

Contra Costa County Sustainability Commission

Record of Action for February 26, 2024, 5:00 P.M.

Present: Luz Gomez
Chuck Leonard
Susan Hurl
Howdy Goudey
Shoshana Wechsler
Victoria Smith
Christopher Easter
Michael Moore
Norman Cohen
Brandon Matson
Charles Davidson
Renee Fernandez-Lipp (remote)
Kimberly Hazard
Sarah Foster

Absent: Wesley Sullens
Erin Levine
Kiara Pereira

Staff Present: Demian Hardman-Saldana, Principal Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Jody London, Sustainability Coordinator, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Emily Groth, Planner, Department of Conservation and Development;
Adam Scarbrough, Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Will Nelson, Principal Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Jennifer Quallick, Deputy Chief of Staff, Supervisor Andersen

Attendees: Gaby Seltzer, Bruce “Ole” Ohlson, Samantha, Marti Roach, Valerie, Devin Jackson,
Mary-Kathryn Rueff, Denice Dennis, Derene Allen, Lisa Jackson

1. Roll Call and Introductions

Chair Gomez called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

2. Public comment on any item under the jurisdiction of the Commission and not on this agenda (speakers may be limited to three minutes).

There was no public comment for items not on the Agenda.

3. APPROVE Record of Action for December 11, 2023, meeting

The Commission noted two minor edits to the Record of Action for December 11, 2023: “CALISO” should read “CAISO” and “help” should read “held” on page 7.

Matson moved to approve the Record of Action with the two minor edits. Second: Leonard.

The Record of Action was approved. Hazard abstained.

4. **ELECT OFFICERS for the Sustainability Commission for 2024**

Cohen arrived at 5:09 p.m.

Foster nominated herself for Vice Chair. Second: Moore. The Commission voted unanimously for Foster to become the new Sustainability Commission Vice Chair.

The Commission deliberated over electing the Chair for 2024. A motion was made to nominate a Commissioner for the position of Chair but was withdrawn due to limited capacity of that member. Hazard nominated Gomez for a second term as Chair. Second: Smith. The Commission voted unanimously for Gomez to become Sustainability Commission Chair.

5. **REVIEW and Possible ADOPTION of Draft 2023 Climate Action Plan Progress Report**

Jody London, Sustainability Coordinator, from the Department of Conservation and Development introduced the Draft 2023 Climate Action Plan (CAP) Progress Report, which reports on progress towards the 2023-2024 Interim Climate Action Work Plan. County departments provided the information included in the plan, and there were a few items on which staff were awaiting additional information. The 2023 CAP Progress Report will go to the Board on March 19.

Emily Groth, Planner, from the Department of Conservation and Development provided an overview of highlights in the Draft 2023 Climate Action Plan Progress Report. Highlights related to a clean and efficient built environment included continued participation in BayREN programs, including over \$788,000 rebates dispersed across 778 projects countywide through the Home+ Program; the completion of the Asthma Mitigation Project with 150 total clients served; the participation of 19 County facilities in distributed energy resource programs, receiving over \$20,000; and the County's continued pursuit of True Resource Use and Efficiency certification for the Administration Building and Jail Demolition and Redevelopment Project. Other highlights included the Board's acceptance of the Healthy Lands, Healthy People carbon sequestration feasibility study in October; continued implementation of Senate Bill 1383 organics collection requirements; the adoption of the updated Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy in September; and the California Department of Water Resources' approval of the East Contra Costa Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan in July. The County received numerous grants to support clean transportation, including \$19 million for transportation infrastructure improvements and \$1.7 million to promote active transportation programming. The County also installed 55 electric vehicle (EV) charging ports and ordered 45 EVs. Work continued on the Just Transition Economic Revitalization Plan (JTERP), Green Empowerment Zone, and Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative. In pursuit of the County's Leadership goals, the Interdepartmental Climate Action Task Force met in February and September; the G3 Champions developed the G3 Champions Activity Guide; sustainability was the feature story of the Winter 2023 FOCUS newsletter; the County's Investment Policy and Debt Management Policies were both updated to support climate equity. Additional achievements included the Board's establishment of the Contra Costa Resilient Shoreline Ad Hoc Committee.

London noted that the Request for Proposal for support for the development of the JTERP would be going out in the coming weeks. The Commission requested the overview of the Draft 2023 Climate Action Plan Progress Report be included in the minutes.

The Commission discussed the history and application of the updates to the County's Investment Policy. The Commission expressed that it did not want the County to limit its ability to invest in projects that could potentially reduce carbon emissions, which the Commission later clarified was not related to this particular policy. The Commission also expressed a concern about the application of certain new technologies, including carbon sequestration and biofuels.

Additional Commission comments included a question about whether the Climate Action Plan (CAP) will be translated into Spanish, a request for the 2023 East Bay Municipal Utility District water use data when it becomes available, and a suggestion for the County's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy to take into account circular economy principles.

Public comment noted that the Draft 2023 Climate Action Plan Progress Report did not mention incentivizing future graywater use, an updated County tree ordinance, or limiting artificial turf. London noted that these items are not included in the 2023 CAP Progress Report since they are not in the Interim CAP Work Plan, but individuals can comment on the draft Climate Action Plan by visiting EnvisionContraCosta2040.org or emailing Demian Hardman-Saldana from the Department of Conservation and Development directly.

Hazard made a motion to adopt the Draft 2023 Climate Action Plan Progress Report with a request to get the date of the Treasurer's presentation to the Commission on the County's Investment Policy, so the Commission can review the presentation and notes. Second: Moore. The motion passed unanimously.

