



MINUTES

TEMPE TOMORROW – GENERAL PLAN 2050 COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP (CWG)

February 7, 2023

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Tempe Tomorrow General Plan 2050 Community Working Group (CWG), of the City of Tempe, which was held in hybrid format in person and via Zoom at the Tempe Public Library, 3500 S Rural Road, Arizona Cypress Program Room (Meeting Room B), Tempe, AZ.

Regular Meeting convened at 5:32 PM

Present:

Staff:

Chair Andre Salais	Ryan Levesque, Deputy Director – Community Development
Vice Chair Anne Till	Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner
Julie Armstrong	Brenda Clark, Neighborhood Services Specialist
Lily Cardenas	Dawn Ratcliffe, Municipal Utilities Program Coordinator
J.P. Coughlin	Braden Kay, Sustainability & Resilience Director
Jana Lynn Granillo	Robbie Aaron, Planner II
Pat McNamara	Jacob Payne, Planner I
Sarbeswar Praharaj	Joanna Barry, Administrative Assistant II
Katherine Schmidt	
David Sokolowski	
Logan Tokos	
Nolan Williams	

- 1) **Call to order** by Chair Salais
- 2) **Attendance Roll Call:** Chair Salais made the roll call. A quorum was present with 12 members present.
- 3) **Public Comments:** NONE
- 4) **Voting of the Meeting Minutes**

Vote on January 17, 2023, meeting minutes was postponed until March 7, 2023, to allow for addition of missing comments from Commissioner Sokolowski.

- 5) **Presentation on General Plan Elements:** Presentation on General Plan Conservation Chapter: Conservation, Environmental Planning, Water Resources, and Climate Change/Extreme Heat elements. Presentation by staff.
- 6) **Activity and Discussion:** Discussion on the Conservation Chapter elements for Tempe Tomorrow - GP 2050

Vice Chair Till asked why the composting service went away. She received an email that she could get a discount somewhere, but it was not anything special.

Staff advised that the compost and inert facility will be closing in March 2023. The City will still continue with curbside green organics program and possibly expand it. They are working with procurement on an inert facility with facilities that

recycle, no open pit. Staff noted that residents can buy compost from GrowWell, at 2807 South 27th Ave in Phoenix, with a 10% discount.

Vice Chair Till stated that woodchips reduce ambient temperatures and are better than rock. She thinks that rebates for rock is the wrong direction for the City to go.

Vice Chair Till stated the need for designers for streetscapes. For example, when they did the survey and put up the plans for Smith Road there were no trees. When the City looks for contractors, find people with a focus on sustainability, heat reduction, etc.

Vice Chair Till stated that wildlife habitats and corridors are focused to big parks, but pocket parks are also important for neighborhood wildlife.

Vice Chair Till stated that people throw a lot of stuff away and we have no dumping site, so they pay a lot for trash transportation and dumping. There needs to be communication about the other ways to dispose of unwanted things, like donating, FB Marketplace for items such as washing machines, or composting in your own property's yard.

Staff advised they are working on ways to limit contamination in the recycling bins. They use a third-party company to do audits of the contamination rates quarterly, which enables us to go through hundreds of pounds of trash, and separate and sort it to get the desired contamination rate. We have one of the lower contamination rates for recycling materials in the phoenix metro area. They did see a spike in contaminants during COVID. The City has distributed over 13,000 educational pamphlets about recycling contamination. Neighborhood Services has been reaching out to HOAs to inform them about contamination and how to recycle correctly. They have also been using social media and going to events to spread education about proper recycling etiquette. We have programs with Goodwill and others to increase the reuse and recycling rates. There is a long-term plan to form a program about food scrap composting. Styrofoam collection will be starting soon and will be announced in the next couple of weeks.

Vice Chair Till noted that Tucson has a grant for stormwater collection features, and the city works with a non-profit to get property owners to install these things.

Commissioner Granillo stated that about recycling, she has a lot of college student rentals in her area, and they have parties and put pizza box type stuff in the recycle bins. She suggested, maybe, having some incentives to target college-age students to recycle responsibly.

Staff noted that when she was in college, she found that what works well with college students is friendly competitions. Maybe there could be a contamination check challenge within ZIP codes or neighborhoods.

Chair Salais stated that when it comes to recycling, it is surprising that we have a better contamination rate compared to some other Valley cities. Other cities require sorted bins, and this would educate people on what can and cannot be recycled. We have free compost bins offer, but reusable green bins are not available city-wide. He stated that on-site processing of green waste is a good idea and maybe, we could have a woodchipper to go around and chip up the waste. He noted there is a test program in LA County for mandatory composting for large lot size homes. He is not sure how feasible that is in Tempe, but it would be good for large trees on big lots needing compost. Woodchips for evaporation and heat reduction is a good idea. Treated woodchip could have more longevity than untreated and would help reduce heat island effects. He stated that to reduce cost for feeding his animals, he used to go to grocery stores and collect thrown out food. Most of these stores are no longer allowing this to mitigate risk of food being eaten by people, so they just throw it out now. There is an enormous amount of green waste now from large grocers that could be diverted to composting.

