



City of Tacoma
Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability

June 29, 2020

NOTICE

Special Meeting

Sustainable Tacoma Commission

Notice is hereby given that a special meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be held virtually on Thursday, July 2, 2020 from 5:00-6:30 p.m.

To comply with Governor Jay Inslee's Proclamation 20-28.5 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting will not be conducted in-person. The meeting can be attended remotely using the following information:

Meeting phone line: +1 (253) 215-8782

Meeting hyperlink: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84763247672?pwd=d2FidFIZeW1WVFpkSik2YUVYdVhidz09>

Meeting ID: 847-6324-7672

Meeting password: 07022020

Microphones will be muted and cameras turned off for all participants during the meeting, except for the Commissioners, staff, and presenters. Public comments on discussion items will NOT be accepted at the meeting. Community members are encouraged to submit comments in writing prior to the meeting by 4:00 p.m. on July 2, 2020. Please e-mail your comments to PBabbitt@cityoftacoma.org with the subject line "STC Meeting 7/2/20" and clearly indicate which agenda item(s) you are addressing.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the following items:

- I. **ROLL CALL & WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONER**
- II. **REVIEW AGENDA**
 - a. **REVIEW PUBLIC COMMENTS (WRITTEN COMMENTS ONLY)**
 - b. **DRAFT LETTER: 2021-2022 CITY BUDGET, COMMISSION PRIORITIES**
 - c. **SCHEDULE COMMISSION MEETINGS WITH COUNCIL, MAYOR, CITY MANAGER**
- III. **ADJOURNMENT**

Patrick Babbitt
Project Specialist, Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability



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City of Tacoma
Office of Sustainability

July 2, 2020

TO: Tacoma City Council
Tacoma Municipal Building
747 Market Street, 12th Floor
Tacoma, WA 98402

RE: Sustainable Tacoma Commission Recommendations for 2021-2022 City Budget

To the Honorable Mayor Woodards and City Councilmembers,

The Sustainable Tacoma Commission urges you to use a comprehensive lens, which incorporates climate justice, racial justice, and environmental justice, to evaluate proposals for the 2021-2022 budgets. Although climate change, environmental pollution, and pandemics affect everyone, the consequences are too often unfairly distributed among poor communities and communities of color. This will support Tacoma's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, as well as build resilience to climate change and future pandemics. In the upcoming budget decisions, the STC suggests you consider the following three priorities:

1. Prioritize actions and resources for the declared Climate Emergency like the City of Tacoma has for other emergencies

The City of Tacoma has the opportunity to address our climate crisis, while it also responds to the COVID-19 health crisis. Recognizing that historically oppressed and marginalized populations suffer the greatest impacts of climate change and environmental pollution, it is concerning that the current priorities in the 2021-2022 budget cycle do not address the climate crisis, climate justice, or environmental justice, which are key to a healthy and economically vital Tacoma.

A good first step would be to specifically add "addresses climate crisis" as a criterion for the 2021-2022 budget proposals. The Climate Emergency needs to be resourced like an emergency; we have seen large amounts of funding mobilized to address the COVID-19 and homelessness emergencies, and appropriately so, but have yet to see the same level of investment in addressing the climate crisis, which the City of Tacoma also declared an emergency. According to the United Nations' Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C¹, we have 10 years to prevent the most catastrophic impacts of climate change; each year delayed adds makes preventing this outcome more logistically challenged and more expensive.

¹ https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf

2. Preserve community trust with transparent decisions and dialogue

We encourage the City Council to improve engagement with community members. It has been hard for us as Commissioners, with staff support, to understand how the Council makes decisions. Similarly, we have heard from frustrated community members who do not know how or if their comments are being considered. To improve transparency the Council and City must communicate how community voices have been, and will continue to be, heard and considered in decision making.

Although COVID-19 has brought challenges to the traditional methods of soliciting and hearing feedback, we know the Council can find innovative ways to facilitate substantive two-way dialogue.

Additionally, it is important for the Sustainable Tacoma Commission, among other Commissions, to be allowed to meet regularly. For the first three months of the COVID-19 crisis, the Sustainable Commission was not allowed to meet as a body and fulfill its advisory role. As a result, we were not allowed to weigh in on important decisions.

