

**Sustainability Commission**

Present: Shoshana Wechsler  
Chris Easter  
Mike Moore  
Charles Davidson  
Sarah Foster  
Wesley Sullens  
Kiara Pereira  
Brandon Matson  
Howdy Goudey

Absent: Erin Levine  
Kimberly Hazard  
Luz Gomez (Chair)  
Victoria Smith  
Chuck Leonard  
Susan Hurl  
Cohen Charles  
Renee Fernandez-Lipp  
Norman Cohen

Staff Present: Demian Hardman-Saldana, Principal Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development; Jody London, Sustainability Coordinator, Dept. of Conservation and Development; Adam Scarbrough, Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development, Alyson Greenlee, Economic Development Manager, Dept. of Conservation and Development;

Attendees: Carol Weed, Denice Dennis, Arianna Aguilera, Carol Mascali, Salvador Morales

1. Roll Call and Introductions

*Meeting started at 5:01pm*

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

*No Public Comments.*

3. APPROVE Record of Action for August 26, 2024, Commission Meeting

*The record of action was approved unanimously. There was no public comment.*

4. RECEIVE Report on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Coalition Grant Application

*George Carter, project manager for Contra Costa County's Department of Conservation and Development, presented on the Brownfields Coalition Grant Application. He provided detailed information about Brownfield properties which are those that contain or may contain hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants, complicating efforts to redevelop or reuse them. Carter emphasized the positive impacts of assessing, cleaning up, and reinvesting in brownfields, noting benefits such as increased local tax bases, better utilization of existing infrastructure, job growth, and environmental protection through the preservation of green spaces and working lands. For FY2025, he outlined current Brownfield opportunities, which included two assessment grants: a community wide assessment grant of up to \$500,000 and a coalition assessment grant of up to \$1.2 million, for which they are applying. The coalition grant, with a potential total of \$1.2 million over four years, positioned Contra Costa County as the lead agency, partnering with the cities of Antioch, Oakley, and Pinole. Carter noted that they had already been awarded a \$500,000 grant for infrastructure assessments. Highlighted were the roles of coalition members, explaining that the county would manage the grant while other cities and entities would participate as non-lead members. Regular meetings were held every Thursday to facilitate this collaboration. Carter also discussed the funding options that support the entire Brownfields redevelopment process, excluding redevelopment itself. The application deadline for the grant was set for November 14th. Indicated that coalition members were actively engaged in identifying project priorities and locations that required assessment. Additionally, there is an upcoming countywide forum scheduled for November 20th, which is aimed to bring together leadership from federal, state, regional, and local levels to discuss ongoing initiatives.*

*Commissioner Discussion:*

*Shoshana Wechsler Supervisorial Appointment District One inquired what continuity of projects means.*

*Carter responded that continuity involves ensuring all coalition members are aligned in their approach and goals. Carter stated that the primary aim of their efforts is to create jobs, but he acknowledged that not every project would necessarily lead to job creation. Community input is vital, as residents may prioritize different needs, such as parks or recreational spaces. This collaborative approach ensures that their projects are functional and beneficial for the community.*

*Commissioner Moore shared a recent development: Phillips 66 announced on October 16th that they would be closing their refineries in Wilmington and Carson, Southern California, affecting about 600 employees and 300 contractors. He described this decision as unexpected, attributing it to a lack of profitability and referencing ongoing political discussions regarding California's energy policies. Moore expressed hope that with the brownfield assessments being initiated, Contra Costa County could avoid similar surprises in the future.*

*Vice-Chair Foster, sought clarification on the distinction between Superfund sites and Brownfields.*

*Carter explained that a Superfund site is an area of extreme contamination, typically resulting from significant incidents. Once identified, these sites are recognized for their contamination.*

*Jody London, Sustainability Coordinator department of Conservation and Development defined a Superfund site as an industrial location identified as heavily polluted, noting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) follows a specific process for remediating and cleaning*

*these sites. The process is highly regulated. London explained that once a Superfund site has undergone cleanup, it might be classified as a Brownfield, but while it remains on the Superfund priority list, it is primarily focused on remediation efforts.*

*Vice-Chair Foster inquired if discussion of disadvantaged communities that are co-located by the Brownfields are included.*

