

Sustainability and Economic Vitality

Council Committee Meeting Minutes
Virtual and In-Person Meeting in City Council Chambers
31 East 5th Street
February 15th, 2023
3:00 pm

1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order by CM Chin at 3:03 pm with CM Chin in chambers and VM Adams joining virtually.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES

A. January 11th, 2023 minutes.

January 11, 2023 meeting minutes were 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

Anne Till submitted a card on 02/15/2023 and joined in Chambers to read:

Advocated for the usage of new types of soil and woodchip to encourage sustainability of Tempe properties, as well as create better environments for both people and animals. She said it should be a critical priority that the city chooses designers and builders who have a proven track record of resilience and sustainability for city approved projects.

4. COMMITTEE SESSION ITEMS

A. Current Items and Updates

1. Resilient Tempe Master Plan

Dr. Braden Kay and Maddie Mercer from Sustainability gave an update on the Climate Action Plan and key projects they are working towards. Braden emphasized adoption of GSI (Green Stormwater Infrastructure) to help mitigate extreme heat and drought. He said it will require deep collaboration with the Municipal Utilities Department as well as the Community Development and Engineering/Transportation departments, plus several external Tempe partners as well. He gave examples of the project's success in a few smaller, individual scales. Last year's budget approved funding for this master plan. VM Adams asked about the new landscaping on Rural between Warner and Elliott, and noted the water is just being

wasted in street. Braden said that's a good example of a piece of infrastructure which could capture more water if properly funded. Elements of the scope of work include an Urban Forestry Master Plan, a utility feasibility study, and stakeholder engagement. Beyond the design and implementation of GSI, he said we need to look at the long-term impacts. Their intent is to develop a native and indigenous landscape maintenance guide as well as workforce development training. He referenced a tour staff took of GSI ecosystems in Tucson a few months ago, which SEV Council Committee staff attended as well. He reiterated what next steps would be in terms of permanency.

2. County Island Update

Ryan Levesque from Community Development and Maria Laughner from Economic Development gave updates beginning with the status of current developments – there are multiple housing units actively being constructed right now. Ryan shared pictures, floor plans, and zoning plans of those developments. Maria shared info about the Brownfields Coalition grant which her department is participating. VM Adams asked for some more details about the lukewarm developer situation. Maria explained financial markets are weary right now due to increased interest rate changes being imposed.

3. Downtown Tempe Refresh Update

Deputy City Manager Keith Burke introduced Community Services Deputy Director Alex Jovanovic, PIO Kris Baxter, and Julian Dresang from Transportation & Engineering. Julian talked about how many of the downtown topics were relevant to current performance measures. Kris discussed visible public outreach and the efforts being used to promote these many projects—namely window treatments at the former Rula Bula space which includes a QR code leading to Tempe Forum for feedback. Alex talked about landscaping's 30-60-90 Day Plan which should provide an immediate visual impact to downtown. The 30 days began with the medians (replacing gravel and planting,) the 60 days will focus on trees and shrubs, and the 90 days will close out with trees being installed in raised planters on Mill. Julian spoke about things actively being worked on despite all that is being planned, which include adaptive street concepts and near-term projects like string light replacement, installation of downtown festoon lighting on 4th, 6th, and 5th street streetscapes, and the Mill Avenue streetscape and infrastructure project.

VM Adams asked if the RFP could be moved up from May since this is such a priority. Julian said they cannot start construction until they have a final design, but they will try to move things along as fast as possible. He discussed how staff will garner community input and feedback between now and the Fall.

CM Chin asked if the numbers on the chart on the Design slide meant what the year would be. Julian said yes. She then asked if Lori Foster from DTA wanted to say anything about her group's thoughts on the project. Lori said they are excited and cannot wait for it to happen. She said that outreach to our residents is going to be important. They want to make sure the impact to some of their events is as minimal as possible and asked to make sure the construction schedule is as less impactful as possible. She explained they just went through tough times with Streetcar construction and then Covid. She asked that the city do it in the summer and at nighttime.

CM Chin asked to make sure that the scramble on 5th and Mill be ADA compliant, and to include them in the testing as well too. She then said she remembered watching the Work

Study Session on 3/4/22 online and observed that everyone on Council was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this project. She said let's not lose that enthusiasm, and the longer we drag it out that enthusiasm wanes. She said it was nearly a year ago, but staff's timeline shows them just starting to meet with a designer a year later, which is frustrating. She emphasized that this is going to be a disruption to our downtown residents and stakeholders and asked that they please incorporate their asks in staff's planning. She said that she's been trying to get the downtown area activated, and she has seen the new signage, but asked if we are managing expectations as people start getting excited but must wait years to see the results. She asked why we have not made more progress? She further stated that she has inherited this as a new councilmember and told staff that they were going to hear questions from other councilmembers of why this is taking so long. She reiterated that staff said they just met with designers, despite the plan being adopted a year ago. She urged them to adopt that urgency the Council has about this project, asked for pro-active leadership, and told them to let council know what is happening as it happens.

Julian said he would take that to heart and said they did not want the thought to be that staff is dragging their feet. He explained that he could see how the interpretation is they were moving slow, but said it is a priority for staff as well. He said they wanted to work and partner with stakeholders to include their input. He committed to making this happen as quickly as possible but said they did not want to sacrifice quality and make a mistake.

Keith said staff would work on communicating better and challenged staff to speed up the process.

CM Chin said that she appreciated their promise to try speeding things up and asked that they please be proactive and let Council know what is going on, including any challenges, to help manage expectations.

VM Adams said that Council approved the project last March, and that they talked to constituents about it. She said that the delay negatively affects their standing with the community as a year has gone by and very little has happened. She said it does not sit well with anyone and felt the same frustration as CM Chin. She asked that staff close those year-long gaps.

B. New Items for Consideration

- 1. VM Adams asked that the Cool Pavement Pilot Program be placed on the March SEV agenda. She said that she is going with Transportation staff to look at Phoenix's pilot program and will report back at the next meeting.*

C. Announcements

- 1. CM Chin announced that she is doing a GREEN Storytime event at the Tempe Public Library.*

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday March 22nd, 2023, 3:00 PM