

West Linn Sustainability Advisory Board

WebEx Virtual Meeting

DATE: 6-7:30 p.m. September 15, 2022

Attendance: Board: Terence Shumaker, Kim Bria, Victoria Meier, Michael Carlson, Greg Smith, Charity Hudnut. Debbie Wong (absent)

Council Liaison: Mary Baumgardner (absent)

Staff Liaison: Dylan Digby (temporary until one appointed)

Guests: None

Mission: From the Charter (Mission): The Sustainability Advisory Board is committed to collaborating with government and residents to improve the quality of life in West Linn by advancing stewardship of our environment, social, and economic resources that is equitable for all present and future generations.

Agenda Item 2: Approval of minutes. Minutes for the June and July meetings had not been received by everyone. They will be distributed, reviewed, and approved via e-mail.

Agenda Item 3: Public Comment. No members of public present.

Agenda Item 4: Guest speaker: Natalie Rogers, Climate and Natural Resources Manager City of Milwaukie, Oregon. Natalie was invited to share her knowledge of climate actions, efforts to preserve and extend urban forest in Milwaukie, and tap into newly available federal dollars available for climate action projects.

In her current role Natalie is able to oversee programs that hit a multiplicity of areas that are related to climate change, especially with regard to urban forest management.

The city's climate action program started in 2017 after the city defined goals aimed at supporting people, the planet, and place by making Milwaukie livable, equitable, and sustainable. In 2018, the city decided to focus on the development of a climate action plan. The public works director (an advocate for climate action, himself) was tasked with the development of a process that would draw the public into the creation of this plan.

The Good Company in Eugene was hired to oversee this process and help with the technical aspects of the plan. The cost of their involvement was \$200,000. Other cities such as Lake Oswego have done this in-house at much less expense. The goal to create an urban canopy covering 40% of the city was established at this point. Other items in the plan were aimed at coordinating already existing efforts and at creating specific benefits for the city's residents.

There are new sources of funding coming down the pipe to support this kind of work: grants from METRO, the United Sustainability Directors' Network, and the Public Sector Sustainability Roundtable.

Natalie was hired at the end of these efforts. She needed to work with a limited budget and staff. This required being opportunistic in terms of projects and developing strong relationships with partners like PGE as well as staff from other cities like Beaverton, Gresham, and Lake Oswego seeking to accomplish similar goals. PGE, for example, has been very helpful with the installation of fast EV chargers on the city's Electric Avenue, peak-time rebates, and work in the area of resilience.

Natalie then moved on to a discussion about things that can be done to nudge a city council toward the adoption of climate action policies. The first of these is to encourage the adoption of resolutions or declarations that do not involve funding or the creation of programs. Such resolutions, however, do justify future program creation or expansion as well as resource dedication. She encouraged us to see what we could get started.

It is also good to think about funding when developing a climate action plan since the best way to encourage initial action is through the use of carrots such as tax incentives, although these can be expensive. There is, however, much climate action that can be done on a small budget.

In cities that are just getting started on this work, it's important to show them that they are already doing climate work with regard to things like storm water retention, tree planting, and the introduction of EV charging stations, etc. Frame this already ongoing work as part of the overall climate action effort. The same can be true of things the city may be doing to meet state mandates like those spelled out in Oregon's rules regarding Climate Friendly Equitable Communities aimed at reducing pollution and increasing housing choices.

Currently, four years into the process of developing and enacting their climate action plan, the Milwaukie city council is discussing the creation of a stable climate fund that will be dedicated to staff salaries. This will be the final stage in cementing climate programs. There will be a vote about this in November.

When asked about how this will be supported, Natalie said that they are exploring the possibility of tapping into fees for something like sidewalk improvement that residences, multifamily housing, and businesses are required to pay. Residences, for example, would pay \$3 a month. They are looking to pull dollars from sources other than public utility funds to support the urban forest fund. It's difficult to justify the use of this money for something like the removal of a dangerous tree from privately owned property. They are working to create a fund of \$300,000 to \$700,000 to support climate action work. The lower end of this request would cover already existing staff and programs; more dollars would allow for expansion.

When asked about changing procurement policies to encourage more sustainable practices, Natalie indicates that this approach can become overly complicated and constraining with the exception of things like fleet or paper purchasing and efforts to buy truly carbon free electricity. It makes more sense to figure out who the biggest pollution or carbon emitters are and change policies to affect them rather than spend too much time with procurement issues.

With regard to pavement and sidewalks, Natalie reported that Portland is using an alternative form of concrete with lower carbon emissions. She also suggested that using light-colored concrete or asphalt can help reduce the urban heat island effect as can efforts to overplant trees.

In Milwaukie, developers must replant any tree removed with two trees. State regulations regarding non-point sources of pollution are also leading the city to more frequently use permeable pavement. With regard to pavement and street surface in general, the things to keep in mind are low-carbon impact, permeability, color, and tree cover.

Environmental permitting is nudging the city in the direction of more climate friendly policies: low emission concrete is a local standard, low-carbon energy purchasing is in the city code, and storm water practices are spelled out in federal requirements that the state must meet in its permitting process.

Agenda Item 5: Check-ins

Charity – First Green Team meeting will be held shortly at Rosemont Middle School. On September 23, there will be a gathering with Ecoschool Director Amy Higgs to which SAB members are invited. On September 27, a meeting to highlight accomplishment of Ecoschools in our region will be held at the Adult Community Center between 6:30-7:30.

Victoria – Nothing to report but asked that we schedule time to process what we learned from Natalie this evening.

Mike – Plugging away at school. Now been to 50 states. On recent trip to Hawaii he was struck by the ubiquity of solar panels and wind turbines and the commitment by communities to preserve the island's ecosystem.

Terry – He recently joined a river trip sponsored by the Willamette Riverkeeper. This organization is trying to purchase 25 acres along the Willamette that has a healthy population of a native mussels, instrumental in helping keep the water clean. This is a good cause to toss a few bucks into.

Greg – Attended meeting at police station this morning aimed at collecting community input about what is working well and suggestions for improvement. He made a brief statement about enhancing neighborhood resilience as a means for preparing for weather and social disruption tied to climate change. He is also participating in the Tax Incentive Financing committee charged with making recommendation to the city council about riverside development efforts from the Falls to close to Willamette Park and ways to pay for this.

Kim – Needed to depart after Natalie's presentation for another engagement.

Agenda Item 6: Tree Planting Program Status. Will be discussed at October meeting

Agenda Item 7: Tree Code Update. Revision of tree code is now apparently on the city council's docket. Kim will be writing up and delivering a statement about the importance of this issue from the SAB's standpoint at the September 19 meeting.

Agenda Item 8: Education Series Seminars for Remainder of the Year. Mike Carlson reported that he hasn't yet located someone to make presentation for October meeting. He has a call in to someone at the county but has not yet heard back.

Action Item 9: New Business. We returned to Victoria's question about processing what we learned from Natalie Rogers and decided that we will schedule a three-hour meeting/retreat in October from 6:00-9:00 p.m. to discuss this as well as priorities for the coming year. We'll plan on meeting in-person for this event and attempt to schedule it in a larger room at the Adult Community Center of library.

Action 10: Action items for SAB members: Charity will circulate information about the Farm-to-Table Event at a local winery. Mike will finalize a presenter for the October education series. Greg will locate a room for our October meeting/retreat. Terry will flesh out the annual report required by the council before the end of the year.

11. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 7:25.