

SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

July 15, 2020

This Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting was held remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic

The July 15, 2020 meeting of the Longmont Sustainability Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Pro-Tem Kay Vollmayer at 3:33 pm via remote Zoom meeting connection.

1. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present at roll call: Cody Flagg, Kay Vollmayer, Mary Lin, and Jim Metcalf

Board Members Excused: Kate Collardson and Violeta Manoukian

City Staff Members Present: Lisa Knoblauch, Annie Noble, Francie Jaffe, Berenice Garcia Tellez, Tim Ellis, and Heather McIntyre

Council Liaison Present: Polly Christensen

2. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

There was a quorum present with four board members in attendance.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 17, 2020

Board member Metcalf moved, seconded by Board member Flagg, to approve the June 17, 2020 minutes. The motion carried 4-0.

4. PUBLIC INVITED TO BE HEARD

None.

5. AGENDA REVISIONS AND SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS

None.

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Review and Discuss Climate Action Task Force Recommendations

Staff member Knoblauch introduced the Climate Action Task Force (CATF) Report and gave a broad overview of the report before discussing each topic area in detail. The full report of recommendations covers six topic areas including Adaptation & Resiliency, Building Energy Use, Education & Outreach, Land Use & Waste Management, Renewable Energy, and Transportation. The recommendations for these six topics were developed with an integrated emphasis on equity in order to include all residents in addressing climate change in our community.

The CATF recommendations were initially presented to City Council over two separate meetings, the June 30, 2020 Regular Session and the July 7, 2020 Study Session.

Presentations of the CATF Report were scheduled to go to relevant advisory boards for input and feedback at their upcoming July or August 2020 meetings. This information would be compiled and presented to City Council later in August for their consideration along with the Task Force's recommendations.

Staff member Knoblauch reviewed each topic area in detail with the Board and gave them opportunity to provide their specific support, concerns, and thoughts in response to each of the CATF recommendations. A summary of discussion for each category is below.

Adaptation & Resiliency:

The Climate Action Task Force identified adaptation and resilience as key components in preparing the community for the impacts of climate change. As such, they developed three recommendations for Council under this category, which address concerns about public health, water conservation, and flooding mitigation and preparedness education.

The Board was generally in support of the recommendation regarding public health to launch a coalition to create a climate adaptation and health plan by January 2022. Board member Lin stated, though, that she would like to see some examples of other municipalities that have similar goals with evidence of how they are attaining those goals to determine if the CATF recommendations are reasonable.

Regarding the water conservation recommendation from the CATF to reduce overall water consumption by 35-40% below a 2019 baseline by 2025, the Board was concerned that it was arbitrary, unrealistic, and perhaps even unattainable in such a short amount of time. Board members agreed that water conservation and reduced consumption is a plausible goal, however, stated that it would be difficult to create any workable strategies for such a short timeline that would be well accepted or sustainable. Board members Lin and Vollmayer suggested a need for a grey water option as a possible means to contribute to an overall reduction in water consumption.

The Board had mixed feedback about the CATF's recommendation on enhancing education concerning the City's flood mitigation and preparedness through a public awareness campaign. Overall, they were hesitant to support this recommendation as they consider it a lesser priority than other foci related to climate change.

Building Energy Use:

Recommendations proposed by the Climate Action Task Force regarding building energy use address concerns regarding building codes, electrification, commercial building benchmarking, commercial efficiency and rebates, increasing use of residential efficiency works programs, expanding low-income residential energy efficiency programs, and establishing a climate action fund program and staff.

Staff member Knoblauch explained that the City of Longmont does a good job of adopting and implementing the most recent building codes, but the CATF's recommendation to Council is to expand that adoption to include codes related to solar-ready provisions, EnergyStar rated appliances, and electric heaters and hot water

heaters. Board members Metcalf and Vollmayer expressed concerns about full-board electric energy heating regulations due to Colorado's geographical climate, particularly in the winter, as well as currently insufficient infrastructure sources to provide consistently reliable electric energy for heating. Board member Metcalf suggested that the City could better save on greenhouse gas emissions through other avenues that would also be more cost efficient. Board member Vollmayer added that even though building codes advance sustainability, they also put an additional cost burden on builders and/or homeowners replacing those appliances who may not be able to afford the extra cost for replacement. Board member Lin expressed additional concerns about current environmental sources for the City's electric power supply, as well as the financial burden that would be placed on residents and small business owners, in particular.