6. **CONSIDER** proposed comments to submit from working group on the County Draft Climate Action Plan

The Commission discussed the process for finalizing the comments on the County Draft Climate Action Plan (CAP). A member of the Commission suggested evaluating the CAP strategies through the lenses of the environment, economics, and equity.

The working group began by providing a summary to the full Commission of the draft comments. The proposed comments covered the following topics: emphasizing coordination with other jurisdictions in the county; using easy-to-understand and specific language; providing resources to facilitate the use of Konveo; including more background information on progress since 2015 and how the CAP and General Plan fit together; including a more expansive greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and explanation of the modeling; including more information on how to track progress; incorporating a more mathematical approach to the goals; including biogas in the GHG inventory; including more specifics on responsibilities and timeline for implementation; specifying emissions and cost savings; identifying sources of funding; identifying climate impacts in Board orders; and reducing minimum parking requirements to allow for more impervious surfaces.

The Commission discussed the following items for potential inclusion in the Commission's comment letter: developing a Spanish translation of the final CAP with summaries available in other languages; clarity on what is being counted in the greenhouse gas emissions inventory; embodied carbon; specific targets for per day water use; minimizing the use of offsets and focusing on local projects when offsets are used; reporting on building energy use; reducing the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides on public lands to protect water supply; green chemistry; adding more specificity about solutions related to biofuels and carbon sequestration; protecting biological resources and eradicating invasive species; the frequency of conducting GHG emissions inventories; and the process for evaluating the GHG emissions reductions of development projects. A member of the Commission noted that the County has an integrated pest management (IPM) policy, which the IPM Advisory Committee is working on implementing. The Commission also noted that the California Air Resources Board website has information on GHG reduction protocols, expressed support for a dashboard to report progress, and asked about the cost GHG reduction verification.

Public comment noted that science has shown there is not a need to wait for technological advances to achieve GHG reductions and expressed a desire for the CAP to prioritize direct GHG reductions rather than using industrial carbon capture or offsets. Marti Roach from 350 Contra Costa Action noted a sign-on letter with thirteen organizations that includes suggested actions to reduce emissions to strengthen the CAP, some additional recommendations and context for performance targets, and support for a dashboard to report progress.

Moore moved that the working group meet one more time to clarify the draft comments and that the Commission will have a special meeting at the end of March to finalize the comments. Individual members of the Commission can send comments directly to Chair Gomez for consideration. Second: Matson. The motion passed unanimously.

Hardman-Saldana will coordinate with the Commission to schedule the special meeting.

7. RECEIVE Report on Training for Members of County Advisory Bodies

Demian Hardman-Saldana, Commission staff, from the Department of Conservation and Development noted that all information on the trainings for members of County Advisory Bodies is included in the staff report on page 72 of the Agenda Packet, including links to the required trainings. All members of County Advisory Bodies are required to complete the trainings and submit the Training Certification Form to Commission staff. Hardman-Saldana will be reaching out to Commissioners, including Alternates, individually about the requirements. Commissioners who serve on another advisory body need to submit proof that they have completed the trainings.

8. RECEIVE reports from Sustainability Commission members and alternates, and PROVIDE DIRECTION as needed

Chair Gomez moved item 8 to the end of the Agenda.

The Commission requested that Moore be granted 15 minutes at the next meeting to talk about his research on the remediation of the Pacific Refinery. The Commission also asked if there was interest in a report on the BlueGreen Alliance's study on Just Transition. Leonard noted that he

was nominated and elected as Second Vice Chair of the Green Empowerment Zone, which will have representatives from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and California Energy Commission (CEC) speak from a regulatory level about roadblocks for low-carbon investments at its April meeting.

9. RECEIVE Report on Staff Activities that Support Sustainability Goals

Jody London from the Department of Conservation and Development noted that the County has been applying for grants to address sea level rise and hosting focus groups on the scope of a grant to develop a countywide tree plan. Additionally, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is submitting a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant through BayREN, and Public Works received a \$15 million grant to install electric vehicle chargers at County libraries.

London also noted that the Board of Supervisors will be considering a recommendation to suspend the County's All-Electric Ordinance at the Board meeting the following day. The item is on the consent agenda (C.41) and is a response to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit's decision invalidating a City of Berkeley ordinance that prohibited natural gas infrastructure in new buildings. Suspending the ordinance means it will not be enforced but will remain in the County's building code. The ordinance only applied to new construction, which is a relatively small number of buildings compared to existing buildings. Staff are considering other approaches to support transitions to all-electric, including actions by the State, pilot projects, and support for voluntary transitions. Hardman-Saldana noted that staff has started brainstorming what additional actions will need to be included in the draft CAP.

The Commission asked if staff had heard any information about what other jurisdictions are doing in response to the Court's decision.

10. RECEIVE Report from Sustainability Commission Chair and IDENTIFY TOPICS for next report to Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability

Chair Gomez noted that there was no Sustainability Committee meeting in January; the next Committee meeting will be held on March 18.

The next Sustainability Commission meeting will be a joint meeting with the Hazardous Materials Commission on April 29 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Mark Jacobson, a professor at Stanford, and Victoria Bogdan Tejeda from the Center for Biological Diversity will be speaking about carbon capture and storage. Hardman-Saldana is looking for another speaker from the CEC.

The Commission requested that the speakers at the April 29 Commission meeting talk in layman's terms and represent diversity of thought and suggested a potential speaker from the technical advisory committee at the Air District.

11. The next meeting is currently scheduled for April 29th.

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.