



Minutes City Council's Community Sustainability Committee December 10, 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Community Sustainability Committee held on Wednesday, December 10, 2008, 7:30 a.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Mayor Hugh Hallman
Vice Mayor Shana Ellis
Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian
Councilmember Corey Woods

City Staff Present:

Lisa Collins, Deputy Development Services Manager and Committee Liaison
Mike Crusa, Mayor's Chief of Staff/City of Tempe
Molly Enright, Mayor's Aid/City of Tempe
Mary Helen Giustizia, Solid Waste Supervisor/City of Tempe
Shelley Hearn, Community Relations Manager/City of Tempe
Lisa Lathrop, Administrative Asst. II/City of Tempe
Mark Vinson, Principal Architect/City of Tempe
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Programs Director/City of Tempe

Guests Present:

Anne Ellis, ASU
John Kane, Architekton
Kirby Spitler, Citizen
Aaron Swift, Student
Denise van den Bossche, US Green Building Council, AZ Chapter

Mayor Hallman called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances/Call to the Public

None.

Agenda Item 2 – Discussion of Work Plan

Mayor Hallman summarized that ASU's Global Institute of Sustainability also has put together a working group of cities, "Sustainable Cities Network Coalition", to begin identifying best practices that could improve sustainability. That group has tried to create a brainstorming session to determine what they thought they could accomplish for a group of cities that could then be advanced through organizations such as Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG). MAG has now adopted, through its executive committee and the council, the notion that it will rely on this

effort to create best practices and information that could be implemented throughout the MAG cities. Their focus for this group, and given the geographic scope, has most to do with information sharing at this stage. While that is important, his goal with this committee, which is a committee for the community of Tempe, is to truly make Tempe a sustainable community. In her report, Lisa Collins used three touchstones: (1) environmentally, (2) economically, and (3) culturally.

Mayor Hallman added that this should be a brainstorming session which will probably go from the fairly discrete items that might be a specific task, up to very big goals under which many of these items might be hung. Agenda Item #4, creation of ad-hoc committees, is intended to be an open process, where maybe one councilmember and members of the community decide to launch a specific effort and investigate a specific area, for example, building standards. What could we be doing, what could we pull from, how do we adopt for Tempe the right kinds of building codes that would at least offer the opportunity to create increasingly sustainable buildings. It took four years to get a code adopted that would allow us to have straw-bale construction. The goal here is to reduce some of those kinds of hurdles, and if it makes sense and other people have adopted it, in order to see if we can get the City in a position where we can make available those kinds of opportunities.

Committee members introduced themselves:

Vice Mayor Ellis stated that she is the former Chair of last year's subcommittee that dealt with sustainability which was somewhat buried in the Transportation, Housing and Environment Committee. Each month, they could only spend a small amount of meeting time on sustainability. Chris Anaradian had put a lot of work into creating a compendium of different environmental practices that each department was doing. She hoped that this committee could continue along those lines. There were many good ideas generated and many of those ideas were not costly, but were a different way to get people thinking.

Councilmember Woods stated that he works for the American Lung Association, as well as the Valley of the Sun Clean Cities Coalition. He has specific interests in energy efficiency and alternative fuel vehicles, as well as anything that helps to improve overall air quality.

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that she is married to an engineer who is an efficiency expert and a lot of sustainability is about being efficient with what we have. We have a culture that is very ready for us to launch different types of initiatives in terms of sustainability. Those topics and those ways of looking at spending taxpayer dollars are the most respectful way of using those dollars. An important piece to include is the youth education component. We must start raising up our youth to understand that this is part of our culture. She and Vice Mayor Ellis worked with Greg Stanton of the City of Phoenix last year to expand awareness of "Bag Central Station" which is a program to recycle grocery bags and encourages the use of cloth bags. She saw how ready Tempe is for these kinds of issues.

Aaron Swift stated that he is a community member and ASU student, and he just wants to get involved.

Kirby Spitler is an architect in Phoenix and a Tempe resident. He chairs the advocacy committee of the U. S. Green Building Council, and has done a number of green buildings. Through those efforts, he has a lot of knowledge to bring to the committee.

Denise van den Bossche is the incoming Vice-Chair of the U. S. Green Building Council, and she has worked closely with Mr. Spitler.

Lisa Collins is the Deputy Manager of the Development Services Department. She will serve as a liaison to help in developing ideas, to keep everyone informed, and to move ideas forward.

Lisa Lathrop works for Lisa Collins in the Development Services Department.

Mike Crusa is the Mayor's Chief of Staff.

