

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 25, 2019
5:00 P.M.
THIRD FLOOR, PUBLIC WORKS CONFERENCE ROOM
CITY HALL

Committee Members Present: Sara Pesek (Chair), Leah Lavin, Rajesh Kapileshwari, Denise Terry

Committee Members Absent: Angela Young, Amber Baker, Allison Bowling, Keyra Williams, Dane Kuppinger, Stephanie Friede, Lee Stackhouse

Attendance of City Staff: Director of Operations Johnnie Taylor, Jennifer Chrysson, Helen Peplowski

MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sara Pesek at 5:07 p.m.

Roll call was taken.

Helen Peplowski introduced the topic of the 100% Clean Renewable Energy Resolution. She compared the original submission from the Sierra Club and the version that was edited by the Office of Sustainability to show the changes made. She explained the reasoning behind the changes were based on analysis done by the energy manager and to make the goals more feasible to secure council support.

Sara asked about why the specific reduction goals and years associated with them were removed (referencing the 80% clean renewable energy by 2030 and 100% by 2050). Helen emphasized that especially the goal of going 80% clean and renewable energy by 2030, being only 10 years away, was not a feasible goal for the city government to be able to accomplish, even within its own operations. Helen also explained that emissions from the operations of the various Utilities Department facilities account for a large portion of overall emissions, and the reduction goal for them would likely be even more difficult since they have millions of dollars' worth of projects planned already and they are more directly controlled by the City/County Utilities Commission.

Sara asked if it was a "chicken or the egg" situation referring to whether the funding is lacking due to slow progress or whether there is and will be little to no progress due to the lack of funding. Helen explained that while the funding is related to the slower progress, it isn't just a matter of securing funding for all of these sustainability projects. To achieve a significant reduction in emissions, the energy manager for the city has estimated it would cost the government around \$50 million. This type of funding would mean asking council to take funding away from other priorities and projects like infrastructure and economic development and put

that into achieving these goals. Helen said that the high amount of funding needed is therefore beyond just asking council for \$50 million more in the budget.

Rajesh commented on wanting to still include more details in the resolution, like specific numbers for the goals. Helen explained that she had forgot to mention the sustainability plan she put together was to be submitted with the resolution and that is where the specific numbers were.

Johnnie Taylor, Director of Operations, stated that while he understands the committee wants to encourage more action from council and push them to set and achieve lofty goals, he first would like the committee to take advantage of their position to first work on building support through more reasonable plans. He said once the committee is able to build support and secure more buy-in, then they can start recommending gradually more ambitious projects. He emphasized that this is how council and city management is more likely to respond positively to committee recommendations.

Rajesh continued that he thought it might be a good idea to start the resolution with asking the Mayor and City Council to recommit to goals that had been committed to several years ago through the Climate Mayor's Agreement and We Are Still In. What the city signed onto by supporting these initiatives are the goals from the Paris Climate Accords and the specifics from those accords are at minimum what the city should consider as their goals.

Rajesh also wanted to see more about energy efficiency in the resolution as a strategy towards achieving the reduction goals. It was briefly discussed that energy efficiency is a good low-hanging fruit option to start with to achieve progress towards reducing emissions.

Denise Terry brought up the importance of energy efficiency for lower income residents in terms of improving equity. She mentioned that for residents in her respective ward in the city, energy bills can be a financial burden in older houses that lack many types of energy efficiency upgrades, like sufficient insulation or new windows. She mentioned an interest in seeing more efforts to help weatherize homes for lower income homeowners, but beyond what programs like Duke Energy or Piedmont Triad Regional Council Weatherization can provide. This might include training people to do this work for others, and overall assist in creating a more equitable city.

Denise and Rajesh discussed wanting to eventually create programming to support this idea as it would be valuable to many people in the city.

Helen explained that related to the resolution, the committee is expected to submit it first to the Community Development, Housing & General Government Committee (what is referred to as General Government Committee). The General Government committee is one of four council committees that reviews items like this proposed resolution before sending it to a full City Council Meeting. They meet once a month on the 2nd Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. in City Hall.

There was a discussion among those present to further explain what they might expect from the committee, including which council members were on it and whether there was time to have a presentation to explain the resolution. Jennifer Chrysson added that due to the length of the agendas for these meetings, if there were a presentation, it would need to be limited to a

maximum of ten minutes, including time for questions to be asked by the council members. She suggested members of the Community Sustainability Program Committee could watch the videos from previous meetings of the General Government Committee if they needed to further understand the format of the meetings.

Leah Lavin added that the council members who sit on the General Government Committee are Council Members Denise Adams, Annette Scippio, Dan Besse and Robert Clark.

Johnnie Taylor, Director of Operations, explained that this resolution won't be able to be added to the agenda for the March General Government Committee meeting, but that it should be ready for the April agenda. The meeting in April will take place on Tuesday, April 14.

Helen mentioned that with council committees, a variety of perspectives and priorities play a part in council decisions, and if a presentation were to accompany the resolution, whoever gave it would need to remember that not everyone has the same understanding of sustainable and environmental ideas as those on the sustainability committee.

Jennifer gave Bee City USA updates about the event taking place at the Southside Branch Library during Forsyth Creek Week to educate kids about bees.

Helen gave Office of Sustainability updates. She mentioned the upcoming Great American Cleanup event as part of Forsyth Creek Week coordinated by Keep Winston-Salem Beautiful taking place on April 4. She also shared that she applied for a grant to support an extensive litter campaign effort through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Finally, she disclosed that the city was not being awarded the LEED for Cities grant but still having an opportunity to complete the program independently or as part of another cohort of former STAR Communities.

Leah motioned to adjourn, Rajesh seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:07.