

## MINUTES

Eugene Sustainability Commission  
McNutt Room—Eugene City Hall—777 Pearl Street  
Eugene, Oregon

December 21, 2011  
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Josh Skov, Steve Newcomb, Chris Anglin, Jessica Bloomfield, Shawn Boles, Howard Bonnett, Art Farley, Dave Funk, Kathi Jaworski, Rusty Rexius, Sue Wolling, Stacy Vynne, commissioners; Babe O’Sullivan, Matt McRae, City Manager’s Office.

ABSENT: Alan Zelenka, commissioners.

Mr. Skov called the December 21, 2011, meeting of the Sustainability Commission to order.

### 1. Opening – Agenda Review, Approval of Minutes

Mr. Skov reviewed the agenda. There were no changes.

Mr. Skov called for corrections to the November 16, 2011, minutes.

Mr. Bonnett corrected the spelling of Paul Gilding’s name. He also indicated he would work with Ms. O’Sullivan to clarify the remarks attributed to him in paragraph 1 on page 4 of the minutes.

Mr. Bonnett, seconded by Mr. Boles, moved to approve the November 16, 2011, minutes as amended. The motion passed, 9:1:0; Mr. Rexius abstained from the vote because he had not been at the commission’s November meeting.

### 2. Public Comment

**Matthew Nelson** was joined by Zoe, Nick, and Zack of the Climate Justice League of the University of Oregon and asked the commission to endorse a letter asking the Eugene City to Council pass a resolution opposing coal trains coming through the city limits to reach a proposed coal export terminal in Coos Bay. Mr. Nelson spoke of the negative impacts of coal transportation as a result of coal dust and noted that coal was the largest producer of CO2 emissions. He believed residents would oppose coal trains coming through Eugene.

Mr. Skov asked the Climate Justice League for information about the number of jobs the proposed coal export terminal was projected to create. He also asked how the League would advise the commission to respond to councilors who did not believe the issue was within the council’s purview. Nick explained that the resolution was nonbinding and intended to demonstrate that Eugene did not want coal and would work to stop the proposal. He suggested the City of Eugene could impose all types of regulations on coal trains passing through Eugene to make it more expensive and difficult for companies to operate. He noted that the resolution also called for action on the part of the State to stop the proposal.

Mr. Skov scheduled discussion of the Climate Justice League’s request in January.

### **3. Items from commission and staff**

Mr. Anglin reported that he had shared the commission's work plan with the Permaculture Guild in the hope the Guild would promote it through its own networks.

Ms. Wolling said she had alerted Gears that the commission's agenda included the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (PBMP). She anticipated that PBMP advocates would ask for time on the agendas of the various neighborhood associations to present both the plan and the 20-minute neighborhood concept.

Mr. Newcomb reported that the Eugene Water & Electric Board's Sustainability Report was now available on its Web site. EWEB's Greenhouse Gas Report would be available soon. He reported that he met with Linda Hamilton of the Human Rights Commission to discuss collaboration between the two commissions and thought progress had been made.

Mr. Newcomb noted that December 29 represented the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wounded Knee massacre and it was a somber commemoration for the Lakota People.

Mr. Boles hoped to strengthen the commission's public presentations through a stronger tie to the Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP). Speaking to signs of progress, Mr. Boles noted that the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol had concluded and no more damage was being done.

Ms. Jaworski reported that she recently submitted a letter of support regarding EmX to *The Register-Guard*. She noted that the newspaper recently interviewed several supporters of EmX in west Eugene.

Mr. Farley reported that he spoke to Lynne Fessenden of the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition about the possibility of the commission participating on a panel on Food as Economic Development at the Local Food Connections Conference scheduled for February. He anticipated he would meet with representatives of Food for Lane County about City policies that might benefit that agency.

Mr. Farley noted that one of liaison assignments was the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency and he requested the commission schedule discussion about commissioners' roles as liaisons in light of the e-mail the commission received from Lisa Arkin of Beyond Toxics regarding the Seneca biomass plant.

Mr. Funk reported he had met with the Neighborhood Leaders Council Committee on Sustainability on strategies to ensure the Green Neighbors Fair scheduled for March was relevant to more people.