Board members generally supported the recommendation to create an electrification feasibility committee that would oversee an 18-month effort to research and develop a phased electrification plan. Board member Lin again expressed her concerns about complete electrification with the current infrastructure's dependence on coal and the lack of renewable energy sources for power generation. Board member Metcalf added that any discussion on a plan for electrification should be within the context of the City's existing plan for reaching carbon-neutrality by 2030, which we are already ahead of schedule on attaining. Staff member Knoblauch confirmed that the City of Longmont is currently around 50% in reaching that goal.

The CATF recommendations of implementing a commercial building energy-efficiency benchmarking program and expanding commercial and residential efficiency rebate programs were well supported by the Board. Board member Flagg noted that he would like to see even greater targets than those presented in the recommendation to increase residential Efficiency Works™ program utilization. The Board also supported expanding the low-income residential efficiency program and establishing a fund to assist low-to-middle income residential and commercial building owners in the transition to renewable energy, though Board member Lin stated concerns about equity issues related to mandating electrification.

Education & Outreach:

The Climate Action Task Force identified various avenues for education and outreach and included recommendations to publicize and promote greater climate awareness in the community. Their recommendations included developing a comprehensive workforce plan, a "Big Picture" climate lecture series, a climate change article series, enhancing the "Front Range Rising" exhibit at the Longmont Museum to incorporate additional sustainability insights, and establishing a peer-to-peer Community Sustainability Liaison program.

Board members supported the recommendation to develop a comprehensive workforce green jobs training program to diversify skills in the workforce, ensuring capacity to help the City meet its climate action goals by 2023.

Concerning the CATF recommendation to develop a climate lecture series spanning from early 2021 until at least 2025, Board member Flagg voiced concerns that this and

the next few educational series recommendations seem to be virtue-signaling to target audiences who are already involved in the climate action conversation; he suggested that efforts could be spent elsewhere to broaden the audience. Board member Lin agreed and suggested, too, that these series should incorporate a broader focus than carbon alone. Board member Metcalf noted that he believes the target audience for these types of series is young people, and therefore these series have the potential to be highly valuable in contributing to the climate discussion and educating them about future opportunities in the green jobs fields.

Board members' thoughts on the climate change article series mirrored those expressed in the recommendation above. Enhancing the current "Front Range Rising" exhibit at the Longmont Museum to incorporate additional insights toward climate change and sustainability, however, was supported by all as it is already proving to be well received in the community, particularly with elementary-aged children.

The CATF's recommendation for establishing a Community Sustainability Liaison program was generally supported by the Board. Board member Metcalf expressed that he liked the idea of the program, but had concerns that the amount of time it would take to create and sustain it might outweigh its reach in the number of people it impacts.

Land Use & Waste Management:

Land Use and Waste Management recommendations from the Climate Action Task Force focus on strategies they believe would offer key solutions for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, including extending agricultural zoning, increasing participation in residential and commercial composting, and implementing pay-to-park requirements in Longmont's downtown. It was noted that the recommendations were written by the CATF before the COVID-19 pandemic and that the last recommendation regarding pay-to-park requirements would not be implemented until after the pandemic's effects subsided.

Council member Christensen expressed concerns about the feasibility of all three of these recommendations.

Board members agreed that extending agricultural zoning to allow for residential agriculture beyond the current code's provisions would do little to address hunger challenges due to property sizes. They noted that while everyone growing their own food is a nice idea, the amount of gardening and water it would take for people to feed their own households would be far greater than the yield they would receive. It was suggested that supporting and encouraging the local farms that we already have would be a more effective means to this end.

Concerning increasing participation in commercial and residential composting, the Board had mixed reviews. Board member Vollmayer stated that she was in favor of the recommendation, but would like to see more done to take steps toward better options for commercial recycling before moving toward commercial composting.

The Board was not supportive of the recommendation to implement pay-to-park requirements in the downtown area for Longmont. Board member Lin suggested that

having municipal parking places for employees downtown would go a long way in freeing up available parking for those frequenting businesses in the area.

Renewable Energy:

Renewable Energy recommendations from the CATF include accelerating installation of smart meters, promoting home energy management systems (HEMS), providing options and incentives for participating in an energy savings demand response program, providing carbon-intensity signaling protocols, and creating an inventory of managed Distributed Energy Resources.

The Board generally favored accelerating the installation of smart meters. Board member Lin expressed significant concerns regarding smart meter installs unless there is a hard-wired option.

