



Minutes

City of Tempe Sustainability Commission December 19, 2022

Minutes of the Tempe Sustainability Commission meeting held on Monday, December 19, 2022, 4:30 p.m. at a virtual meeting on MS Teams, through City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Kendon Jung (Chair)
Barbie Burke (Vice Chair)
Natalie Mendoza
Erin Boyd

Meaghan Coon
Jake Swanson
Shawn Swisher
Morgan Winburn

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Katja Brundiers

City Staff Present:

Brianne Fisher
Braden Kay
Evelyn Brumfield
Maddie Mercer
Andrea Escobar
Richard Adkins
German Piedrahita
Craig Hayton
Paul Bentley
Roy Tatem

Guests Present:

Gretchen Reinhardt
Alejandria Gutierrez (Sandy)
Luke Ramsey

Warren

Mike Hoffman

Chair Jung called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome New Members and Mission of SRC

Chair Jung reminds everyone of the Commissions charge, scope and mission.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Appearances

Gretchen says that she cares very much about Smith Road agenda item and how we do this design bike project in my neighborhood. Unfortunate, the design process has not heard our communities' voices. I will be listening on where this project stands. I hope that Councilmembers get copies of the letters our neighborhood has sent.

Alejandria Gutierrez lives in Escalante Neighborhood and member of Thew Elementary PTA, Conolly Booster Club. I agree with Gretchen's comments. Our neighborhood has not been heard on the Smith bike project. It feels like we have told the consultants what we wanted but it has not been reflected in the project design. I do not believe we are the only neighborhood that has not been heard.

Agenda Item 3 – Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chair mentions one edit in the title of the Sustainability and Resilience Commission.

Vice Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes, including the mentioned edit, from November 21, 2022.

Motion: Barbie Burke

Second: Erin Boyd

Decision: Approved 7-0

Agenda Item 4 – Tempe River Bottom Initiative

Chair Jung reports that Richard Adkins, Craig Hayton and Paul Bentley from city staff are here to present on this topic.

Hayton provides a high level overview on the multi-departmental approach to this initiative. Context setting, a majority of the river bottom is owned by the city of tempe, however some parts, east of the river bottom, is not owned by the city. Phased approach. Leading with

services, make sure they know what is available to them. Must know that living in the river bottom is an adequate place to live. Provide two months of education and outreach. In September, Richard and his team went in to help clear a lot of the debris once folks vacated the river bottom. Starting in October, pruning and vegetation plan. Safe Harbor Agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Services. Contractual environmental obligations, that city is responsible for. Phase 1 included a resource village. We had outreach staff and fire medical resource, a place to keep property as they transitioned.

Paul Bentley states that there were 150-200 individuals at the beginning of this initiative. Based on proactive outreach and engagement found ways to self-resolve. Did engage about 75 and 50 of those individuals did accept shelter. Two shelter options owned and operated by the city.

Richard Adkins states that he has been on the operations side of things, working with contractors and vegetation approach. I've been working with Police Department and Human Services for several years to understand the relationship with those living in Indian Bend Wash and LoPiano preserve area. I was asked to oversee the vegetation management in river bottom. Main goals was to mitigate fire hazard and maintain habitat and resources. Working with Safe Harbor Agreement. Once folks were out of river bottom, asked to help get debris and trash out of the area. Pulled over 111 tons of trash and debris out and we are not yet complete. We are starting to work on vegetation management. End of the bird nesting season. End of October and beginning of March to remove invasive species and provide public safety to have a view corridor. We are half way through section one. Sixty percent of the vegetation we have removed has been tamarisk, invasives and palms. We have agreements with Army Corps of Engineers, Maricopa Flood Control, US Fish and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Quality. Vegetation material being removed has been up to 11,000 tons of material. Leaving the mesquites, palo verde, sycamores and cottonwoods working to be maintained. I have heard concern about over thinning, however I have been maintaining about 20-25 trees per acre. By the time I get the invasives out that is about what is left anyways. We are maintaining water ways and low flow channels.

Hayton mentions that we do have to maintenance plans moving forward. We need to manage the area moving forward. We have put together an annual maintenance plan to keep it this way.

Alejandra asks who is responsible for the property east of the Mill.

Hayton responds that it looks to be AZ Department of Transportations responsibility and we have been in communication with them.

Chair asks what the nature of police calls for service are.

Bentley responds that usually it is call for assistance for individuals and to assist Fire Medical Rescue for fires.

Chair asks, of the 25 individuals that did not accept help, what was their rationale. Bentley says that in general, in working with homeless population that resist service feel their individual needs can be meet without services and a lot of this is about building trust which we all know takes a lot of time.

Chair Jung asks what has been done in the past to build trust. Bentley lets the Commission know that the HOPE team has been around since 2013. This means individuals going out to the community, meeting individuals where they are at. Many of our HOPE team has lived experience which helps build trust.

Luke Ramsey asks a question in the chat: what is the annual maintenance plan budget? Hayton says there has not been one in the past. Staff will be identifying what those needs are and asking for funding in this year's budget process.

Gretchen R. asks about police calls doubling between 2021 and 2022? Hayton and Bentley say that the general statements previously provided are all we can speak to we would need Police Department to provide more detailed response.

Jake Swanson thanks staff for the information and responsiveness to the request given some concerns we heard from residents. It is great to hear that a majority of the removal has been with invasive species. I was curious about the strategy moving forward with occupying this area again. Is there a prosecution process or a more supportive services approach?

