

Sustainability Commission

Present: Luz Gomez (Chair)
Victoria Smith
Chuck Leonard
Susan Hurl
Howdy Goudey
Shoshana Wechsler
Chris Easter
Mike Moore
Norm Cohen
Charles Davidson
Renee Fernandez-Lipp
Sarah Foster
Wesley Sullens

Absent: Erin Levine
Kimberly Hazard
Kiara Pereira
Brandon Matson

Staff Present: Demian Hardman-Saldana, Principal Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Jody London, Sustainability Coordinator, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Ryan Hernandez, Principal Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Brendan Havenar-Daughton, Energy Manager, Dept. of Public Works;
Jamar Stamps, Principal Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Adam Scarbrough, Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Emily Groth, Planner, Dept. of Conservation and Development;
Emlyn Struthers, Deputy County Administrator, County Administrator's Office

Attendees: Elise Hunter, Denice Dennis, Carol Mascali, Bruce Ohlson, Carol Weed, Matthew Brown

1. Roll Call and Introductions

The Commission was joined in-person by a member of the public, Matthew Brown.

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

There was no public comment.

3. APPROVE Record of Action for April 29, 2024, Sustainability Commission meeting

Commissioner Michael Moore requested that the East Bay Times article, “Is this East Bay refinery-turned-housing-development a model for reclaiming contaminated sites?” published on May 2, 2024, be added to the record.

The Record of Action was unanimously approved.

4. RECEIVE Report on the Contra Costa Resilient Shoreline Plan

The Commission received a presentation from Ryan Hernandez, Principal Planner with the County’s Department of Conservation and Development, on the County’s progress in helping to develop BCDC’s Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan which is expected to be adopted in December 2024. Once adopted, the County will shift focus to the development of the Contra Costa Resilient Shoreline Plan which will occur in three phases. Phase 1 will be dedicated to community visioning efforts through a community engagement campaign, workshops, and inventories of shoreline parcels and existing planning efforts. Phase 2 will focus on data/information gathering so that the County can update its existing vulnerability assessments. Lastly, Phase 3 will include a workshop series which will cover the results from the first two phases such as adaptation pathways, priority projects, partnership needs, financing strategies, metrics, and other relevant information that will enable the development of Shoreline Adaptation Plans in Contra Costa County’s waterfront jurisdictions. This process will result in the planned adoption of the Contra Costa Regional Shoreline Plan in 2026. Hernandez also highlighted that Contra Costa County was awarded a grant of \$1,499,285 from the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) on June 4, 2024. This money is intended to help develop consistency among sea level rise adaptation plans.

Commissioner’s comments:

Commissioners inquired about the status of the change in jurisdiction around the Port Chicago Military Terminal? What changes are in the forecast and how does staff plan to work around that? Hernandez responded by highlighting that we have lobbyists at the State and Federal level. Staff are planning for a multipronged approach that will include special districts, private entities, large industrial, and others along the shoreline in this area.

The Commission asked whether Contra Costa County efforts are being synchronized with those of Solano County. Hernandez confirmed that our County has a good working relationship with Solano County and that they are working on a similar Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan. The Commission also asked for clarification on the resilient shoreline coalition participation. Is everyone already at the table or is staff still working to bring the jurisdictions in our County to the table? Hernandez

clarified that we have reached out to these jurisdictions to collaborate on grant applications, and some have the capacity and others don't.

Public Comment:

A member of the public asked whether the County has included environmental advocacy groups such as the Sierra Club? Hernandez confirmed that the County has worked with the Greenbelt Alliance and The Watershed Project but has not yet worked with the Sierra Club.

5. RECEIVE report on the Draft Contra Costa County Strategic Energy Management Plan, and PROVIDE DIRECTION, as appropriate.

Brenden Havenar-Daughton, Energy Manager for Contra Costa County, gave a presentation to the Commission on the County's Strategic Energy Management (SEM) program which aims tie together and connect the various energy management plans in place for Contra Costa County. These plans include but aren't limited to the Energy Reduction Plan (2001), the Distributed Energy Resources Plan (2018), the EV Readiness Blueprint (2019), the Facilities Master Plan (2022), and the Updated General Plan (2024) and Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (2024).

So far, the work completed through the SEM program includes re-commissioning of 11 facilities to reduce unnecessary energy use and increase thermal comfort, securing \$15 million in Federal grant funding to install 100+ EV chargers at 15 County libraries, and hiring a new Sustainability Fellow to support this work. The program also includes a tracking system that will track the status of established goals and desired key results on a quarterly basis. The SEM program will go to the Sustainability Committee on 9/16/2024 and then to the Board of Supervisors on 10/22/2024.

Commissioner's Comments:

Commissioner(s) asked about how the Inflation Reduction Act comes into play with this program. Are there any current energy projects related to this? If so, how far along and at what scale? Havenar-Daughton highlighted that while we work closely with the DCD, the scope of the energy manager is County-owned solar, batteries, and other assets. There is ample opportunity through the Inflation Reduction Act and our biggest limitation is lack of capacity. Commissioner(s) reiterated Havenar-Daughton's response adding that Contra Costa County is in a position to be a leader here and that the County should be as aggressive as possible in accessing these opportunities.

