

PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

April 10, 2025

Phoenix City Hall Online Using Webex

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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 3:04 p.m. There were 8 members present at roll call.

Commissioner Cazarez shared that there is upcoming tree planting in partnership with City of Phoenix at Cortez Park on April 25th. They will be planting 50 trees and the event is open to the public.

Office of Environmental Program Climate Program Manager, Joshua Uebelherr gave an update on the recent Climate Action Plan workshops and outreach events. He and Chair Lobo will be collaborating for a meeting on May 7th about the Climate Action Plan targeted to architects.

Vice Chair Torres announced that she got a new job at Local First Arizona as the Vice President of Resiliency Programs and will be working on climate, sustainability, food systems, agriculture, and tribal engagement. She also announced there is an Earth Day event on April 15th hosted by Earth Gives about climate action at the Changing Hands Bookstore. She invited Commissioners to attend.

2. Review and approval of March 13, 2025 Minutes

Commissioner Cazarez made a motion to approve the March 13, 2025 minutes. Commissioner Tetreault seconded the motion, and it carried 8-0.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public requested to speak.

4. EQSC Engagement for 2025 Climate Action Plan Update

Office of Environmental Program Climate Program Manager, Joshua Uebelherr shared information about the upcoming Climate Action Plan workshops for Energy and Extreme Heat, including that the details and registration links are available online. He invited Commissioners to sign up to attend.

Commissioner Cazarez reviewed the Extreme Heat chapters of the 2021 Climate Action Plan and 2024 Climate Action Plan Progress Report and provided a summary of the goals and strategies related to Extreme Heat and provided his comments. He noted there has been a recent increase in the number of days over 110 and an increasing need for support and programs. He stated that the City of Phoenix is leading the way for heat mitigation and planning. He noted that he thought the goals were good. He mentioned the progress to create the first publicly funded Heat Office, update to the ShadePhx Plan, updates to the Walkable Urban Code, and integration of heat resiliency into Transit Oriented Communities. He applauded the city on the ambitious goals and efforts to create meaningful solutions. He also mentioned that the heat equity gap is still wide, but was impressed by the City's extensive community-based partnerships for tree planting, green infrastructure, and addressing equitable shade access using the American Forest Tree Equity Tool. He recommended that the city evaluate cool Corridor progress and what support is needed to reach this goal. He also suggested the City could use more coordination between departments, specifically with Public Health, Emergency Management, and Homeless Solutions. Chair Lobo asked if Commissioner Cazares has shared the City's climate reports with his peers. He replied that he has not and was focused on reviewing the heat sections.

Office of Environmental Program Environmental Programs Manager, Beth Zima asked what coordination between departments needs to be improved. Commissioner Cazares replied that Parks and the Heat Office are working well together, however cooling stations and other solutions are less known by outsiders. Good work is being done by departments and Commissioner Cazarez wants to continue to have connectivity and coordination between efforts so there is not redundant work and highlight opportunities the City can do more work together.

Vice Chair Torres agrees with all that Commissioner Cazares said and would also like update from city on Cool corridors, specifically how the city has prioritized the selection of where Cool Corridors are installed. In previous conversations, the Streets Department committed to engaging the public, however she has not been aware of how this happened and would like to get an update from them. Chair Lobo agreed, mentioning she thought the Council selected the first locations, and recommended that the Streets Department be invited to an upcoming meeting to get clarification on public engagement for Cool Corridors.

Mr. Uebelherr noted that the city is currently working on how to define what a Cool Corridor is in order to better track the progress toward the goal of 100 corridors.

Commissioner Cazarez agreed that a definition is needed and he is happy to coordinate with City to help in the creation of the definition.

Vice Chair Torres noted that she wants to make sure Cool Corridors are being created intentionally and that the city doesn't count previously developed areas based on trees or whatever definition is created. Instead, the corridors need to be designed and created to meet the needs of the community.

Chair Lobo mentioned that she is working in Sunnyslope area and has encountered zoning barriers in creating Cool Corridors. Streets were annexed from the county which caused issues, and planting new trees in the right of way is difficult. There is a need for the Planning and Development Department to work with local businesses to eliminate barriers to success.

Commissioner Chapman provided his comments on the Climate Action Plan, specifically through the lens of sustainability and his experience working with TigerMountain Foundation for food systems. He agreed that equity in tree planting is needed given the size of Phoenix. He suggested that the City focuses on equity and focus to make sure their work touches the most vulnerable areas and also ties into the Food Plan. He also commented on the cost of action items and the need for buy-in from the community.

Vice Chair Torres asked if the city has hired an Equity Officer and why has this been delayed. This position is critical to the Climate Action Plan and the city has waited for this position to be filled to make decisions on equity, however work can't stop. She

questioned how long will the city wait to start working on equity until this position is filled. The work needs to start now.

Commissioner Chapman commented about EQSC and the need for strong individuals to lead the charge. When he began TigerMountain they didn't win a grant for the first few years but were able to pivot and find other avenues to get good work done.

Chair Lobo reviewed the City of Austin's Climate Action Plan and they have a citizens climate equity plan and recommend Phoenix do this as well. She said that hearing voices of the community and incorporating them into the CAP is very important.

Chair Lobo asked Commissioners Cazarez and Chapman to send their comments to OEP and asked other Commissioners to consider sharing their own review at a future meeting. She also asked how EQSC would like to interact with the Climate Action Plan Update, either by attending workshops or connecting with their networks. She noted that Commissioner Barr has committed to taking on energy at the next meeting.

Commissioner Allee Taylor offered to join the conversation on energy,

Chair Lobo asked for an update on the collaboration the city is working on with the School of Sustainability to engage youth. Mr. Uebelherr said this is in progress and the goal is to get feedback on the plan and promote engagement.

Chair Lobo asked what happened to the EQSC comments from the 2021 Climate Action Plan and if these were included. Mr. Uebelherr said the comments would be in the 2025 plan since 2024 was a progress report.

Vice Chair Torres wants to coordinate with tribal interactions for the Climate Action Plan but would need help with this from the local Native American organizations.

Ms. Zima noted that all engagement from EQSC needs to be provided with enough time for the City to include their feedback in the plan. The draft Climate Action Plan will be available this summer and the final plan will be sent for City Council approval in the fall and asked EQSC to keep this in mind and set up any planned workshops in the next month or two so the feedback can be incorporated into the plan. Mr. Uebelherr stated that he will present the draft plan to EQSC once it is available.

Chair Lobo is sending the Climate Action Plan to her healthcare contacts and is asking for comments so she can include these with her comments. She asked that other Commissioners do the same. Commissioner Chapman stated that he can send it out to food cooperative contacts.

5. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items

Chair Lobo asked Commissioners for ideas for future agenda items. It was previously mentioned that the Commission wants an update on Cool Corridors.

Commissioner Knoop suggested inviting an expert on multifamily charging for electric vehicle adoption will send contact information to OEP.

Commissioner Cazarez asked when the new Sustainable Officer will be starting and asked if she can attend. Chair Lobo stated the new Sustainability Officer is Carla De La Chapa and comes from San Antonio, Texas and she will be starting in late April. She will be attending a meeting in June or July to introduce herself and begin collaboration with the EQSC. Commissioner Tetreault stated that he knows her colleagues and they speak highly of her. He asked that Commissioners open their hearts and help empower her so she can be successful. Chair Lobo agreed and suggested Commissioners attend in person at the EQSC meeting for Ms. De La Chapa's introduction.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katrina Gerster, Environmental Quality Specialist