Ms. Vynne said she was working to reschedule some meetings with local food connections and hoped to meet with Lane County in January. She also anticipated she would meet in January with Kat West, Sustainability Director for Multnomah County, about that county's Food and Jobs Program with the goal of creating links to local efforts. She continued to attempt to connect with Teresa Brand of Lane Transit District to discuss the Point-to-Point Program and Ms. Brand's commission work as liaison to Lane Community College.

Mr. McRae said he was working with the Partnership for Disaster Reliance at the University of Oregon on a review of the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, CEAP, and the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan General Area Plan to identify policy inconsistencies and gaps. He hoped to meet with EWEB commissioners soon to discuss adaptation-related actions such as a regional food security plan and a regional vulnerability assessment. He anticipated that as of January 2012 he would work a few hours

each week with the Community Planning Workshop at the UO on a community campaign to increase locally produced food.

Ms. O'Sullivan recalled the commission's request that staff develop a packet of materials to assist with community outreach and reported that she and Mr. Funk had begun that work. She anticipated the packet would include a presentation outline, key messages, and a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Boles clarified that his request was focused on establishing a sense of mutualism with individuals at the advisory body level. Ms. O'Sullivan believed that the key messages would address that desire and said she and Mr. Funk would consider the task through that lens.

Ms. O'Sullivan invited the commission to attend the January 17 meeting of the advisory committee formed to advise staff on the development of a local outreach campaign focused on climate change. She noted that David Allaway of the State Department of Environmental Quality would attend the advisory committee meeting and was also the featured speaker that same day for the Climate Research Group lecture series held at the UO.

Speaking to signs of progress, Mr. Skov reported his family received its share of the local Grain and Bean Project CSA. He recalled that the commission heard more public comment about local food the first year of its existence than about any other topic at a time when the project did not exist. He commended Dan Armstrong's work on the project. Mr. Skov observed that he had difficulty securing information about what people actually ate, which made it difficult to establish a food consumption baseline.

Ms. Jaworski asked that the liaisons list be modified with the addition of council liaison assignments.

#### **4. Panel for Public Interest Environmental Law Conference**

Commissioners discussed a suggestion from Mr. Boles that the commission be represented at the Environmental Law Conference scheduled for March 3 and agreed that Mr. McRae would present on behalf of the commission and his presentation would focus on CEAP as a driver for local action and collaboration. Mr. Skov agreed to serve as Mr. McRae's back-up.

#### **5. Local carbon tax**

Mr. Skov noted that he distributed a packet of materials via e-mail to commissioners in support of the discussion. He asked the commission to discuss the "what" and "why" of a carbon tax as a prelude to offering the council a recommendation. He also advocated for discussion of how to frame the issue in terms of general motivation and its local and national context.

Speaking to framing the issue, Mr. Skov suggested it be framed as part of a "mosaic of action now that leads to a blanket of action later." He thought the commission would be remiss if it did not consider the issue in terms of fiscal strategy. Mr. Skov referred to a booklet he had circulated among commissioners entitled *Tax Shift* that discussed how to think about fiscal policy at many layers of government. *Tax Shift* suggested that people worried a lot about how to spend public dollars but did not give the same thought to how to raise revenues. *Tax Shift* also suggested there were two ways to affect public policy goals, how money was spent and how money was raised. With a few exceptions such as taxing cigarettes and alcohol, government did not pursue many policy goals through taxation. He thought that issue deserved further discussion. Mr. Skov believed such taxes were a market mechanism and forced markets to use better information. He maintained that the lack of a price on emitting greenhouse gases was wrong because it understated the impacts of those emissions on current and future residents. Mr. Skov invited

questions on the materials he had e-mailed the commission.

Mr. Boles concurred that the commission should frame a carbon tax as a price signal. He believed that such a tax was an opportunity to be more sensible about taxing policy and did not think there was anything wrong in couching support in terms of the need to fund public services.

Mr. Rexius asked if the materials distributed by Mr. Skov discussed the impact of such a tax. He suggested that one could argue that those in the transportation industry already contributed toward what could be considered a carbon tax in the form of weight/mile taxes; those costs were not shared by individuals. He asked if such a tax took that into account. Mr. Skov said that the materials touched on what economists considered “incidents” of the tax, or the burden of the tax on households of different income levels, as well as what businesses ended up bearing the tax. He said even if the council agreed that a carbon tax was a good idea, he believed there was a limit on what Eugene could levy because of the competitive disadvantage it would place the community in comparison to jurisdictions that now lacked such a mechanism.