Staff stated that pre-sorting works very well and when you have different containers there is a lower contamination rate and a better price on the market for diversion. The challenge we have now is with trucks. It would be a lot tougher to go and pick up several bins. There have been discussions with a non-profit to look at this pre-sort bin idea. With the curbside organic green waste programs, we are looking at expansions based on set out rates (how many people use this) and

the amount of vegetation on the lots. The expansion would most likely occur where neighborhoods have higher set out rates. There have been laws to restrict requiring accessory bins like recycling, but California does not have them so they can require property owners to have more bins. There are still voluntary things we can do. Staff stated that the woodchipper has liability issues, but we always think outside of the box so we can try and bring it back.

Commissioner Sokolowski stated that it all comes back around to food, reducing travels to get to food, and recycling food waste into compost. He stated we have to find a way to transition the trucks to alternative fuels. We need to work towards carbon neutrality over the next thirty years and there are some connections where we can use food waste and support our urban agriculture program. You would then be providing a financial incentive as fuel and compost. It is all interconnected and we need to have these values in the General Plan to achieve carbon neutrality.

Staff noted they have had discussions with their division, and it is an interdisciplinary effort. The Sustainability Department has influence to promote alternative fueled fleet vehicles in the City.

Staff stated that lightweight fleet vehicles in the City will become electric by 2035 and some lightweight utility vehicles as the tech becomes available. The City is looking to APS and SPR for charging opportunity and State for funding sources.

Staff stated that a big diversion pilot was held at Diablo and 35% of all waste was diverted. They are talking with City of Phoenix about innovative options for the food waste dilemma. Taking food and keeping food waste in the neighborhood system to come full cycle with reuse. Staff agreed that in order to achieve these high numbers, food composting must be high in the discussion. The Sustainability Department is very supportive of this goal. The challenge we have with food is that our landfill fees for accepting waste are so low, and composting is not the most affordable option. Doing composting and zero waste on a city scale is very difficult.

Commissioner Sokolowski stated there is a huge opportunity to provide financial incentives to fund and support a local agronomy and using food waste as fuel or in a reuse helps.

Chair Salais stated that we should just accept that composting is more expensive, and we need to just bite the bullet and do it. He stated that 2/3 of his home waste is diverted and composted. His rate of waste going to a landfill is probably negative, which will not be achievable for most, but we can head to near zero.

Staff stated that ASU is doing impressive things behind the scenes with waste sorting and what they say is that this is just the cost of living here. We pay for everything else and there is going to have to be a cost for sustainable programs. It is about achieving a balance and what is feasible for all residents.

Staff advised that we got a USDA grant for a local food promotion, where there are opportunities to grow local food. They are in discussion for partnership for a small business compost program for commercial food waste collection.

Vice Chair Till stated that food waste decomposes very quickly and probably takes as much space as wood chips and other things. It is also very good for soils. She suggested perhaps a rebate for that and a designated compost spot, possible community gardens for compost drop off. She noted that woodchip can be obtained for free from arborist. For couches, washing machines and similar large items, we should disallow throwing that, and that people need to individually figure out someone to come pick it up. For recycle bins, she thinks it would be great for drop off of things like water bottles and common items and that maybe amazon boxes have a drop off spot like how we do with batteries. Even cans can be sold or given to Non-profit organizations. Green organics pick up could be requested and on an "at will" basis and have a list of places where you can request the green waste to be dropped off at your property. She asked for an update on the option of closing alleys in her neighborhood.

Staff noted that one of the challenges with food waste is it has to be aligned with the facility. We did a partnership with ASU and another company and DPI compostable material. Even with using the machine, it is supposed to come out clean, but we had issues with things coming out, and the machine broke down. We are located near the Salt River, and we have to meet certain specifications to make sure there is no adverse effects to the watershed. The weight of trucks, and the anaerobic digestion also play a factor. We still must think outside of the box, and we are lucky to have

Sustainability department support this. We did a pilot with Stardust Building Supplies in the alleys and a lot of the materials picked up were not salvageable. That program is still on an on-call basis. Habitat for Humanity is still an option. There is also another program where materials picked up in alleys can be taken to a place where they can be rehabbed. There is alley abandonment which extends property lines and relocates services. Parrish Spisz at the City is looking into a study about this but there was a Council vote in 2019 that said we are not moving forward with relocation of services from the alleys. Not even a small area was selected to try and see if it is feasible. Scottsdale and Phoenix have relocated services to street side and Mesa has gated alleyways.

