



## Minutes

# City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Commission February 24, 2024

Minutes of the Tempe Sustainability Commission meeting held on Monday, February 26, 2024, 4:30 p.m. in person at Tempe Transportation Center, Don Cassano Community Room, 200 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Tempe, Arizona.

### **(MEMBERS) Present:**

Kendon Jung (Vice Chair)  
Barbie Burke  
Morgan Winburn  
Erin Boyd  
Jake Swanson

Taylor Conley  
Ben Paulat  
Joshua Randall  
Jacob Bethem

### **(MEMBERS) Absent:**

Shawn Swisher (Chair)

### **City Staff Present:**

Eric Iwersen  
Brienne Fisher  
Andy Escobar  
Maddie Mercer  
Carissa Fowler  
Evelyn Brumfield  
Dawn Ratcliffe  
Tom Duensing

### **Guests Present:**

Bob Wall  
Michael McCaffrey  
Bob Pane  
Patricia DiRoss  
Guillaume Evain

Andy Johnson

**Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and SRC Mission**

Vice Chair Jung called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and read the commissions' charge and mission.

**Agenda Item 2 – Public Appearances**

No public comments were shared.

**Agenda Item 3 – Review of Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of the January 22, 2024, meeting were accepted.

**Motion:** Commissioner Ben Paulat

**Second:** Commissioner Taylor Conley

**Voted to Approve:** 9-0

**Agenda Item 4 – Salt River Project – Solar Mounted Canals Initiative**

Andy Johnson, SRP Engineering Manager, gave a presentation on SRP's Solar Mounted Over Canals. The project's objective is to install solar power panels on the canals with the purpose of increasing solar energy capacity and reducing evaporative water loss. He introduced three existing projects and gave an overview of each one. These projects were in India, Gila River Indian Community by Wild Horse Pass and I-10, and Turlock Irrigation District in CA. Some of the potential benefits of this initiative include multi-use of existing canal land, evaporation savings, extending lifespan of existing water infrastructure, impacts to aquatic vegetation growth, renewable generation source, and less power transmission losses. The projects concerns are the public safety since the public had full access to the canal, clearance for equipment, reduce maintenance efficiencies and increase cost, increase shade may increase infestation of quagga mussels.

SRP is working with ASU on evaporation and feasibility project research to study evaporation reduction and savings. Bob Pane, SRP Water Engineering and Transmission Director, explained the study with ASU is far more precise, with a better evaporation savings indicator, by offering an opportunity to correlating with additional scientific data. A consultant company, George Cairo Engineering, was hired by SRP to help with the solar structure design. SRP will focus on a basic structure to can again access underneath. The Pera Club, SRP facility located east of Desert Botanical Garden, and Arizona Falls located on the Arizona Canal along the Indian School Road, are the two potential pilot locations. Next step, GCE is working on some preliminary conceptual design, and SRP will evaluate the cost of it, and will look for federal and other sources of fundings.

Questions:

- Vice Chair Jung Chair asked the anticipated generation of Kilowatts hours, if there is any potential to link this with those that are heat insecure, and the capacity of solar energy space storage.

- Andy said they anticipate under 1 megawatt generation and explained the study will focus on evaporation component primarily. If the project moves forward, SRP will have opportunities to study and investigate different impacts and aspects of the project.
- Bob Pane mentioned that SRP within the next 10 years will be adding a great number of solar panels and other renewable power generation capability, including the Roosevelt Lake pumped back storage
- Commissioner Joshua Randall asked what environmental permitting process SRP needs to go through.
  - Andy and Bob explained since SRP is structured as quasi-governmental entity, they usually don't need to get permits, but they will work very closely with Federal Bureau Reclamation throughout the process.
- Commissioner Jake Swanson asked what battery aspect capacity the project will add to the grid, and the study threshold.
  - Andy said since this project generates just one megawatt, they will focus on the evaporation component since there are only two studies out there, and none of them has provided a real data field measurement.
  - Bob added that the biggest SRP challenge is having the canals open to the public due to public safety.
- Commissioner Barbie Burke asked how long the pilot project would take place, and how soon will Wild Horse Canal project start.
  - Andy said they are in the early stage of conceptual design and looking for funding source. They will also need to go through all levels of approval from SRP board and council, therefore he can't give a timeframe. He also doesn't have the exact starting date for the Wild Horse Project, but he heard they were breaking ground. It should be a more immediate event.
- Chat Guest asked if there any architects involved in the study? I believe there could be an opportunity for design to improve the pedestrian cyclist experience along the canal as well.
  - Andy said the Pera Club location has some adjoin multi-use pass offering alternative opportunities for improvements, and GCU Consultants has some architects involved in conceptual design.
- Commissioner Ben Paulet asked what the start date for breaking ground and project duration will be.
  - Andy explained the canals solar panels are in the concept study phase, and the evaporation study is well under way. There is no breaking ground date yet, but they expect by the end of April, 50% of the design phase to be finalized. In May, SRP will be moving to the next phase of full design, cost estimate and finding fundings. He foresees several years out for breaking ground.

Eric Iwersen, Transportation and Sustainability Director, mentioned that a letter of support, signed by the City Manager, was sent out to support these next steps SRP is taking.

### **Agenda Item 5 – SmartPower Intro and Proclamation**

Brianne, Climate Action Manager, provided some opening and context regarding the Proclamation presented to the Mayor's Office by Bob Wall, Vice President of SmartPower, and Michael McCaffrey, Tempe Resident. The Mayor's Office asked the Commission to hear more about SmartPower and review the Proclamation language.

Bob Wall gave an overall view about SmartPower, a nonprofit marketing firm, focusing on energy efficiency and clean energy. He highlighted their program, Solarize, intended to work with communities, municipalities and local organizations throughout an outreach campaign designed to increase residential solar while driving down the soft cost.

#### Questions:

- Vice Chair Jung asked what the difficulties are to have solar in Tempe.
  - o Brianne explained that each household has different incentives expectations like shorter payouts or financial returns, therefore the challenges of having solar power are subjective to the household outcomes.
  - o She also mentioned the Sustainability and Resilience Office is dedicated to the high heat priority neighborhood, focusing on the most socially vulnerable and the ones with lack of inventory. She also clarified this is a presentation to educate the commission, and highlight future opportunities.
- Commission Boyd asked if this is mostly for residential or commercial clients?
  - o Bob clarified this is a residential campaign.
- Commissioner Burke asked who gets the Federal and State Tax Credits for Solar Panels?
  - o Bob - It depends on the method of the acquisition. Customers purchasing solar panels with cash or finance by loan, get the federal tax credit. If purchased through a lease, a third-party owner receives the incentives.
- Commissioner Taylor – How do you incentivize landlords to take advantage of solar opportunities, and could this increase the cost for renters in Tempe?
  - o Bob - It depends on the size of the units.
- Vice Chair Jung – Is there an additional fee for the 20-weeks community-based education and outreach campaign?
  - o Bob said there will be no charges during the campaign or planning phase, therefore no cost to Tempe.

Discussion about solar program and the next step.

Vice Chair Jung made a motion to bring this back in the fall and include a presentation from city staff with all the different components that are related to an accelerating community solar work.

**Motion:** Vice Chair Kendon Jung

**Second:** Commissioner Taylor Conley

**Voted to Approve:** 9-0

### **Agenda Item 6 – 2024 Neighborhood Awards – Call for Nominations**

Brianne shared the five nominations and sustainability category scoring sheet.

Vice Chair Jung mentioned at the last meeting discussion that future awards pivot away from singling out individuals to celebrating collective efforts such as a collaboration of individuals or groups. He also reminded the language amended for next year's award. He asked if staff could provide additional resources to increase the number of nominations.

Nominees:

- Let's Go Compost – Non-profit
- Ana Aguilar – Individual
- Keep Tempe Beautiful – Non-profit
- Cocina Chiwas – Business
- Filter Clean – Business

A roll-call vote was called, and Ana Aguilar is the 2024 Neighborhood Awards winner.

### **Agenda Item 7 – Sustainability and Resilience Commission Dates of Interest Calendar**

Iwersen brought up the calendar presented to the commission last month. Commissioners may weigh in on the calendar. The calendar gives the commissioners a better perspective of upcoming events, and a chance to prepare ahead of time. He focused on the upcoming March events and gave feedback on the February presentations and council meetings.

Erin gave shout out to Commissioner Jake Swanson for bringing a Q&A with Tempe City Council Candidates focusing on Sustainability to the Emerging Leader Program.

Eric mentioned the grants received for several of our programs due to the staff efforts. He pointed out the upcoming budget meetings and emphasized the importance of the commission throughout the budget process.

Vice Chair Jung reminded how the Sustainability Commissions was successful getting \$500,000 in permanent funding and secure sustainability staff and programs. He highlighted the importance and effectiveness of advocating at these budget meetings. He asked staff, in preparation for these upcoming meetings, to have a discussion about what is above the line and below the line.

**Agenda Item 8 – Sustainability and Resilience Office Updates and Housekeeping**

Eric gave kudos to the team for all the tree related grants. He also mentioned the changes to the commission composition language. The second hearing was on February 15, and it will take effect on March 15.

**Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Item**

Chair Jung requested:

Coordinating Solar Efforts during the fall.

Bring above the line conversation about Budget.

Character Area 6 Planning

Growing together Program Grant Funding – March

S&RO Grant Activity

Commissioner Randall would like the opportunity to meet with commissions from other cities. Commissioner Swanson is also interested in the same settings and would like to meet with other City of Tempe commissions.

Commissioner Paulat motions to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

**Motion: Commissioner Ben Paulat**

**Second:** Commissioner Swanson

**Decision:** Approved 8-0

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13pm.

Prepared by: Carla Sidi

Reviewed by: Brianne Fisher