

# PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

**March 13, 2025**

# Phoenix City Hall Online Using Webex

[illegible]

**1. Call to Order/Roll Call and Announcements:**

The meeting of the Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission (EQSC) was called to order with a roll call at 3:02 p.m. There were 9 members present at roll call.

Kelly Barr joined the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

Eric gave an announcement about his experience with scheduling bulk trash pick and gave kudos to the city for addressing trash and dust concerns in alleyways. He thanked the city for being responsive.

**2. Review and approval of February 13, 2025 Minutes**

Commissioner Groman made a motion to approve the February 13, 2025 minutes. Commissioner Knoop seconded the motion, and it carried 9-0.

**3. Public Comment**

No members of the public requested to speak.

**4. Food Action Plan Update**

Office of Environmental Programs Environmental Programs Manager, Rosanne Albright gave presentation about the work done by the OEP Food Systems team regarding the 2025 Food Action Plan, announced the upcoming 2030 Food Action Plan Update, and asked that EQSC to review and share the draft plan, when available, share the upcoming workshop details with their networks, and encouraged them to attend a workshop. She also announced that the Cultivating Food Resilience Documentary was premiered on March 5, 2025. This documentary is now available on the city's YouTube channel.

Commissioner Gorsegrner asked about how the one-mile limit is defined for food deserts. Ms. Albright responded that food deserts are defined by a one-mile radius surrounding any given point.

Chair Lobo asked if the GardenPhx Program participants are required to apply. Ms. Albright responded that the original program participants were selected from applications and the current cycle will do the same, however there will be fewer participants since there is less funding. The current application cycle is open right now. The upcoming cycle will be limited to 28 indoor garden participants for the current spring cohort and 30 outdoor garden participants during the fall cohort.

Commissioner Cazarez asked what type of indoor garden is being used. Ms. Albright responded that the indoor garden is intended for apartment living or houses without a large yard and is an indoor vertical garden. The program will provide garden instillation, 3 months of training, and 6 months of support.

Commissioner Groman thanked Ms. Albright presentation and applauded her and her team for all of their good work. He would be contacting Ms. Albright after the meeting with information on a community organization to connect with for the 2030 Food Action Plan outreach.

Commissioner Cazarez said that in his experience with community gardens at local schools they have been unable to implement using the crops grown at schools in their own cafeteria and asked if she knew any programs that did this. Ms. Albright said she knows of pilot programs occurred in 2022 or 20223 and is something that needs more work. She would follow up on this and connect later to see how they can collaborate to make this happen.

Commissioner Chapman talked about his involvement with Tiger Mountain Foundation and his work in increasing food security. He also thanked City of Phoenix Office of Environmental Programs for their work on the Food Systems Programs.

Nancy Allen encouraged members of the Commission to attend the upcoming workshops.

Chair Lobo asked about providing newer developers an incentive to create community garden within neighborhoods. Ms. Albright would like to start the conversations with developers about adding garden space within new developments. Incentives might not be needed, but many developers are not thinking about this yet. Commissioner Cazarez mentioned that Agritopia is an example of incorporating community gardens in residential communities.

Commissioner Gorsegrner asked about funding now that federal funding from COVID has ended. Ms. Albright confirmed that federal funding has ended. The current funding is coming from existing city budget and grants and they are actively looking for new funding sources and new grants.

Chair Lobo mentioned that she will be doing more engagement and will connect on future opportunities to involve the city.

## **5. Investor Owned Monopoly Utilities vs Community Choice Energy: 2 Models for Delivering Your Electricity**

Arizonans for Community Choice State Director Shelly Gordon gave a presentation about community choice aggregation (CCA) and how Arizona could incorporate more choices to provide residential energy. Benefits of a CCA are lower rates for customers, local energy choices, reinvesting energy costs to fund community energy programs, and increased use of renewable energy.

Commissioner Gorsegrner asked about how residents become a part of a CCA. Ms. Gordon clarified that all residents would be enrolled with the opportunity to opt-out to use existing utility providers, then a CCA would buy power on behalf of residents and deliver energy using existing grid infrastructure.

Commissioner Cazares asked how the CCA is managed. Ms. Gordon responded that many cities create an Energy Department or Joint Powers Authority with other cities to manage the CCA. CCA formation costs around \$20 million and is funded using bank loans or reimbursement from energy costs from users.

Commissioner Knoop asked if the CCA has the ability procure enough renewable energy for all customers and the potential for outages if the CCA didn't have access to enough energy for the residential load during the summertime. Ms. Gordon said that CCAs in other states are able to do this and this question is best answered by one of them. It could take time to reach the desired energy mix and energy brokers work to achieve the goals of the CCA. Legislation would need to be written to discuss what happens in cases of outages based on energy demand.

Commissioner Gorsegrner mentioned he had similar questions as Commissioner Knoop and CCAs seem promising, but this is a complex issue. He also stated he is struggling to see the difference between CCA and municipalization or deregulation and how the metering for CCAs work. Ms. Gordon stated CCAs is not deregulation. The city would take over supply, but everything else would be handled by the current utility companies.

Commissioner Cazarez asked if residents have to live within the municipality boundaries to be a part of the CCA. Ms. Gordon said that traditionally customers need to live within the CCA boundaries, but since this would be a new initiative in Arizona legislation could create different limitations.

Chair Lobo stated that she wanted to continue moving on to other agenda items and could invite Ms. Gordon to come back for more questions and discussion. Ms. Gordon agreed and stated it could be helpful to invite the head of a CCA to discuss their experience as well.

## **6. Potential Community Engagement Workshops**

Chair Lobo introduced wanting EQSC to engage and talked to Commissioner Knoop.

Commissioner Knoop discussed ideas for the EQSC to provide feedback on the Climate Action Plan (CAP) update related to electric vehicles and charging stations and potential workshop topics. She is working with Office of Sustainability's Electric Vehicle Program Manager Karen Apple as well. Ideas include engaging with the Interstate Renewable Energy Council for improving streamlined permitting for charging stations, updating the Transportation Electrification Action Plan (TEAP) with increased goals and prioritizing opportunities that support economic development, electric vehicle carsharing and ridesharing, and charging at parks, museums, and multifamily dense areas. She stated there is an increased need for more Level 2 and DC fast charging, especially for multifamily housing. She expressed concerns about the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Grant not being funded and creating a potential problem which will slow down progress.

Ms. Apple stated that the city is scheduling a CAP electric vehicle workshop on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. She also stated that the city will exceed electric vehicle goals stated in the TEAP for electric fleet vehicles and charging stations, The CFI funding would have helped, but if the city doesn't receive that funding they will need to find another way to keep on track. There are currently 361 charging stations and the goal is 500 by 2030. For electric fleet vehicles there are over 80 vehicles currently in the fleet and the goal is 200 by 20230. Ms. Apple is currently working on implementing low income rideshare options using electric vehicles and agreed that there are other programs that could be added to the TEAP.

Chair Lobo mentioned that Commissioner Knoop had previously talked about inviting subject matter experts and would like to invite them to an upcoming EQSC meeting. Commissioner Knoop agreed and gave suggestions of someone from SWITCH Energy or Kameale Terry from ChargerHelp. Commissioner Knoop suggested that the city could also invite them to speak at city workshops, if desired.

Chair Lobo asked that other Commissioners do a similar study that Commissioner Knoop for their area of expertise and come to a future meeting to discuss how to involve EQSC. Commissioners Cazares and Chapman volunteered.

## **7. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items**

There were no announcements nor review of future agenda items.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Katrina Gerster, Environmental Quality Specialist