Commissioner Granillo state that in the plan, she would like to see a funding area, promoting partnerships and expanding funding for recycling and other things discussed just prior. This can be vague but impactful – use words like “encourage, promote, expand.” She would also like to see a relationship made with the air quality and environmental with public health. There is a cost of disease and poor health to the society and there are standards and studies on this topic. She would like to see a strategy about community engagement in neighborhoods and specifically highlighting it.

Commissioner McNamara agreed with Anne on everything. He noted that the low hanging fruit on the grocery list of Anne’s is Amazon boxes. We order a lot of things online and many residents are transient and could use the boxes to store and move things.

Commissioner Tokos stated she is happy to see the plan addresses brownfields. Land is valuable and we need to focus on remediation of brownfields. She asked how much control to we have on electricity sources and emissions.

Staff noted they do not have much control, but their team has been getting bigger and they are working more with SRP and the Arizona Corporation Commission. New employee will soon sit on their boards and get them to disclose their carbon emissions and solar policy changes. We have carbon neutrality goals for the City facilities and citywide, and so do the utility provides and adjacent cities.

Commissioner Tokos stated she priced out solar on her home and it is not cost-effective based on the usage, but she would be happy if they put them up.

Staff noted that SRP changed their policy that made solar not cost-effective anymore. Residents do not have incentives for solar with their current policies. It will take more political will to change their policy.

Commissioner Tokos noted we have a shade plan but has seen a lot of homes turn into rentals and the shade trees get cut. She asked if there was a way to deter that, as we all bear the cost of that.

Staff stated we have an upcoming shade and resilience plan, and we will look at our trade ordinance and see if there is something we can do. Some cities have policies that if you cut a tree you pay into a fund that plants trees. We work with a neighborhood forester to help plant trees. Staff noted that a couple of the commissioners would make good ambassadors for the shade plan, and we well be scouting soon for that group to help update the forestry master plan. We are lucky to have pilot projects from the City and other neighborhoods and cities like Tucson.

Commissioner Tokos asked what the uses for the remediated water are with the reopening of Kyrene.

Staff advised that SRP has first rights on the water for cooling at their plant and we will use it to recharge the aquifer. Both of these give us credit that we can use for off-territory properties

Commissioner Tokos stated that the idea of alleyway gating is new to her, and she is concerned. It is public land and if we cut off access that is concerning. There may be good ways to utilize them like as wildlife facilities.

Commissioner Sokolowski stated he is opposed to closing off alleyways. These are travel ways and could also be used or bike parking. He noted that in Europe and Japan they use even smaller alleys as walkways.

Staff noted that the City Council vote in 2019 shut down the idea of relocating alley services. The gating was just an option discussed.

Commissioner Williams referred to wildlife and asked what types of animals we have in Tempe and who are we trying to protect. He asked if we wanted to make specific habitats or just a general blanket for useable habitat over the City.

Staff noted there are a lot of wild animals in the City, birds of prey discussed this morning for example. Right now, we are looking at corridors along the Salt River that must be protected. Tall trees are dying, and they are important for the ecosystems.

Commissioner Williams asked for clarification if urban shade and wildlife are connected. He suggested to be as aggressive and cut-throat as you can.

Staff advised we are looking to update the Urban Forestry Plan to have 25% canopy by 2030 (instead of 2040 as stated in the 2017 Plan), but the city can only do so much, and we must enhance in private property too.

Chair Salais asked about a potential penalty for people that take out trees. Some trees are not important to shade like Palm Trees. He asked if the City was looking into gray water storage reuse to be incentivized.

Staff stated that we have a gray water rebate available. There are gray water options in the CIGCC (International Green Construction Code) and we are working on that with Community Development.

Commissioner Schmidt stated that she does not like the idea of punishing people for not getting on board with things. Making people be responsible with garbage by punishing them, closing alleys, and punishing people for removing trees will only make them resent it. Sustainability is wonderful, but how much of the population really is aware of it? She stated we need an educational outreach on this. Twice a year in her neighborhood they have a potluck, and a City representative comes out to talk and that is an effective way to educate the residents. A lot of people have given up on recycling.

Commissioner Coughlin wanted to call out, buried in Energy resource Goal 1, provide electric charging stations. He noted that is a big change since the last General Plan and needs to be expanded and made more visible.

7) **Questions & Discussion**
None

8) **Community Working Group, and City Staff Announcements**

Staff went over recent General Plan 2050 events, such as the public meeting, Arts in the Park, etc. and thanked the Commission members who volunteered their time at these events. Staff will be posting some of the feedback they received in the Council Chambers for others to see.

Staff advised the Commission on the topic for the March 7, 2023, Working Group Meeting.

Staff stated that April or May will be the potential draft time for the plan. Staff will be presenting the plan to various Boards & Commissions, as well as in a City Council Work Study Session. Hopefully in June, this Commission will be voting on whether to recommend adoption of the General Plan 2050 to the City Council.

Meeting adjourned at 7:11 pm.

Prepared by: Joanna Barry, Administrative Assistant II
Reviewed by: Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner