overall, Austin is developing but we're focused on preserving 8 inches and greater, and the protected trees and the heritage trees
 - Daniel – Since the data proved is specific to date that cross our threshold, I don't think we can draw Urban Forest wide conclusions based just on development data.
- Leal – Have y'all seen examples of cities that have regulations that have low tree canopy
 - Naomi - We are the most progressive in the country.

Anna Scott left meeting 7:34pm

Melissa Rothrock left meeting 7:37pm

- Maxwell Gaines-site inspections how does that occur after initial tree protection is set up?
 - Naomi - Once the building permit is issued, that goes to environmental inspection division so they're also looking for erosion control. They're not contracted out.
 - Daniel – We don't have tree specific inspectors we have environmental inspectors who do trees and other environmental concerns.
- Maxwell Gaines – Does the 3rd party tree companies help the homeowner with permits? Is there still a permit to take out a dead tree?
 - There's always a permit. In code there's a 10 day business day window to review and approve.
- Alberta Phillips – Tree equity and/or disparity, some places having a lower number of trees or tree canopy. How is that being addressed in Austin?
 - Naomi - All trees are protected once they reach 19 inches. The ordinance does not distinguish where a tree exists.
 - Daniel – At the protected level, there's nothing in our process that distinguishes in the part of town.
- Alberta Phillips - Compliance and penalties, Do you have any data on how many traffic tickets/violations?
- Daniel - Administer through the environmental inspections division and municipal court, but we could see what's available, but we don't have that data. Not sure if it's available to the public.
- Alberta Phillips – Oak Hill, they said they have a waiver to cut down heritage trees? how is that possible? When does the developer have to get the permit?
 - Jim D – Sounds like a system of vested rights. Zoning change is usually done prior to development plan being submitted.
- Alberta Phillips - Compliance – what are the penalties for violation?
 - Jim D - Penalty for violation is monetary and more with the civil side.
- Lane Becker – Curious to hear how do you see the comprehensive inventory impacting your work?
 - Naomi- On the regulatory it's not going to impact our work, its designed for land managers.
- Amy Noel – Clarification from Tree Mitigations ordinance and tree mitigation program.
 - Naomi - Our focus is on tree preservation and ordinance. Our focus is on preservation. Mitigation, which will be part of the urban forester's presentation will focus more on that.
 - Daniel – Our code requires mitigation when a regulated tree is removed.
- K. White – Reasonable use and reasonable access and how are those defined?
 - Naomi – it's on a site by site, case by case basis.
- K. White - Is reducing the square footage of the building taken into consideration?
 - Naomi – Yes
- K. White – If a tree is removed without proper authorization or permitting. Is the property owner?
 - Daniel P – as far as Code violation, property owner is always ultimately responsible.
- Alberta – under the new land use ordinance, is the tree ordinance impacted under the new HOME 2 ordinance?
 - Naomi - Yes still has to follow guidelines and ordinance. No change to the tree ordinance. No change to the heritage tree ordinance.

Anna Scott left meeting 7:35pm

Melissa Rothrock left meeting 8pm

5. Discussion of agricultural land acquisition and potential Working Farms Fund pilot

Diana Wheeler left meeting 8:33pm

6. Approval of Proposed 2025 Joint Sustainability Committee Annual Meeting Schedule

- Houser motion, Charlotte second, passes 10-0

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Urban Forester – Emily King
- City of Portland – Low carbon concrete
- Cap Metro
- Transportation Presentation
- Home Commissions Updates
- Conversation about \$50 Million

White adjourns meeting with no objections at 8:42 pm.

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).