John Kane, architect with Architekton. He is finishing up the Tempe Transportation Building. Lots of lessons were learned on that project in terms of pushing the envelope, sustainability, the current codes, and the disconnects that we have. He is also concerned about the potential disconnect between putting capital projects together and life cycle costs of buildings, and looking at the bigger, overall budget issues of projects. The question is whether we spend a little more upfront to save a lot more on the back end.

Jan Hort, City Clerk.

Shelley Hearn, Community Relations Manager. She is interested in this topic, but also how we can take the ideas that come out of this committee and get them to the community.

Mark Vinson, City Architect.

Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Services Director. The Neighborhood Advisory Commission recently formed a sustainability committee to look at sustainability at the neighborhood level.

Molly Enright, Community Relations, Mayor's Office.

Anna Ellis, ASU Global Institute of Sustainability. The Institute is excited to engage with Tempe and all the Valley cities to advance these causes.

Mary Helen Giustizia, Solid Waste Services Director for the City. She is passionate about evolving the City's solid waste and recycling program to the next level. When recycling was implemented in Tempe fifteen years ago, the determination was to make the program voluntary. Across the country, the culture is changing and there is a move to make recycling programs more mandatory and building incentives into fee structures to encourage people to recycle more and be more aware of how they purchase products with recycling in mind. An education and community outreach program has been implemented to bring awareness to the community. It is important to get started at this level and change policies to encourage people to provide incentives.

Mayor Hallman suggested the committee name be "Tempe's Hope for Initial Sustainability" or "Tempe's History Includes Sustainability" or "Tempe Horizon Is Sustainability", for an acronym of THIS committee.

Agenda Item 3 – Review of Sustainability Practices

Mayor Hallman summarized that John Kane provided one suggestion to rework the Code to make it more conducive to modern sustainability.

John Kane explained that in the new Transportation Building, they wanted to use gray water and storm water for irrigation, and use gray water for the building as well. They had a beautiful, elegant combined system that required little in terms of technology and, after going through the process with the current Code, the system became completely convoluted and the cost rose. Other communities do this all the time, so we know it has been done around the country, but our current County and City Codes do not allow it. Current engineers are also not familiar. If the interest is there, can it happen and can we help rewrite the Code. It doesn't need to cost a lot of money and hopefully this committee can help.

Mayor Hallman asked if Mr. Kane would be willing to be the co-chair of a subcommittee which would work specifically on that series of issues. We will figure out from Council whose schedules allow what and then pull together any members of the group who would like to participate in that part of the process and set up a series of tasks. The goal is not necessarily that this committee meet as a whole very often, because once we determine the working orders, we can move forward. That is one of the top issues, however.

Mr. Kane agreed.

Mayor Hallman added that the second issue raised by Mr. Kane was the budget process. We have some capital costs up front that would have to be paid, but it would reduce the long term costs of operations. There is no means by which that calculus gets analyzed at the City level. The second issue then, is the cost benefit analysis in terms of looking at how we decide to implement a building in the first place.

Mr. Kane added that the photovoltaic (PV) idea is important.

Mr. Spittler explained that PV uses panels that convert the sun's energy into electricity. We live in one of the greatest places on earth to do that. He is involved in a program that would attempt to bring PV into the public right-of-ways as a place to harvest the sun's energy. The study is moving forward but it is still in the fund raising phase at this time. As a beginning point, he would like to see some kind of organization and statement of goals. What area do we want to focus on, such as transportation, energy, air quality, materials and resources, and water conservation? If the committee would say that this is what we are about and how we are going to break down the problem, it might help. Also, whatever we decide to do, it is important that we measure where we are as a baseline for the City, how much energy is used, common consumption of electricity per square foot, how much carbon we are putting into the atmosphere, etc. The Bush Administration has supported high performance, sustainable buildings. The reason is that those buildings have been measured and the successes can be pointed to and the costs can be justified. He offered his help with best practices or initiatives that have been undertaken by other governments.

Councilmember Shekerjian agreed that measurements are very important. We need to have a master plan of what we are doing, and the starting points of what will we look at in sustainability. That may be how we should organize our subcommittees. One might be code compliance, another might be recycling. When we talk about culture in Tempe, Ms. Giustizia noted that many cities are going to mandatory compliance. She didn't think that was necessary. It is always better to win compliance rather than mandate it.