Mr. Rexius believed it was unlikely that other local jurisdictions would adopt such a tax. Mr. Skov suggested that the County’s fiscal problems might lead the Board of County Commissioners to conclude such a tax was a good idea. He pointed to the many different taxing mechanisms that currently existed and said there was nothing coherent about them and further noted there was no tax uniformly applied to fossil fuel use for the purpose of taxing its carbon content.

Mr. Newcomb said as he read the materials it appeared that taxing mechanisms were not easily influenced by bottom-up action. He was curious to know what the commission needed to be aware of if it wished to take local action with the hope it influenced other levels of government.

Mr. McRae observed that research about behavior change focused on gas taxes indicated it required about \$1 per gallon to shift people to other modes, and suggested that a carbon tax might create a big fight with relatively little return, even at the state level. Mr. Skov acknowledged it was unlikely that Oregon would adopt a carbon tax of a magnitude needed to significantly influence people’s driving behavior but suggested that the increased price of gasoline might have that effect. He did not think the commission would recommend a carbon tax to decrease driving, but would recommend one because it concluded that such a tax was a just, equitable, and climate-savvy form of fiscal policy.

Ms. Jaworski also questioned whether it made sense to introduce such a taxing mechanism at the local level, particularly if it did not change local behavior. She agreed it was important to raise awareness of the true price of carbon. She preferred a mechanism that created a revenue stream to help the City meet its sustainability goals and suggested it could be modeled on the voluntary carbon tax offset payment. She thought that such a voluntary approach would raise community awareness.

Mr. Boles believed any taxing mechanism needed to be mandatory but conceded there was little support for that. He suggested the commission could couch such a tax in terms of the alternative of no action at all and identify the consequences of that course.

Mr. Newcomb suggested that the commission could consider an ecosystems services model as another alternative, noting that such an approach was used in Uruguay.

While she agreed passage of such a tax would be challenging, Ms. Wolling suggested the commission could plant some seeds for the tax by creating a vision that included a carbon tax as part of an improved tax system that funded services better and more equitably.

Mr. Farley concurred with Ms. Wolling that a carbon tax could be a component of a broader reform package. He believed that if other local jurisdictions lacked such a tax it would essentially become voluntary because people would work to avoid it. He recommended that the commission think small but not give up.

Mr. Skov encouraged the commission to consider such a tax in context of whether it would help to advance a larger goal, such as establishing a multi-state carbon tax or joining California's cap and trade system. He said while Eugene could not implement a carbon tax that was felt in all actions, it could take incremental steps with that end in mind, such as adopting a more comprehensive climate and energy policy. Otherwise, such a tax could be more difficult to justify. He did not want the commission to get too caught up in the question of incentives to personal behavior.

Ms. Jaworski believed the commission needed to be cognizant of behavioral change, which would impact both businesses and residents, and recommended the commission be cognizant of the impact of its recommendations on people.

Mr. Skov suggested that behavior change would be more easily realized if such a tax were more broadly applied.

Mr. Bonnett did not think a voluntary approach would result in behavioral change. For example, while he had paid a voluntary carbon tax for airplane travel, he had still made the trip. He said his review of the materials indicated that such a tax would be revenue-neutral, and a carbon tax was not recommended for use as a revenue stream; rather, it should be used to offset the adverse impact of climate change at the local level. He said he had yet to hear much about where the tax would be applied and how it could be applied on a community-wide basis with a degree of equity.

Mr. Skov encouraged the commission to review the materials he had provided so it could consider the administration of the tax, the equity of such a tax, how it could be made revenue-neutral, and how the revenues would be used. He asked the commission to consider what it wanted the City Council to know about the issue and what message it wanted to send the council. He asked the commission to consider what it could support if it did not support such a tax. He cited State legislation as an example. Mr. Skov believed the commission should be skeptical of voluntary action as a mechanism for real change.

## **6. BREAK**

## **7. Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan**

Ms. Wolling provided a brief overview of the plan and noted the various grant funding sources, which affected the order in which projects were constructed. She proposed the commission recommend that the City fund infrastructure to count trips from various modes and that it prioritize those bicycle and pedestrian projects that got the community closest to its goals for funding. She also recommended that the performance measures be strengthened so they could be used to more accurately measure whether the community was achieving its goals.