Bentley says that this is a public safety initiative, with that we are trying to assist our community that is detrimental to all of our health. This is an area that is prone to flooding and difficulty providing assistance due to the terrain. With that being said, the initiative is intended to provide opportunity for shelter and vegetation is being pruned to improve natural site lines and surveillance. As patrol officers are within the area, they will be able to see if an encampment is being established in the first place. Folks will have more difficulty to hide. This area is a no trespass zone, it is marked and signed as such. With that, the no trespass is being enforced. The outreach and engagement will remain the first and foremost part of the work. If there is an individual in the area, our Care 7 and HOPE team will come out and provide services while they are being educated on the fact that they are NOT to be there.

Chair Jung states that the strategies to build trust are not being articulated. In the 25% of folks not accepting help then that is a key piece. It sounds like there needs to be a deeper

learning about this smaller population of the unhoused. I want to say thank you for the plan that you have going forward. I am appreciative of Tempe for treating initiatives like this so well and humane.

Agenda Item 5 – Smith Road Improvement

German Piedrahita states that this presentation was given to the general public earlier in the month and a recording of that meeting can be found online. Objective of the project is to provide bike lanes, improve lighting, remove visibility barriers, increase shade, improve on street parking. Project design is broken up by section. University to Rio Salado is buffered bike lanes, widening sidewalks, crossings at driveways would be brought up to ADA standards. Looking at shelter with benches for shelters. No on street parking for this section. We have center turn lanes for the industrial area activity that takes place in this area. Apache Blvd to University is second section. We have a lot more residential and varying right of way. Incorporating sidewalk width, bike lanes, and vehicle lanes. Buffers would not be introduced until north of 10th street. Instead of the buffer we are showing landscaping. Streetscape summary shows what the residents are requesting before the 15% design, generally looking for bike lanes throughout the corridor, no street parking on the south smith road side. We have heard parking is necessary in that area. Lighting, crossings over drive ways and at streets, low impact design. Some design considerations also include fire hydrants, drain pipes, construction easements, utility relocation, transit stops. We are going back to the neighborhood chairs. The challenge we have is that if we want to put something in, we have to take something out.

Chair Jung asks how this design advances the cities sustainability goals?

German responds by saying updating neighborhood street that does not have standard sidewalks and not much else in terms of infrastructure. This design brings in connectivity to Apache Blvd to Tempe market place. The sidewalk is one of the biggest construction elements of the project. Also correct crossing for driveways and intersections. Landscaping between 10th street and university that the city has right of way. South of 10th street a little harder because we have less right of way.

Chair Jung states that trees are not landscaping. They make our city more cool and walkable therefore they are [art of transportation infrastructure.

German responds that says our design to the north is more landscape than trees because of how tight the area is that we have. The landscape area is outside of the sidewalk. The tree canopy area is more focused on the south side. That does not mean that is our goal but we have to work out the constraints we have.

Gretchen asks about the bus stop.

German says we are working with transit to understand more about what that looks like and where that is located.

Warren (resident) asks for clarification on the sidewalk between Smith and University. There are already sidewalks there and it is very narrow. Is the plan to remove all the sidewalk or retrofit the area.

German says we will be reconstructing all the sidewalks that are currently 4 ft wide. North of University there are some areas where the sidewalk is already upgraded.

Alejandra asks on Howe to Apache. There are vehicles that belong to the duplexes. My main concerns is providing enough parking for those families. I would like to maintain the standpipe art that was done by the community?

German addresses the parking. Certain areas on Lemon and Howe currently do not have on-street parking. We cannot take too much right of way to fit in all the elements the community wants. We want equity for all users. The parking to the north of Howe the front Smith, we've heard community concerns. Might be an area that we cannot provide bike lanes but a hybrid solution. As for the art components, the project will take care of these and we consider it an asset to the community. We will relocate if necessary.

Alejandra also comments that Smith between University and Rio Salado, the picture shows there are no cars parked there but that does not reflect reality.

Chair Jung asks that staff to take note on that comment and work with community to work on parking issues.

Commissioner Swisher asks if there is discussion about included green stormwater infrastructure. Also if its been explored if any of the buffers can play a role in incorporating green stormwater infrastructure and adding trees. This of course also helps provide more physical barriers. Underscore the very car nature of all of these designs.

Director Braden Kay states that he has sent an internal email on our office's recommendations. One is to see where there is an opportunity for green stormwater infrastructure. We have additional money that can be injected into the project to see about opportunities there. The second recommendation is to work with Richard Adkins and our private property tree program to see if we can incentive private property owners that live within a block of the project. Last, we want to work with institutional partners. Tempe just put 30 trees at Thew Elementary and 27 trees and Alagrea park that is in short distance of the bike lane.

Agenda Item 6 – Board and Commission Annual Report to Council

Chair Jung asks the commissioners if they have any comments or feedback on the second draft of the annual report?

Commissioners Swisher states that he provided Brianne some feedback via email over the weekend.

Chair Jung states how proud he is of the Commissions work and looks forward to accomplishing even more in the next year.

Vice Chair moves to approve the letter. Natalie seconds. Unanimous approval.

Agenda Item 7- 2022 Water, Wastewater, Stormwater Rate Letter of Support

Chair Jung requests any feedback to the letter of support. No members have any comments.

Commissioner Swisher moves to approve the letter. Vice Chair seconds. Unanimous approval.

Agenda Item 8 – Housekeeping

Chair mentions that he will be reaching out to new members and staff to do annual check ins.

Fisher mentions the need to move the January meeting given the meeting is currently on a city holiday.

The Commission discusses alternative options and decide to have their next meeting on Monday, January 23.

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

Chair states that he is working with staff on calendaring the year ahead so if there are any topics commissioner desires to email him and we can look to work it in.

Vice Chair motions to adjourn the meeting, Swisher seconds. Unanimous approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 pm.

Prepared by: Brianne Fisher

Reviewed by: Brianne Fisher