
Minutes

City Council's Community Sustainability Economic Sustainability Sub-Committee

February 11, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Community Sustainability – Economic Sustainability Sub-Committee held on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, 8:00 a.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Sub-Committee Members Present:

Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian

City Staff Present:

Lisa Collins, Deputy Development Services Manager and Committee Liaison

Mary Helen Giustizia, Solid Waste Svcs Dir

Connie Krossschell, City Clerk's Office

Lisa Lathrop, Administrative Asst. II/City of Tempe

Jyme Sue McLaren, Dep. Public Wks Mgr

Bonnie Richardson, Transportation

Mark Vinson, Principal Architect/City of Tempe

Guests Present:

Bonny Bentzin, ASU

Mona Chandra, RSP Architects

John Kane, Architekton

Catherine Mayorga, Tempe Chamber of Commerce

Councilmember Shekerjian called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances/Call to the Public

None.

Agenda Item 2 – Scope of Work: discuss and develop

Councilmember Shekerjian summarized that this subcommittee's job will be to address both environmental and organizational sustainability to create efficiencies and see the economic benefits of such. This will include some cost/benefit analysis to determine what to send on to Vice Mayor Ellis' Technology subcommittee for implementation.

Lisa Collins summarized that there are two other subcommittees: Code Sustainability and the Technology Sustainability. The issues will ebb and flow between the various subcommittees. For example, one issue that has been discussed by the Council at IRS is ERIC recycling. There has been discussion that it may begin at the Technology subcommittee to get it up and running, and then they will do an analysis to determine how to use it. The cost/benefit analysis that this subcommittee will focus on may come at the beginning of a project, or at the middle or end.

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that she has a passion for the recycling, composting and solar use and much of that falls under the Vice Mayor Ellis' technology piece, so the bulk of the work will be done under that subcommittee.

Mary Helen Giustizia added that it does have an impact economically as well. Hopefully, through the education piece that the ERIC system will provide, it will be possible to increase recyclables, thereby lowering landfill costs.

Ms. Collins added that through cost/benefit analysis, it will encourage the program to grow.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that in economic downturns, cost/benefit analysis and measurements are important to justify what we are doing. It is critical to have measurable goals. The education piece of recycling is important, but it needs to be measured.

- Recycling – Ms. Collins will work with the recycling group to develop ways in which that can be measured.
- Solar component – Develop ways to measure. Councilmember Shekerjian suggested finding ways to put solar units on all City buildings.
- Composting - Councilmember Shekerjian asked for a report on composting. A good cost/benefit analysis is currently being done. Tempe has a green waste system. The concept is that, rather than sending waste to the landfill, it will be composted by a local company with the compost returned to be used on the parks. It could be sold to residents or used for the athletic fields through a partnership with the schools. There is a cost benefit for less landfill and waste cost.

Mary Helen Giustizia reported that last year, staff began a comprehensive revision of the Solid Waste Ordinance and language is being modified in the Code that requires separation of green waste and defines clean green waste. She summarized a pilot green waste program:

- A crew would chip the green waste on site and take it to a staging area where the compost area would be set up.
- Staff has applied for a grant through the Pasqua Yaqui Native American Tribal government to offset cost.
- Staff is working with Kenneth Singh who owns a farm with a compost program at the 101 and McDowell. He handles all the green waste from ASU, manages the composting and sells the compost back to ASU for application on landscape projects. He has had a pilot program with the Parks Department on a field to increase the retention of water for decreased cost.
- Mr. Singh will assist in setting up the pilot program.
- Staff is also working with Water Utilities Department to recycle the sludge that currently goes to the landfill.
- Staff is also working with Department of Transportation to use some properties to set up a program. One property is large enough to set up demonstration gardens and a nursery for the parks.
- This program could reduce the landfill cost, but also put a valuable resource back into the community.

DIRECTION: Councilmember Shekerjian asked Ms. Giustizia to set up a tour of the compost farm for both her and Lisa Collins. She also asked staff to bring back a cost/benefit analysis and proposed next steps for this subcommittee and the Community Sustainability Committee to push forward on such a program.

Ms. Collins proposed that the subcommittee put together and preliminarily publish a scope of work when we return to the next Community Sustainability Committee.

Agenda Item 3 – Action Items – develop projects and actions plans related to the following subjects: Organizational Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability, Economic Sustainability

Councilmember Shekerjian summarized that there are three action items: (1) organizational sustainability; (2) environmental sustainability; and (3) economic sustainability.