3. Consider access to multiple health and environmental benefits just as integral to life as public safety, and reflect this in the 2020-2021 budget

Clean air, water, and natural spaces ranks with access to food, jobs, transportation, and other social and environmental factors that are integral pieces to healthy individual living conditions and a safe and healthy community. Compared to other aspects of public safety, the City of Tacoma has yet to put even a fraction of similar general fund investments into programs that have a large benefit to community members' health and wellbeing.

We recommend rethinking budget decisions so that we can improve the environmental and health inequities that Tacomans experience daily. The recently passed Resolution 40622 names making "transformational change" in the city's systems and institutions an immediate goal and specifically cites "quality of life" as a concern. We urge the council to consider reprioritizing the budget to reflect this commitment to transformational change and to fund the other aspects of human wellbeing named above.

Below, please find the STC's specific suggestions for Council action to meet these three priorities:

Immediate Actions – Prioritize with funds available now:

1. Prioritize Climate Justice in the 2021-2022 budget and in any use of future federal or other stimulus dollars.

Specifically, add "addresses climate crisis" as a criterion for the 2021-2022 budget proposals, and continue using the Equity Index² and other tools such as the Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map³ developed by Front & Centered to evaluate budget proposals.

² <https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=175030>

³ <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/wtn/WTNIBL/>

2. Continue to fund actions in the “Air & Local Food” section of the 2015 Environmental Action Plan (EAP), specifically actions A3, A5, and A7.

Access to food has emerged as a large impact of the COVID-19 crisis and has given clear examples of how access to healthy foods is part of a person’s and community’s resiliency and self-sufficiency. Actions A3, A5, and A7 invest in the local food system and encourage innovative economic opportunities for Tacoma community members.

- **A3 -- Support community groups working on food equity**

Action A3 is currently proposed to be cut in the 2021-2022 budget. In the 2019-2020 biennium, this action provided contracts with grassroots community groups to work on food equity projects.

- **A5 -- Support urban agriculture and clear legal hurdles so citizens can sell produce grown in the city**

There has been some initial interest in this action, but substantive progress that would allow citizens to develop self-sufficiency and food sovereignty through selling produce grown in the city has not been made.

Additionally, it has come to our attention that the City has ceased issuing permits for community gardens in the public right-of-way. This should be reinstated, and novel uses of public right-of-way for food production should be explored as a part of this action.

- **A7 -- Pilot 1-2 small scale urban agriculture programs on public land**

3. Fund implementation of the Urban Forest Management plan, specifically Municipal Code changes for tree preservation and assistance for low-income homeowners with hazard trees

The availability of trees in our neighborhoods is directly connected to the COVID-19 crisis. Supporting studies for the 2019 Urban Forest Management Plan⁴ showed that low-income and high-person of color areas of Tacoma had significantly less trees than whiter, more affluent parts of the city, and that these areas became much hotter on extreme heat days. While the air monitoring study is still ongoing, there is a direct correlation between lack of trees and poor air quality⁵ and lack of trees and high rates of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)⁶ – conditions that increase COVID-19 mortality⁷.

A program to assist low-income homeowners with maintenance of hazard trees has been eliminated in the proposed 2021-2022 budget. We encourage you to reprioritize funding from other areas to keep this program available to residents, as it will help preserve tree canopy in low-income areas and make progress toward some of the equity goals in the Urban Forest Management Plan.

⁴ <https://www.tacomatreeplan.org/post/supporting-studies>

⁵ <http://www.naturewithin.info/UF/TreeBenefitsUK.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/how-urban-trees-can-save-lives/>

⁷ <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/covid-pm>

Exploring Municipal Code changes to preserve and expand the City of Tacoma's tree canopy cover is part of the Urban Forestry Implementation strategy and can likely be done with existing staff.

4. Continue to implement the Sustainable Materials Management Plan, in general, and leverage any education activities for “recycle right” to stress waste prevention

In addition, in exploring recovery from the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, use this as an impetus to support local development of markets and other processing capacity for recyclable materials.

5. Transportation funding

Transportation accounts for the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the City, and there is a strong connection between modes transportation, air quality, and human health. As the COVID-19 crisis has made using public transportation riskier for vulnerable groups, investments in active transportation access and options become more important. The City should continue to fund, support, and encourage active transportation adoption and infrastructure. Actions within the transportation section of the EAP should be a priority for funding with additional stimulus and other funds the City may acquire.

