



Eugene Sustainability Commission

MINUTES

Eugene Sustainability Commission
Atrium, Saul Room
Eugene, Oregon

December 17, 2014
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Howard Bonnett, Joanne Gross, Sasha Luftig, Steve Newcomb, Kevin O'Brien, Howard Saxion, Justin Overdevest, Carolyn Stein, Sue Wolling and Alan Zelenka, commissioners. Babe O'Sullivan, City Manager's Office; Chris Henry, Public Works-Engineering.

ABSENT: Shawn Boles, Dawn Lesley and David Tam, commissioners.

Mr. Newcomb called the December 17, 2014 meeting of the Sustainability Commission to order.

1. Opening – agenda review, approval of minutes

Mr. Newcomb called for corrections or clarifications to the November 19, 2014 minutes.

Mr. Saxion, seconded by Ms. Stein, moved to approve the November 19, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion passed, 9:0.

2. Public comment

Mark Robinowitz provided comments regarding his concerns with the Beltline Highway expansion, asking if the commission plans to make an official declaration of opposition in public. He identified several problems with the way the project has been developed including faulty assumptions about traffic growth and failure to consider a low-build option though it was affordable.

Megan Kemple spoke to the need to enact a statewide carbon tax in light of findings from a recent report on the topic. She urged the commission to press City Council to pass a resolution to demonstrate community support for carbon tax legislation.

Sarah Mazze also spoke in support of a carbon tax, pointing out that this is an opportunity for the commission to have statewide impact by supporting a resolution. Benton County has already passed a similar resolution.

3. Sub-committee reports

Transportation

The sub-committee discussed a draft memo on the Complete Streets Policy, asking for the specific changes to what staff has developed, including an accountability provision. The sub-committee requested approval for sending their recommendations to staff indicating that individual commissioners haven't been successful in their requests for these changes.

Mr. Bonnett, seconded by Mr. Saxion, moved to revise the draft memo to indicate that it's a recommendation from the commission to staff and address it to the City Manager. The motion passed, 10:0.

4. Sub-committee item: Transportation

Commissioners Wolling, Saxion and Bonnett, along with Councilor Zelenka, attended a meeting with the Oregon Department of Transportation staff to discuss the Beltline Highway project and clarify key assumptions of the planning process. Main discussion points included:

- The project analysis relies on the same population and travel assumptions as in Envision Eugene and the Transportation System Plan, as well as assumed increases in gas prices and mode shift.
- Staff looked at low build options but these were considered barely adequate in short-term and not for a 20-year horizon.
- The goal is to get local traffic off Beltline. The proposed arterial bridge would take off 17,000 trips of 110,000 total trips/day in 20 years. The existing bridge is at the end of its lifespan and needs to be replaced within 10 yrs.
- The analysis assumes a 25% increase in bike/pedestrian trips and 400% increase in transit.
- The project could be built in phases. The NEPA analysis will be conducted on 3 alternatives that reflect these phases.
- Additional lanes limited to one segment, not entire length. Some short-term improvements are proposed to the ramps at Delta Highway, perhaps without an Environment Impact Statement (EIS).
- Funding is vague – it's not clear what the local match would be, though several federal sources are likely. The City match would come from funds allocated for transportation projects (from state or federal sources). These funds cannot be spent on other transportation projects (e.g. bike/pedestrian).
- Current estimates of \$200-\$270 million don't include right-of-way acquisitions.

The commission discussed options for input as the process continues and acknowledged that this may not be the appropriate time to comment as options are not fully fleshed out. The commission should look at how this project will be integrated with the Transportation System Plan (TSP) as this may be an opportunity to craft concerns to be addressed through the plan's adoption. The Facility Plan may be incorporated in TSP but could be considered separately by City Council. Councilor Zelenka stated that the Phase 1 (low build option) safety improvements need to be covered in the "improved existing conditions" plan. The Facility Plan will likely be imbedded in the TSP for a City Council vote to move forward. The EIS review and selection of a locally preferred option is about 4 years away.

Mr. Saxion recommended that the Transportation sub-committee draft a statement that expresses commission concerns and recommends what to consider (e.g. prioritization of improvements) in the analysis of safety improvements.

5. BREAK

6. Carbon tax

The commission discussed the report on a statewide carbon tax recently released by Portland State University. Discussion included:

- Will the tax have a negative impact on low-income families? The report suggests that such a tax can have no impact on jobs or low-income families and that very little money needs to be taken out of the system to make these families whole. Most impact is in Portland metro area.
- There are significant issues to be addressed in the details of potential legislation, including the constitutional constraints that require taxes collected on transportation fuels go back to the state highway fund.

The sub-committee provided a draft resolution in support of a carbon tax for commission consideration. Several changes were suggested by Councilor Zelenka, who offered to submit a revised draft to the City Attorney for review and formatting. Sub-committee members also reported meeting with Representative Phil Barnhardt who is supportive and is drafting state legislation. He was not encouraging about passing something this year but this discussion occurred before the recent election.

Mr. Bonnett, seconded by Ms. Luftig, moved to approve the resolution with suggested changes and forward to the City Manager and City Council. The motion passed, 10:0.

Ms. O’Sullivan will send along an edited draft to commissioners to review before it goes to the City Attorney.

7. Urban Growth Boundary

The commission reviewed recent staff recommendations to Council for expanding the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), including land for employment, park and schools as well as land for single-family homes in the Bailey Hill/Gimple Hill and Bloomberg/McVay areas.

There are opportunities for submitting comments through January 2015, as well as an open house and public forum. Some varying viewpoints were raised in the discussion:

- Council should not reconsider the housing mix (multi-family vs. single family) which would complicate what has already been a long process.
- Proposed expansions are very modest and in the right places. Pillar 7 calls for a 5-year reassessment where land needs for housing can be corrected.
- Supporting the staff UGB recommendation would be a bad decision. Instead, expansion for housing should be postponed and evaluated as part of an urban reserves analysis.
- The Mayor, Councilors Brown and Taylor had concerns about the recommended expansion for employment lands. Councilor Brown opposes it outright, stating that if development is to occur, it should be kept in the UGB, not in the County, to allow for better planning and regulation.
- The employment expansion decision should consider cumulative air pollution, perhaps as an overlay zone.
- The restrictions on types of industries in the employment lands may be too prescriptive and prevent actual development.

At Councilor Zelenka’s suggestion, the Envision Eugene sub-committee will draft a statement of concerns, not a position or recommendation. The statement should emphasize the issues the commission continues to be concerned about.

8. Items from commissioners and staff

The Sustainable Economic Development sub-committee is looking at opportunities related to the food and beverage industry. They plan to conduct interviews from January-March of 20 food-related organizations.

Commissioner Gross shared information about Urban Agriculture incentive overlay zones used in California.

Ms. O'Sullivan provided an update on the Climate Recovery Ordinance implementation. A work session with Council is planned for Feb. 23 where a progress report will be delivered by staff. Other steps include the formation of staff teams and development of a contract with Good Company for technical analysis. Staff will bring results of the progress report to the commission at its February meeting prior to the Council work session.

Commissioner Overdeest reported that the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan has been submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and will be coming to City Council for adoption in January 2015.

9. Closing

Mr. Newcomb adjourned the meeting at 8:18 PM.

Recorded by Babe O'Sullivan