

Sustainability and Economic Vitality (SEV)

Council Committee Meeting Minutes
Virtual and In-Person Meeting in City Council Chambers
31 East 5th Street
September 18, 2023
1:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order by Vice Mayor Adams at 1:08 p.m. with Vice Mayor Adams and Councilmember Chin both attending in person.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES

A. August 21, 2023 SEV Meeting Minutes

Approval of the August 21, 2023 SEV Meeting Minutes was moved by Councilmember Chin, seconded by Vice Mayor Adams, and approved unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS - The committee welcomes public comment. According to the Arizona Open Meeting Law, the Committee may only discuss matters listed on the agenda. Matters brought up by the public under public appearances that are not listed on the agenda cannot be discussed by the Committee. A 3-minute limit per person will be in effect.

A. Comment Cards Submitted

One comment card was submitted prior to the meeting, and she spoke in person.

- Anne Till of Tempe

Re: 4A1 – Please have all development on Smith Road include green stormwater infrastructure and ample shade on right of ways

Re: 4A2 – Requesting that we promote the use of wood chips rather than rock as we convert turf. It both promotes water conservation and does not contribute further to our heat island.

Re: 4A3 – Thanks our Urban Forestry team for all their work in planting new trees in Tempe and she can't wait for future shady pathways.

4. COMMITTEE SESSION ITEMS

A. Current Items and Updates

1. Engineering and Transportation Update

Principal Planner Bonnie Richardson and Principal Civil Engineer Cathy Hollow provided an update on the planned improvements along Smith Road.

Cathy and Bonnie provided an update on the proposed improvements along Smith Road, between Apache Blvd and Rio Salado Parkway. Cathy explained that the plan will address Council Priority 3.26: The 20-Minute City and was designed to promote pedestrian and bicycle comfort/accessibility, provide on-street parking, and maintain business access. She then went on to outline that the improvements will be addressed in two phases – Smith Road North and Smith Road South (1 & 2). Main focuses of improvements in both areas include bike lanes, new street lighting and landscaping, green stormwater infrastructure, and an attached sidewalk.

Bonnie expanded on the plans for Green Stormwater Infrastructure and expressed thanks to resident Anne Till for her input. Our Green Stormwater Infrastructure will collect rainwater at landscape areas and be supplemented with an underground drip system. Permeable Aqua Rock pavers will be used near trees and Orbit bus stops, with a structural backfill under the pavers near the trees to promote healthy root growth. Root barrier will be used to protect nearby facilities.

Bonnie went on to explain the strategies planned for increasing both shade and manufactured structural shade along the bike paths and sidewalks, with tree plantings and micro transit shelters.

Cathy explained the timeline for the project. Construction is due to begin in December 2023 or early January 2024 on the North Segment, to be completed in June 2024. The South Segment is slated to begin construction in April of 2024 and conclude in October or November of 2024.

Comment Cards Submitted

Vice Mayor Adams then made a call for further public comment on this issue, and two more comment cards were submitted in person.

- Alejandria Gutierrez of Tempe expressed appreciation for the public meetings on this issue and for listening to the residents and neighbors, as well as taking into consideration that there are three separate sections of Smith Road, with three slightly different sets of needs. She asked how many of what kind of trees will be put in, and what is the plan for maintenance of the trees? The standpipe on the corner of Don Carlos and Smith became a public art project for the entire neighborhood that everyone contributed to. Please keep the standpipe where it is – it is important to the residents of the neighborhood. (Cathy assured her that the standpipe is not going to be moved. Bonnie assured her that the standing trees will be incorporated into the landscape plans. Richard Adkins answered her questions about trees.)
- Terrie Ekin of Tempe suggested implementing water credits to the residents and businesses that help plant and maintain trees. (Bonnie supplied a general update that in the areas the city has been planting trees they've been using wood chips to great water conservation and cooling success.)

2. Water Utilities Division Update

Interim Water Resources Manager Tina Sleeper provided an update on Tempe's robust

Water Conservation program.

Tina opened her presentation with an announcement that Tempe received a grant for over \$100K to remove over 27K square feet of non-functional turf in four of our City parks. Tempe is also giving out grants – they re-launched the Industrial Grant and gave out the first two Water Efficiency and Education Grants in 2023. Tempe approved \$60K in funds and those were awarded to two Tempe industrial businesses to remove non-functional turf from their premises, saving a projected 64 million gallons of water over the next 30 years.

Tina went on to explain that our Commercial Indoor Fixtures Rebate program was expanded to include additional indoor fixtures, and that our Outdoor Commercial Rebates offer non-residential customers up to \$10K for turf removal projects. Tempe has a wide variety of water conservation rebate programs for residential and non-residential customers, which provide incentives as well as educational opportunities to the public. In this regard, Tempe is also expanding its water conservation messaging and education in partnership with the regional water conservation messaging campaign: Water Use it Wisely.

Tempe is also re-evaluating and strengthening its public ordinances to ensure they remain effective, including Water Waste Ordinance 91.46 and Water Conservation Report/Water Use Plan 98.11. Also, the Waterfluence Dashboard pilot, which is being used right now by several City parks and Homeowner's Associations, already is showing how data can drive more effective usage and get our usage more in line with our budgets.

In 2022, residents and businesses in Tempe took action that conserved an estimated 114 million gallons of water. These efforts are part a long history of success for our water conservation programs. Since 2002, our efforts have reduced water usage in the City of Tempe by 19%, even while the population rose by 21% during that same timeframe.

3. Urban Forestry Update

Tempe's Urban Forester, Richard Adkins, presented on the current and future state of Tempe's trees and shade canopy, and the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

With the support and encouragement of City management and Council, Richard Adkins oversees performance measure 4.11 – to achieve a citywide shade canopy of 25% by 2040.

The "Urban Forest" is comprised of all the trees in the City – both on public and private property. The human-forest interface is a keystone for urban living, providing numerous benefits for our residents and visitors, as well as being a low-risk, high-yield investment for our community.

Tempe currently has around an 11% tree canopy. This includes over 27K trees – nearly 18K in parks and preserves, with an additional 10K in our rights-of-way and trails. Overall, there are over 100 species and varieties of trees on COT property, comprising over \$63M in value and \$1.2M in annual economic and environmental benefits. Tempe has been a designated "Tree City USA" for over 27 years running.

Moving forward, in our efforts to increase the tree canopy, we are working towards utilizing

more carefully chosen, desert climate-adapted species. Urban Forestry Master Plan goals include demonstrating the city's commitment to sustainability in increased shade canopy, to replace missing/diseased or declining trees with updated climate-adapted tree species, empower residents, businesses, and other organizations to collaboratively create and care for our Urban Forest, and support other strategic priorities and performance measures, such as water conservation and heat resilience.

Between establishing a more proactive tree care and management team, utilizing data for more strategic tree planting, and educational outreach programs (including residential rebate programs and training workshops), Tempe is working to build a more resilient Urban Forest.

B. New Items for Consideration

1. *No new items were presented for consideration.*

C. Announcements

1. *Vice Mayor Adams announced her Trees for Tempe sticker and public awareness campaign, designed to educate the public about the City's various options for assisting community members to help us increase the shade canopy in Tempe, including Cost Match, Treebate, and others.*

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: October 16, 2023

6. ADJOURN

Meeting was adjourned at 2:09 p.m. by Vice Mayor Adams.