Regarding the recommendations for HEMS and an energy savings program, Board members stated that these would require a significant cost investment for most residents with little payoff in increasing energy efficiency. It was suggested that promoting the purchase of better insulation alternatives and energy-efficient windows in people's homes would be better solutions to meet the goal of those recommendations.

The Board fully supported the Carbon-Intensity Signaling Protocols recommendation proposed by the CATF, as they believe providing real-time information on the intensity of power production is a simple way for residents to be aware of and learn about their energy consumption. Similarly, they supported the recommendation for a pilot program and 10-year development plan for creating an inventory of managed Distributed Energy Resources.

Transportation:

The recommendations included in the CATF report on the topic of transportation include increasing effectiveness of the public transit system, installing additional electric vehicle charging infrastructure, creating a plan for safe and connected bikeways through Longmont, and promoting an education campaign on how to reduce commuting congestion in peak periods through alternative work schedules. Staff member Knoblauch noted that the last recommendation was formulated prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Board members fully supported the CATF recommendation to expand public transit coverage and availability by developing and implementing a checkpoint bus service line with a lower cost-per-rider than FlexRide by 2025.

Regarding the recommendation to install 20 new electric-vehicle charging stations in preferred Downtown Longmont parking lots in the next ten years, the Board had mixed reviews. Board member Vollmayer questioned whether the market demand for charging stations was significant enough to warrant this as a current priority. Additionally, Council member Christensen expressed concerns about the cost investment and longevity of the stations, as well as the equity component of who would be served by installing them. Board members Lin and Vollmayer echoed her concerns.

The Board supported the recommendation for creating a plan for safe, complete, and connected bikeways in Longmont. Board member Metcalf added that he would like to see this recommendation expanded to include connections that would be safe and away from cars for all non-car transportation (i.e. wheelchair accessible, walking, etc.).

There was also full support for the CATF recommendation related to conducting an educational campaign for employers and employees about ways to reduce commuting congestion in peak periods through alternative work schedules. Board members restated that this has already been happening since the COVID-19 pandemic began and added their observation of environmental benefits from it in Longmont in the spring.

Just Transition Plan Recommendations:

Staff member Francie Jaffe reviewed the purpose of the Just Transition Plan Committee (JTPC), which was formulated prior to Council's resolution to create the Climate Action Task Force. The JTPC was created to help with achieving Longmont's overall equitable climate action.

Staff member Jaffe added that the recommendations provided by the JTPC were specifically designed to address the process of "how" any CATF recommendation approved by City Council can be achieved with equity as a key component. They are framed as questions to consider when evaluating the CATF recommendations and include applying an equity assessment to climate action and focusing on frontline communities most impacted by climate change. Because discussion with City Council continues as to whether these recommendations will be considered along with those of the Climate Action Task Force, Staff member Jaffe asked the Board for high-level comments on the Just Transition Plan Committee's recommendations.

Board member Metcalf stated his support for these recommendations, but asked who would be asking the assessment questions and if members of the community would be involved to ensure they were asked and answered appropriately. Staff member Knoblauch reiterated that staff is still awaiting formal direction from City Council on this process, but that discussion with them had begun about the possibility of continuing to work with the JTPC for applying the equity lens. Board member Metcalf stated that he would like to see the Just Transition Plan Committee's continued involvement, noting that they would be a valuable voice to climate change conversations.

Board Feedback:

Staff member Knoblauch asked Board members for their feedback regarding the CATF recommendation to assign oversight of implementation for the Climate Action Task Force recommendations to the Sustainability Advisory Board. All members supported this recommendation. They also supported continuing with community engagement, though suggested that efforts should be strategically focused to increase effectiveness.

Board member Metcalf stated that the Just Transition Plan is the reason Longmont's Sustainability efforts are currently working. He added that it has been the missing component in conversations about conservation and environmentalism in the past and is key to its success.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None

9. ITEMS FROM STAFF

Staff member Knoblauch reported to the Board that the next Longmont Sustainability Coalition is scheduled for Wednesday, August 12, 2020. They will be discussing the Climate Action Task Force recommendations at that meeting as well.

10. ITEMS FROM BOARD

None

11. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL LIAISON

Council Liaison Christensen encouraged the Board in their willingness to oversee accountability for the implementation of any CATF recommendations once they are approved by Council.

11. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Pro-Tem Vollmayer at 5:05 pm.

The next regular meeting of the Longmont Sustainability Advisory Board is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19, 2020, at 3:30 pm. The location will be determined by the pandemic guidelines at that time.

Kay Vollmayer, Chair Pro-Tem

Date

Heather McIntyre, Recording Secretary

Date