Commissioner(s) asked for clarification on EVs as energy assets – is the County considering EV to be energy assets? Are EVs utilizing bi-lateral charging? Havenar-Daughton indicated that the County is not there yet, and the technology isn't quite there yet.

A question was raised about whether the County has forecasted the anticipated increase in demand which would result from the implementation of the SEM plan? If so, has this information been shared with PG&E and MCE so that it can be reflected in their implementation plans? Havenar-Daughton confirmed that the County is currently in the process of working with the County's fleet team Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Plan which will include those forecasts. He also highlighted that he is part of PG&E's Transportation Electrification Advisory Committee to help support this transition.

Commissioner(s) asked whether staff have projected operational savings, such as purchasing petroleum and vehicle maintenance, that will occur by converting the fleet and upgrading infrastructure? Havenar-Daughton confirmed that this is currently happening through a Total Cost of Ownership analysis, and he can report back once the study is farther along or completed.

What role will this work play with regard to the County's work from home policy? Jody London, the County's Sustainability Coordinator, responded citing that over two thousand employees are working remotely but many of the job classifications are not eligible to work from home due to the nature of the role. We don't expect to see this number increase dramatically.

The Commission asked if there is still time to provide input on the SEM plan to which Havenar-Daughton indicated that the pencils down moment is October 10th, 2024.

Public Comment:

Members of the public highlighted the importance of building out the biking infrastructure on all arterial streets to encourage increased adoption.

The public also inquired about whether hydrogen will be considered in the SEM plan. Havenar-Daughton confirmed that this is also being explored, however, there are separate and more complicated challenges involved so it's not the focus in this plan.

6. RECEIVE Report on County preparing ordinance amending the County building code to increase energy efficiency standards for certain newly constructed buildings.

Demian Hardman-Saldana, Principal Planner with the Department of Conservation and Development, gave a presentation to the Commission on a proposed amendment to the County's Energy Code to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from new buildings. The presentation covered the background and timeline for this work, the basics of the Title 24 Energy Code, and an overview of proposed changes to the energy budget for new construction which is expected to encourage reduced frequency of gas infrastructure being installed in new single family, multifamily, and certain non-residential buildings.

Commissioner Discussion:

Commissioners asked whether this ordinance would affect stoves. Hardman-Saldana replied that this ordinance will only apply to space heating and cooling equipment and water heating equipment. Some Commissioners asserted that this ordinance seems to be shifting from a GHG reduction model to an economic model and asked for clarification as to why staff isn't approaching this from a public safety perspective with the growing awareness of the health risks associated with burning natural gas in homes. Staff reiterated that despite the outcome potentially reducing GHG emissions in new construction, this ordinance amends the building code to be more efficient – not to reduce GHG emissions in homes and that local jurisdictions do not have authority over air quality.

Commissioners recommended staff start thinking about the 2025 Building Code update and what sort of reach code may be needed to reduce emissions. A question was also raised about how this will impact the permit application process in terms of prescriptive versus performance pathways. Hardman-Saldana highlighted that prescriptive compliance is extremely rare and this is the reason this ordinance only addresses the performance pathway.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

7. RECEIVE Report on Staff Activities that Support Sustainability Goals

Jody London, Sustainability Coordinator, provided an update on staff's work to support sustainability goals. The report is included as an attachment to the agenda.

Commissioner Discussion:

Commissioners raised a question about finalizing the County's CAAP and how staff worked with PlaceWorks to address the latest round of comments. London replied that the process was very extensive and PlaceWorks was very helpful in sorting through the comments and assisted staff in responding to address all comments received.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

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

Commissioner Moore highlighted an East Bay Leadership Council meeting presentation given by George Carter, Economic Development Project Manager with the Department of Conservation and Development. The meeting was held in July and focused on Brownfield Economic Development, Land Reuse, and Brownfield Assessment Grants in Contra Costa County. Commissioner Moore encouraged the Commission to invite the County's Economic Development team back to provide an update on their work.

There was no public comment.

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

Commission Chair Gomez highlighted this Commission's role in the development of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and the General Plan updates and inquired as to whether this Commission should provide public comment to the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors. Chair Gomez asked for a couple of commissioner volunteers to meet separately to discuss what changes the Sustainability Commission has proposed previously, identify whether the suggested changes were included in the final drafts, and develop language for public comment to the Board of Supervisors at its December 10th session.

Commissioners Chris Easter and Shoshana Wechsler volunteered to join Chair Gomez for this task.

Commissioner Easter recommended a book, "Into the Clear Blue Sky" written by Rob Jackson, which provides information related to much of this commission's work in a way that is easy to understand.

Chair Gomez shared with the group that the EPA is receiving comments on the Montezuma Carbon Storage Project and inquired as to whether anyone from this Commission would like to provide

comments to convey. Commissioner Wechsler added that the EPA project review has not been issued yet but is anticipated sometime this fall. Chair Gomez will follow up once the comment period has been opened.

There was no public comment.

10. The next meeting is currently scheduled for October 28th.

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

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