DIRECTION: Councilmember Shekerjian asked staff to bring measurable goals for the action items to the next meeting.

Ms. Collins suggested establishing what the work item is and some of the tasks for the milestones and work with the staff members who are associated with those. Regarding organizational sustainability, it had been suggested to have someone on the leadership team take charge of that. She suggested also making sure there is a community member associated with them.

Councilmember Shekerjian added, regarding organizational sustainability, that TQM is merely one idea. She was not interested in pursuing anything that is not aligned with what the leadership team already wants to do. The idea is to encourage and support better sustainability within our organization. We have to have some way to set goals, assess them and see how we are doing. Performance management is a piece of this and there is a liability associated with not assessing people and what they are providing.

DIRECTION: Have someone from the leadership team speak on (a) what they are trying to do and (b) what this committee can do.

Ms. Collins added that Human Resources Manager Renie Broderick would also be a good choice.

Councilmember Shekerjian clarified that the action item should be stated broadly, such as organizational sustainability. She stated that the same kinds of things would apply to environmental sustainability: Solar is another piece in addition to recycling and composting.

Ms. Collins stated that she met with Don Hawkes, Water Utilities Department Manager, to talk about how they can work with this committee. He will come to the next meeting to discuss the cost/benefit analysis.

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that one of the things discussed in the Community Sustainability meeting was to see how we can use the Green Building Conference as a way to introduce international companies to what Tempe is doing. Economic sustainability is more than just the Green Building Conference.

Ms. Collins noted that Mark Vinson is present representing the Economic Development group. At the last Community Sustainability meeting, the Mayor asked to meet with Shelley Hearn and Kris Baxter to talk about how to get this ball rolling. She asked if Councilmember Shekerjian would like to be included.

Councilmember Shekerjian agreed.

Ms. Collins stated that staff would provide an update at the next meeting.

Councilmember Shekerjian asked if the Economic Development group would provide some other ideas about what it is currently doing or looking at to make the economy more sustainable. The Green Building Conference would generate some ideas. We have focused a lot on the environment because that is what people associate with sustainability, but we can't pay for those things through tax revenues, so economic sustainability is very important. What kinds of things are being put into place, and what kinds of measurable goals are there regarding how we will make the Tempe economy more sustainable?

Bonny Bentzin, Director of University Sustainability Practice at ASU, stated that her role is to integrate sustainability practices in their small community of 80,000 people.

Councilmember Shekerjian asked her to share where the City can connect with ASU to find ways to support what they are trying to do so that we can have a synergistic partnership.

Ms. Bentzin added that it is important to have that partnership. The two communities are embedded into each other.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that Ms. Bentzin probably has a lot of projects at ASU and has knowledge of things that are going on in terms of environmental sustainability, as well as economic sustainability.

Ms. Bentzin agreed that starting with simple goals are important. By achieving some simple goals, the platform for a five-year plan is laid, for example, zero waste, banning water bottles, plastic bags, etc.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that is why part of the things she has talked about are things that are already embedded in part of what the cities do. We have to have measurable things that we can report on to the Community Sustainability Committee and to the Council. In our goal-setting, we have to have some things that are smaller.

Ms. Bentzin added that it is also important to set a little bit of the impossible to get there. They did just that two years ago with their solar program.

Councilmember Shekerjian asked to hear more about the solar case because that is something this subcommittee and the Technology subcommittee would like to work on, for example, the idea of promoting not just solar businesses in Tempe but also the use of solar on City buildings. How can we incorporate that into what we are currently doing? One example is the library expansion. We have bond money to do that, and is there some way to incorporate solar off of that?

Ms. Bentzin added that on February 25th, as part of the kickoff of the Sustainable Cities Network, they will be doing a solar workshop. It will be a broad overview but will touch on the financing, the ASU project, and what they have learned. It is a network of the Valley cities. One city can do all the right things, but if the surrounding cities don't, then not much has been accomplished. The purpose is to bring together a network to communicate and share ideas and build a comprehensive strategy that is shared among all of the cities.

Bonnie Richardson noted that she is representing Tempe in that task force. This roll-out will invite all the municipalities. Many cities are creating policy, but they don't have the experience. This is just a start. They are looking at doing an inventory from different cities of what they are doing now and what they would like to do, so no city is re-inventing the wheel about a particular issue, but has shared knowledge. The idea is to have the city manager/manager level there, and to keep it out of the political realm for the kick-off.

