



Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting – August 1, 2023

Committee Members in Attendance: Kendra Smith – Chair, Janet Alderton, Vince Dauciunas, Luke Fincher, Chris Greacen, Adrian Kilpatrick, Jay Kimball, Renee Koplan, Barbara Marrett, Michael Shanks, Jerry Whitfield

Committee Liaisons in Attendance: Paul Andersson, Lynn Bahrych, Steve Bernheim, Sandy Bishop, Heather Dew Oaksen, Marilyn O'Connor

Ex-officio and County Staff: Cindy Wolf, Angela Broderick, Debbie Boyer

Members of the public/guests: Barbara Pesola, James McCubbin, Nancy Devaux

Committee Members absent: None

Convene meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kendra Smith at 8:55am. After she confirmed that a quorum was present, Kendra reminded the Committee that we would no longer be reciting the Coast Salish Acknowledgement at each meeting as we discussed at the last meeting.

Public Comment

James McCubbin commented that the announcement for this meeting appeared not to have been posted on the County website in a timely manner as required. Kendra noted that the County has changed its agenda platform and was experiencing some glitches that the County IT department is working on fixing. The agenda was posted on time but the navigational links were not all functional.

Angela read a letter (attached) submitted by Bill Appel expressing his opinions and suggestions for the committee in regard to transportation.

Business Operations

- Approve Agenda – The Agenda was approved as presented and reviewed.
- **MOTION: Approve May 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes – Adrian moved, and Chris seconded, to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2023 meeting as presented and the motion passed.**
- Elections: Kendra opened the floor for nominations for Committee Chair. Lynn nominated Jerry for Chair and Jay nominated Vince for Chair. Each nominee was given a chance to speak. Paper ballots were distributed, and Committee members voted. Vince was elected Committee Chair and he accepted the position.

Document Review

SJI Stewardship Guides

Angela shared the history of the Stewardship Guides and cup coasters that were placed at each place setting.

The Guides were developed in partnership with the Visitor's Bureau in 2018 and updated again in 2022. She encouraged the members present to take the guide and coasters with them.

SJI Destination Management Plan

Angela gave an update on the Sustainable Tourism Plan which will now be called the "Destination Management Plan". She and Kendra will present the preliminary draft to Council in mid-August, followed by a public input time. The tribes will be consulted in the fall and winter this year, followed by final adoption expected sometime in 2024.

Commerce Climate Element Guidance

Angela shared the newly released preliminary Climate Element Planning Guidance document provided by the Washington State Department of Commerce. The 153-page document was available to the Committee prior to the meeting, and they reviewed the highlights, including the new mandate requiring a Climate Element for Comprehensive Plans which requires a GHG emissions reduction sub-element and a resilience sub-element. Angela noted that San Juan County is not required to adopt a full Climate Element due to our size, but the resilience sub-element will be required with our next update in 2025. She reviewed the potential pathways that Commerce has laid out to create both sub-elements.

Greenhouse Gas Report

Angela shared the SJC Community and County Operations Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Inventory report. She reviewed the overall emissions estimate and top emissions categories (transportation, land use, and building energy). She highlighted that tree loss does not account for sequestration benefits. She also clarified that with wood burning emissions, the anthropogenic emissions come from human production (burning wood) then you add in biogenic emissions – the carbon dioxide released when you burn the wood – to create the overall effect of wood burning for heat.

The Committee discussed wood burning emissions, home heating, and forest management. Discussion highlights:

- worth noting that we need to look at the total magnitude of the two combined
- timescales for the different uses of lumber need to be accounted for as well
- biochar should be a part of this conversation and strategy
- risk associated with small, spindly trees in islands forests, Coast Salish traditions of forest management noted which have not been followed in recent times, and recommendation to work with forestry experts to help expand on the nuance of forest management beyond just the emissions metric
- excess stock in forests is standing available energy; a biochar pellet stove is one way to remove this risky stock out of our forest and turn it into clean energy
- committee members felt that the report lacked the forestry component as our Islands have a lot of small trees and underbrush that should be addressed.

Angela asked the Committee if they would recommend the report to the County Council and noted that the outreach to the community will be key to help expand on this data, which the committee can help with.

MOTION: Chris moved to forward the GHG Report to the County Council accompanied by a statement that the Committee feels the report lacks sufficient nuance in certain elements, particularly around forestry management and wildfire risk. Vince seconded the motion. During discussion, it was agreed that the statement would be drafted and shared with the Committee for input. The motion passed unanimously.

Morning break

Forming a Strategy

Vince shared a presentation of his thoughts regarding next steps. It included an overview of major Washington State climate legislation and the corresponding goals, total state GHG emissions in reference to reduction goals, top emitters in the state and some analysis of the feasibility of the state meeting that goal.

He summarized the top five GHG contributors in San Juan County from the GHG Inventory, which are responsible for 76% of total emissions. He offered his suggestions for pathways to reduce GHG emissions in the County based on the top emitters. He included recommendations such as increasing budget funding for climate planning and grant applications, considering “low hanging fruit” actions, synergistic actions and working with allies Whatcom and Skagit Counties. He talked about understanding the “wicked problem” on a local level and how that informs communications.

Following the presentation, Kendra discussed revisiting the draft action table and noting some additions from holes that have emerged. The Committee gave feedback and discussed possible strategies. Discussion highlights:

- committee recommendations valuable for County leadership for budget and policy priorities
- awareness shift is necessary for the public
- voluntary and policy approaches are both necessary and planning should identify what makes sense where
- committee’s support of other orgs already working on these issues is important
- need to recognize what we can control/impact and what is fundable
- concern raised about climate crisis and the need for immediate action along with planning process
- need to identify what is at risk in our county (dollar value ~ 6-7 billion infrastructure), cost to protect it
- look at existing models rather than reinvent the wheel
- “rubber hits the road” beyond plans, what goes in CIP and what leadership directs staff to work on
- action plan could be simpler and more action oriented was favored by many; Vince’s presentation offered possible start point.
- one wildfire could surpass all other emissions captured, forest health is critical work area
- suggestion to develop a wood processing industry in partnership with neighboring counties that can gather the overstock in forest (wildfire fuel) and make it into building products and waste can be made into pellets (Jerry volunteered his technical expertise and leadership)
- possibility of county serving as pilot location for electric boating program
- it’s important to help Islanders contextualize/visualize the issues and possible solutions. Community based social marketing shows that social/peer influence, incentives, reducing barriers, and social prompts are most effective at changing behaviors.

Lunch break

Breakout Sessions

After a networking lunch, votes were tallied and Vince Dauciunas was selected as new committee chair.

The Committee broke out into working groups based on updated prioritization from GHG inventory: Transportation, Building and Grounds, Solid Waste, Protect and Restore Nature, Education. Food & Agriculture scored low on emissions but still an important resiliency element. Groups were asked to identify top targets in their category and offer updated verbiage as needed.

After the group discussions, Vince asked for a quick summary from each of the groups and requested groups put their thoughts and top 2-3 priorities together in an e-mail to him and he would help incorporate them into the presentation to Council later this month.

Adjournment

Vince asked the Committee to share their ideas for the agenda so that the Committee can be as productive as possible. Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:09pm.

The next meeting will be held on September 28, 2023, at 5:30pm.