Mr. Bonnett proposed that the commission recommend to the council that it include more dedicated funding to construct the priority projects in the PBMP in the bond measure being discussed as a possibility for 2012. He emphasized the other key City initiatives that those projects supported, such as 20-minute neighborhoods. Mr. Bonnett recalled that at one time the City had a fund dedicated to sidewalk infill construction and suggested the commission also recommend to the council that it

reinstitute that funding. Ms. Wolling added that there was \$160,000 in the funding allocated for street calming that might be another source of funding for active transportation modes.

Ms. Jaworski suggested that the commission send a letter based on the memorandum prepared by Ms. Wolling and Mr. Bonnett to the council that expressed its concerns. Mr. Newcomb recommended that the letter highlight the amount of time it would require to implement the current PBMP using current funding streams. Ms. Jaworski concurred.

Commissioners briefly discussed the inadequacy of the current approach to funding active transportation projects, the challenge of separating the cost of bicycle and pedestrian amenities from related street improvements, the possibility of establishing standards related to residents' access to such infrastructure, alternative funding approaches such as a bond completely dedicated to funding such improvements, and a perception the PBMP was more of a strategy than a master plan, placing the projects it contained at a disadvantage when competing with projects from other plans for funding.

Mr. McRae reminded the commission that street improvements were based on many elements and not just funding; for example, neighbors living on 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue were pushing back against a proposal for bicycle lanes on that street because of concerns about parking capacity. Mr. Skov suggested that standards tied to the bond measure would help City staff override such resistance at the project level.

Mr. Funk suggested that rather than send a single letter, the commission send a series of letters that addressed the concerns members had expressed. The first letter could speak to the draft PBMP and could mention the issues identified by Ms. Wolling and Mr. Bonnett and include a recommendation for more funding. As the commission became more knowledgeable it could provide more input on the bond measure. There was general agreement.

In regard to a question from Mr. Skov about whether the commission should recommend the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) become involved in development of the bond measure, Ms. Wolling and Mr. Bonnett indicated their belief that was appropriate. Ms. Wolling pointed out the PBMP called for that. She recalled that the input she and Mr. Bonnett had prepared for the council had called for adopted criteria that BPAC could use to prioritize projects.

Ms. Wolling and Mr. Bonnett agreed to prepare a letter for commission review prior to the next meeting.

## **8. Using Human Rights Framework to advance Sustainability Commission work plan**

Mr. Skov recalled the presentation on the Human Rights Framework that the commission heard from representatives of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in November. Ms. Jaworski had not been able to attend the meeting but had read the minutes and observed that they did not reflect any response to the commission's suggestions about issues that both commissions might have interest in. Mr. Skov indicated there had been little time to get into details. Mr. Funk characterized the presentation as a broad overview. Ms. O'Sullivan said both commissions expressed interest in forming a joint subcommittee with a topical focus.

Mr. Skov suggested the commission focus on joint statements the two commissions could make to the council about work plan items of mutual concern. He cited EmX and Envision Eugene as examples of work plan items that could be subject of such statements. Mr. Newcomb added TransPlan as another item of mutual interest.

Mr. Newcomb raised 20-minute neighborhoods as mutual discussion topic for the two commissions. He said that Portland had examples of how that approach resulted in neighborhood gentrification because the city had failed to include enough mass transit links to make the concept work. He believed there were many similar issues of mutual interest.

Ms. Jaworski liked the idea of a joint subcommittee and suggested that one be formed and tasked to prioritize opportunities for statements to the council as its first work item. She volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

Mr. Skov expressed reservations about forming a permanent subcommittee. Ms. Jaworski suggested the subcommittee could be *ad hoc* in nature and members could be asked to discuss possible next steps. Mr. Farley suggested that Mr. Newcomb and Ms. Jaworski meet with representatives of the HRC to share work plans. There was general concurrence.

Mr. Skov asked the commission to review the Human Rights Framework prior to the next meeting. He also asked commissioners to prepare a sentence or paragraph about how the framework related to EmX or Envision Eugene to start the discussion with the HRC.

## **9. Closing: next meeting, other follow-up**

Mr. Skov anticipated he would resign the chair in March 2012 because he did not intend to continue on the commission past June 2012.

Mr. Skov adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

*(Recorded by Kimberly Young)*