Ms. Bentzin added that the hope is to build a bigger vision for the Valley, rather than just for each individual city. The goals can be looked at as a singular goal. They have been making an effort on the Tempe campus. They found inefficiencies or opportunities and maximized those opportunities. The Transportation Center is an example. It isn't just a transportation center, but a community center, a gathering place, a conduit.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that the City is looking at doing something similar with code enforcement by having the water meter readers report on code violations. They are out there anyway and many times code violations actually impede their ability to read the water meter. We are looking at ways to use people who are already in the field as eyes and ears. She would like to have a meeting with ASU to see how they are doing that.

John Kane, Architekton, one of the architects on the Transportation Center, stated that they learned a lot in terms of the process of going through a public building and making it as green as possible. There are disconnects standing in the way in terms of how we might be able to solve issues relative to the Codes. In terms of the capital budgets, there

is a disconnect between long term operation and maintenance. The cities are the best organizations to think about their operations and maintenance costs. If they can put a little more up front, they won't fight battles later on in terms of the things that get value-engineered out. How do we get those groups together so that we can save the City money in the long term?

Councilmember Shekerjian asked that when we build buildings, what are we doing in looking at the long term operations and sustainability costs of those buildings? Are we cutting things out that will affect our cost in the long run?

Ms. Collins stated that the Code Sustainability Subcommittee will be looking at that for City-owned buildings and for other things as well that really don't meet the ideal of sustainability. See how we can make changes to those, and then go beyond that to State codes that maybe don't provide the cities the flexibility that they need. Again, it comes back to this subcommittee to look at some of those cost/benefit analyses to give the Code subcommittee the ability to move forward. This subcommittee gives each of the other subcommittees the ability to do it. When the committees and subcommittees present at the IRS, the overarching committee would have a big goal and these would be subsets of that. She will be discussing this with the Mayor.

Councilmember Shekerjian summarized that maybe it means that sometimes we choose not to build right away if we can't afford to have those things included.

Ms. Collins added that it is important to think ahead.

Ms. Richardson stated that a post mortem on the sustainable practices will be done on the Transportation Center. One of the benefits of the LEED certification is the requirement to meet metrics and have third party verification. That's where numbers that work are developed. It will be a year or two out before real data is available, but staff is monitoring how much potable water is being reduced, energy, and recycling is occurring in all the different sustainable strategies put in the building and staff can report back on what are the big savers or which ones didn't work as well. That will occur over time. Without a strong person representing sustainable interests in the City, it is very difficult to get everyone to look at the whole, not just their individual piece. The cities that have been successful have actually had a sustainability department or manager to be able to take responsibility for and educate.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that due to the economic constraints, it would not be possible to have a sustainability department or manager. Because there is a great deal of support on Council for sustainable practices, however, we could then get staff already in place to start to think about these things.

Catherine Mayorga stated that the Chamber of Commerce is interested in seeing what they can do to partner with the City to get the message out.

Agenda Item 5 – Future Meeting Dates

Ms. Collins stated that all four parts to the Community Sustainability Committee can operate differently. We don't know yet how often the Technology and Code subcommittees will meet. The overarching committee was scheduled initially to meet quarterly, then every other month, and since the subcommittees were formed, the Mayor felt the subcommittees should meet as needed. That might change over time. Initially, they should meet more often in order to get the action plans of the subcommittees put together so it can be presented to Council. She asked how often this subcommittee should meet.

Councilmember Shekerjian asked when the next Community Sustainability meeting will be.

Ms. Collins responded that it is scheduled on March 18th.

Councilmember Shekerjian felt that the subcommittee should meet a minimum of one more time before the next Community Sustainability meets.

Ms. Collins suggested March 11th.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that in the meantime, she would like to meet with each subcommittee member individually to discuss where we are going with this subcommittee. She will have her assistant call everyone to set up a time to visit about the Community Sustainability Committee as a whole, as well as the specific economic piece.

Agenda Item 4 – Future Agenda Items

Next meeting will be on March 11th at 8 a.m.

- Update from Economic Development on economic sustainability (what Tempe is doing on this issue)
- Cost/benefit analysis on composting
- Organizational sustainability status update from the City Manager or Human Resources Manager

Agenda Item 6 - Announcements

None.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Lisa Collins

Jan Hort, City Clerk