Specifically, the City should focus on:

- **Action T2 -- Establish dedicated and stable funding for active transportation education, encourage, safety programs, and infrastructure improvements.**

The City should also continue to lead by example, such as by increasing investment in:

- **Action T11 -- Convert solid waste trucks from diesel to renewable natural gas made from methane captured at the wastewater treatment plant.**

6. Adequately fund outreach for the update of the Environmental Action Plan.

Funds for an outreach contractor for the upcoming EAP update were partially eliminated in 2020 due to COVID-19 budget cuts. If funds allow, \$10,000 - \$20,000 available to support grassroots community outreach would drastically increase the reach of outreach, particularly in communities prioritized for equity. Funding the EAP update was part of the Climate Emergency Resolution. We feel that a concerted investment in outreach is an essential element in building transparency, trust, and buy-in to the City's planning efforts.

Sincerely,



Lexi Brewer
Chair, Sustainable Tacoma Commission

CC: City of Tacoma Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability
Patrick Babbitt
Kristin Lynett
James Parvey
Latasha Wortham
Jennifer Kammerzell
Lihuang Wung
Michael P. Slevin III
Elizabeth Pauli



**City of Tacoma
Sustainable Tacoma Commission
Special Meeting Minutes**

Date: July 2, 2020

Commission Members Present:

Lexi Brewer, Tony Ivey, Ashley Sloan, David Thompson, Matthew Benedict, Evlondo Cooper, Katin Kendrena, Elly Claus-McGahan, Phil Coughlan (joins 5:44pm)

Commission Members Excused: Gabe Moaalii

Commission Members Absent: Emily Pinckney, Grace Hope, Nikie Walters

Others Present: Patrick Babbitt (City of Tacoma), Kristin Lynett (City)

Call to Order

This special meeting was called to order by Lexi Brewer at 5:02p.m.

Review of July 2, 2020 Special Meeting Agenda

Staff and Chair Lexi Brewer explained special meeting agendas cannot be changed in accordance with Washington State rules. Agenda was reviewed by Commission.

Commission Business Items

Public Comments

No public comments were given.

Draft Letter: Commission Priorities for 2021-2022 City Budget

Commission discussed strain on City budget and how funding requests should be accompanied by potentially specifying budget reductions elsewhere. Commission reiterated its focus on a budget that realizes equity and climate priorities. Commission acknowledged overlap between climate, air quality, and public health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Commission determined to pull language from and call attention to Tacoma's December 2019 Climate Emergency resolution. Commission emphasized the need for them and other citizen Committees, Boards, and Committees to be able to meet in order to provide advice and oversight to Tacoma City Council, as they are designed to do. Commission identified key actions from Tacoma's Environmental Action Plan for Tacoma City Council to focus on in the context of COVID-19 and the next biennial budget. Commission emphasized food security, sustainable transportation, climate change mitigation, and urban tree canopy priorities. Commission recommended the need to retain funding for community engagement activities to support Tacoma's climate planning update process from 2020-2021.

Staff will support a couple Commissioners to clean up the letter, keeping the spirit and content as drafted and to be passed. Staff will deliver the letter to Tacoma City Council once it is complete, reporting its successful delivery back to the Commission.

Approval of Commission Recommendation Letter to Tacoma City Council Regarding 2021-2022 City Budget

Motion: Matthew Benedict

Seconded by: Elly Claus-McGahan

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried to approve letter as drafted, with Chair Lexi Brewer and Commissioner Evlondo Cooper to coordinate with staff to finalize letter and deliver to Tacoma City Council. The motion was declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Gabe Moaalii, Emily Pinckney, Grace Hope, Nikie Walters

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:29p.m.

Adjournment of July 2, 2020 Special Meeting

Motion: Matthew Benedict

Seconded by: Elly Claus-McGahan

Action: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.

Ayes: All

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Gabe Moaalii, Emily Pinckney, Grace Hope, Nikie Walters

The next regular meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be Thursday, July 16, 2020 from 5:00 to 7:00p.m., Tacoma Municipal Building, 747 Market Street, Room 248.

Lexi Brewer, Chair

Patrick Babbitt, Staff / Note Taker