*Carter emphasized the goal is to be intentional in including impacted communities in all aspects of their work, from Brownfields efforts to transition initiatives. Carter confirmed a part of the funding will be for community engagement but there are separate funding streams available for cleanup efforts as well as resources dedicated to supporting community engagement and other related activities.*

*Foster asked if it helps fund health disparities.*

*Carter explained this Brownfield coalition grant funding is specifically designed to identify. There are other funding streams that are available to help support impacted communities once the assessment identifies those areas.*

*Commissioner Wechsler raised the questions as to what the difference between a Super Fund designated site and a Super Fund qualified site is.*

*London explained a Super Fund qualified site possibly means a location has been identified and is being studied while a Super Fund designated would be confirmed that it is contaminated and is now on a qualified list.*

*Commissioner Sullens asked if these grants are one-time grants or continuous.*

*Carter explained once they apply for the grant and if they are awarded the 1.2 million dollars would be allocated for a four-year period. If Super Fund sites are identified through the assessments, there would then be an effort to pursue additional funding.*

*Commissioner Davison noted that Contra Costa County has 60 square miles of Brownfields. He proposed the idea of establishing solar fields at these sites, highlighting that both solar and battery prices have decreased significantly. Davison mentioned that there is funding available for such projects, which could help provide electricity to impacted communities. This initiative would alleviate pressure on the grid, enhance grid resilience, utilize unused land, and offer benefits to the community. He expressed a desire to see this as an aggressive policy pursued by the county.*

*Public Comment:*

*There was no public comment.*

## 5. RECEIVE Update on Just Transition Economic Revitalization Plan (JTERP)

*Alyson Greenlee, Economic Development Manager for the Department of Conservation and Development, presented an update on the Just Transition Economic Revitalization Plan. In a previous presentation to the commission, she discussed a \$750,000 federal earmark grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development designated for this plan. Of that funding,*

*\$200,000 is allocated for community engagement, another \$200,000 for economic analyses, and \$150,000 for detailed studies. This brings the county's total expenditure on consulting assistance to \$550,000. The next step involves the county issuing a request for proposals to assist in developing the Just Transition Economic Revitalization Plan.*

*Commissioner Discussion:*

*Moore asked for clarification on the Contra Costa Refinery Transition Group, specifically whether it is a county, private party, or county partnership, and how often they meet. He also inquired if the new total of \$550,000 discussed is the updated amount from the previous \$750,000.*

*Greenlee clarified that \$200,000 is allocated for county staffing, while the remaining \$550,000 is for consulting services. The proposed change is to bundle these services into one RFP for the Just Transition Economic Utilization Plan. Regarding the Contra Costa Refinery Transition Partnership, Greenlee explained that it is a coalition of organizations, including the Blue Green Alliance, UC Berkeley Labor Center, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and the Contra Costa Labor Council. These groups are funded under a California Workforce Development Board High Road Training Partnership grant to develop a refinery transition partnership analysis.*

*Greenlee stated that they are conducting a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to assess the impact of the industry in the region. She emphasized the need for a team of economists with the right expertise to ensure the economic analysis aligns with community engagement efforts. Additionally, the analysis will incorporate various studies related to environmental impacts.*

*Davidson remarked that advancements in materials science and manufacturing have dramatically changed over the past decade. He highlighted the incredible resources available in Contra Costa County, including Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. Davidson expressed hope that they could leverage the intellectual capacity of these institutions to explore new possibilities for energy production and other industries. He emphasized the value of these intellectual resources in generating innovative ideas for transitioning into new sectors.*

*Greenlee responded that they are exploring applications in the food and beverage industry, particularly regarding packaging for wineries. She noted that the county has a Recycling Market Development Zone, which aligns with their goals. Greenlee emphasized that all these initiatives are part of the strategic action plan for the Northern Waterfront, which has been the county's guiding framework for economic development since 2019.*

*Davidson inquired whether a grant had been applied for to develop battery manufacturing technology in the county.*

*Greenlee stated that their team submitted an application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration for a project called "Just Transition to Battery Manufacturing" along the Northern Waterfront. This \$1.2 million grant application aims to pre-develop sites for a potential battery manufacturing hub in the area, with involvement from ten different partners in the application.*