Agenda Item 4 – Creation of Ad Hoc Committees

Mayor Hallman suggested setting a matrix. He proposed starting on things the committee is interested in. For example, Mr. Kane, after having a difficult experience trying to get a gray water system through the City, knows what he can do to change the way the City is doing business. As part of that process, we will have to examine whether we are mandating something or making it available. If it is only available, then the cost benefit analysis is going to be up to the person actually implementing it, except to the extent it is a City project, and then we as a City have to decide the same thing a developer would. Many of the issues on finance and cost benefit analysis take place in the private market for private building. For the City, we don't necessarily do that, so we have to impose it because we don't lose money in the same way the private sector does. The Code we need to fix has as much to do with whether a developer can get the additional things he wants in his building done cost effectively, or whether he gives up. Some things will take care of themselves, but a subcommittee might be working on a project, and identify the things they are seeing. Mr. Kane is the person he would go to for PV, and he suggested that he chair a subcommittee on implementation of PV technology in the City of Tempe. What can we do as a City in employing that technology? As part of that, it will ask the question whether it is cost effective.

Denise van den Bossche agreed that a lot of lessons have been learned with the Transportation Building. There was a lot of money invested and if it wasn't for someone like Bonnie Richardson who somehow got it pushed through, it would not have happened. That project is very timely to take those lessons, implement and measure them.

Mr. Kane added that what was lost was the measuring. They were hoping to tie back into ASU in terms of the notions of testing the strategies. What is really working that can be built upon for other architects and developers. Not everything costs a lot of money. The idea of measurement is very intriguing. Buildings have a life cycle and techniques and strategies evolve and change, but if we can be constantly learning from the ones we build, the first thing we do when we build the next City project is to analyze what worked and what didn't work.

Ms. van den Bossche added that this building will be Platinum and might be one of the first Platinum mixed-use buildings in the country, as well as the regional innovation of the first Sonoran roof. The 2009 LEED program is adding a regional category. A lot of research and development money was invested that other people could take advantage of for other desert climates and Tempe could be a leader in that. Green Build will come to the Phoenix convention center in November. Based on Boston's experience two weeks ago, 30,000 people attended and a big spotlight will be on this community.

Mayor Hallman added that beyond that, it is formalizing the assessment and measurement of the performance of our efforts and then taking the lessons learned and formalizing those back into code structures, as well as the finance matrix in which we are deciding to make a capital investment.

Councilmember Shekerjian offered to chair the finance subcommittee.

Councilmember Woods offered to chair the code subcommittee because he is also the chair of the Housing Committee, so he is looking at best practices and ways to make future affordable or workforce housing. If we are going to build those kinds of things and keep the price down, we need to find ways not just to save money upfront, but make sure we are saving money in the long run and doing things that are good for the environment.

Vice Mayor Ellis offered to chair the technology subcommittee.

Mr. Kane asked how the City actually promotes this idea that gets the energy beyond this committee. Is there a City committee plugging into that so that we define ourselves, as opposed to being defined by others?

Mayor Hallman clarified that Mr. Kane was asking how we describe what Tempe is doing both as a City government and what the community is doing itself and how that could be implemented elsewhere.

Mr. Kane added that it is an evolving thing.

Mayor Hallman added that a whole host of this kind of thing is taking place. Every time we open a building we are promoting what is going on in the environmental side; but we are trapped in an environment where newspapers are falling apart and there are blogs that simply want someone to confirm an opinion but don't confuse it with the facts. We can get the word out to people who already know, but no one else is interested. Shelley Hearn from Community Relations and Lisa Collins, who does a lot of promoting, are probably the staff level side of this. We need to start making sure that as a value for our community, we are implementing the PR side of the house, having all of the departments feed into as single point of source everything we could use to describe what Tempe is doing, and then make sure that message is getting out. There are real hurdles currently to communication.

Mr. Spitler added that we are coupled with GPEC who has a major focus on bringing green industry to the valley. If we could get that message out, then we are probably the leaders with that.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that her Council committee is dealing with that in terms of working with GPEC to bring those programs to Tempe. There is no reason why, after the first of the year with light rail that, we can't contact those organizations that are putting on events like this one and inviting them to a tour of our community. We can bring them from downtown Phoenix on the light rail. It is a good economic development tool.

Mayor Hallman proposed that the group think about the scope of what we could tackle, as well as the issues. At the next meeting we could brainstorm one of the topics. We could then pull together from our PR folks a marketing place which folds into the economic development piece. We are talking about putting all messaging into a central location, which includes our Economic Development Department, essentially the marketing department for the City of Tempe. He suggested that Shelley Hearn return with how we get these messages out and how we start coordinating with Transit, Transportation, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Water/Wastewater Departments, the kinds of things are doing, how we are promoting them, and what else we should do.

Mayor Hallman added that anyone can contact Lisa Collins for coordination. At the next meeting, we will decide on the directions we want to go, create the scope of work, but then move into the subcommittees that could start going forward on the four or five top topics.

Agenda Item 5 – Future Agenda Items

Next meeting set for January 14, 2009, 7:30 a.m.

Announcements

None.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell

Reviewed by:

Jan Hort, City Clerk