*Kim Hazard, representing an education and research institution, questioned how the county plans to empower Environmental Justice communities in the process. She emphasized the importance of groups involved in the Contra Costa Refinery Transition Partnership, such as Communities for a*

*Better Environment, noting that these organizations have dedicated decades to this work. Hazard urged that funding be prioritized for groups capable of effective community engagement, suggesting they should also play a key role in vetting other consultants for the interdisciplinary team needed for this initiative.*

*London explained that they are encouraging stakeholders who typically do not collaborate with community groups to actively seek out these organizations. The goal is to partner with them and integrate their perspectives into the project design.*

*Public Comments:*

*There was no public comment.*

#### **6. RECEIVE Report on Staff Activities that Support Sustainability Goals**

*London provided updates from the Department of Conservation and Development, highlighting several key initiatives:*

- Climate Action Adaption Plan is going to the Board for adoption. The plans emphasize four themes: sustainability, environmental justice, economic development, and health.*
- Sea Level Rise Plan: They are in contract negotiations with the Ocean Protection Council for a \$1.5 million grant to develop a sea level resilience plan for Contra Costa.*
- Energy Efficiency Grant: They are close to accepting federal funding for energy efficiency projects, continuing their pilot program with the City of Pinole.*
- Urban Forest Management Plan: They did not receive the Cal Fire Grant for this project but have an interview scheduled with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation for potential funding.*
- Community Change Grant: A coalition led by Urban Tel in North Oakland submitted a \$19 million grant application to the EPA.*
- Induction Cooktop Demonstration: Partnership with Sustainable Contra Costa, hosted a live Spanish-language demonstration at the Brentwood Community Center.*
- Bay Area Sun Shares Program: They are collaborating to connect residents with vetted solar installers.*
- Building Efficiency Ordinance: A new ordinance for building efficiency has been adopted, pending final approval from the California Energy Commission.*
- Drought Resilience Plan: Following Senate Bill 552, the water agency convened the first meeting of the Contra Costa Drought and Water Shortage Task Force.*
- Transportation Grants: The Public Works Department is actively submitting grant applications for bike and pedestrian projects. They are also studying lighting solutions for key transit areas.*
- Health Department Initiatives: The Community Wellness and Prevention Program is focusing on safe routes to school and promoting walking and biking through various grants.*
- Video of EV Beam Arc was shared to the board.*

*Commissioner Discussion:*

*Moore states October 22nd, the Board of Supervisors established the Economic Development Committee as a standing committee.*

7. RECEIVE Reports from Sustainability Commission members and alternates, and PROVIDE DIRECTION as needed

*Foster gave a PSA that last week was Flood Awareness week and make sure to prepare for rainy season.*

*Commissioners shared an update on a recent action by MCE that will soon appear on our content label. This change addresses the exit fee that CCA customers pay for stranded contracts when switching from PG&E to a CCA like MCE. MCE's default product is 60% renewable, and they have aimed to make it fully carbon-free, primarily using large hydro. Previously, they transferred the carbon-free attribute from large hydro but chose not to accept the nuclear power attribute from Diablo Canyon four years ago. However, with Diablo Canyon's operational extension, the Board has decided to take the nuclear attribute now, which will add about 10-12% nuclear to the default light green product's label. This decision doesn't involve new purchases; it's about crediting energy customers have already paid for. It helps keep costs low and allows MCE to maintain a carbon-free attribute around 95%. The deep green 100% renewable option remains available for those who prefer not to include nuclear.*

*Commissioner Hazard reported that they are creating a new template for county departments to report on their Integrated Pest Management Plans, clarifying responsibilities and identifying low-risk pesticides.*

*Public Comment:*

*There was no public comment.*

8. RECEIVE Report from Sustainability Commission Chair and IDENTIFY TOPICS for next report to the Committee on Sustainability

*Nothing was discussed by the Chair for this item since the next report to the Committee is after the next Sustainability Commission meeting in December.*

*Public Comment:*

*There was no public comment*

9. The next meeting is currently scheduled for December 9, 2024

10. Adjourn

*Meeting adjourned at 7pm.*