

PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

August 13, 2026

Commission Members Present	City Staff Present
Sotiria Anagnostou	Lahayla Curiel, Office of Environmental Programs (OEP)
Darren Chapman	Katrina Gerster, OEP
Chris Erickson	Beth Zima, OEP
Kevin Groman	Erin Beasley, OEP
Caroline Lobo	Nancy Allen, OEP
Andrea Odegard-Begay	Emma Goethe, Office of Sustainability (OOS)
Amy Scoville-Weaver	Carla De La Chapa, OOS
Colin Tetreault	Enrique A Bojorquez-Gaxiola, Planning and Development Department (PDD)
Vice Chair, Ginger Torres	Christian Monahan, PDD
Chair, Kelly Barr	Joel Carrasco, PDD
Commission Members Not Present	Community Members Present
Penny Allee Taylor	ASU University City Exchange
Eric Gorseigner	Mikayla Qian
Kathy Knoop	Melissa
Sarah Porter	

1. Call to Order/Roll Call and Announcements

The meeting of the Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission (EQSC) was called to order with a roll call at 2:01 p.m. There were 9 members present at roll call.

The following Commission members left the meeting:

Chris Erickson, 2:47 p.m.

2. Review and Approval of July 9, 2026 Minutes

Commissioner Tetreault made a motion to approve July 9, 2026 minutes. Commissioner Groman seconded the motion, and it carried 9-0.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public requested to speak.

4. Planning and Development Department – Presentation on the Rio Salado District Policy Plan and other RIO PHX efforts

Chair Barr introduced E. Bojórquez Gaxiola and noted the project aligns with the commission's annual mission. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver added that community support is strong for the Rio Salado district policy plan and general plan amendment. The two major efforts include the district policy plan and a land use map amendment. The RIO PHX initiative aims to revitalize a 20-mile stretch of the Rio Salado; E. Bojórquez Gaxiola reviewed past planning efforts and highlighted early habitat restoration and expanded recreation efforts.

The Rio Salado Beyond the Banks Area Plan was the foundation for the Rio Salado district policy plan which serves as a guide for growth beyond the river banks using a three-part framework of people, nature, and the built environment. Since 2023, outreach has engaged more than 1,000 residents. The plan's four parts cover accomplishments, community identity, desired outcomes, and implementation. Community input shaped the four big ideas, catalyst sites, and visions for land use and connectivity. This plan aims to inspire redevelopment of properties in the area as it is not required, and all catalyst site owners were contacted.

Questions from commissioners centered on catalyst site buy-in, incentives, and zoning implications. Property owners for all sites have been contacted with mixed inputs. No incentives exist yet, though future options may emerge. The City-owned catalyst site at Central Ave and Rio Salado is planned as a mixed-use area, supported by environmental assessments and future zoning changes. Connectivity improvements include transit, bike, and walking paths, with long-term connections envisioned westward toward Tres Rios.

The fourth section of the plan outlines a roadmap for achievement including case studies, strategies, and 5-year actions. Restoration successes were highlighted and the industrial past of the area was considered in the policy plan and land use map amendment. Top priority actions are identified, supported by new design guidelines created with Bloomberg Associates. Proposed land use changes align with general plan goals, emphasizing mixed use, commercial activity, and increased housing density along the riverbanks and light rail corridor.

Community engagement has been ongoing, with council review planned for the fall. Comments are requested by August 31. Commissioners discussed neighborhood impacts, transitional areas, the future of City-owned land, and next steps after council approval. E. Bojórquez Gaxiola noted the plan will support policy consistency related to transit-oriented communities and although it does not open direct funding, the policy plan can inspire future conversations about funding, including grants and bonds. Design standards for heat readiness and walkability will be explored further. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver offered

to take point in drafting commission comments for September. Council action is expected around October.

5. General Brainstorm on Next Steps

Chair Barr led the discussion, noting the commission has so far provided letters of support for the Food Action Plan, Solid Waste Rate Increase, and now the Rio Salado district policy plan. Commissioner Groman asked how the commission can better guide the City Council and make EQSC's support clearer, suggesting the commission highlight additional sustainability elements for the Rio plan and encourage expansion beyond the Rio area. Commissioner Lobo questioned why investment isn't prioritized in already dense areas and emphasized making existing communities whole rather than contributing to urban sprawl. Commissioner Chapman commended the EQSC's work and the broad range of presentations.

Commissioner Scoville-Weaver shared appreciation for learning how City departments operate and how EQSC fits in. She suggested the commission identify priority topics, such as data centers, and become a resource earlier in project timelines. Vice Chair Torres emphasized that EQSC can recommend items beyond presentations and suggested exploring why some community members were neutral or opposed to Rio PHX. Commissioner Anagnostou found presentations and letters valuable and asked what the City and Council expect from EQSC, how other commissions succeed, and in what format feedback is most useful.

Commissioner Lobo noted challenges in delivering shade to communities that need it and asked how innovative city ideas could scale despite funding limitations. Chair Barr proposed creating a list of three items the commission would like the City to adopt and linking them to GO Bond opportunities. She also suggested inviting ASU experts to discuss urban heat and exploring policy applications, along with presentations from urban heat leadership academy graduates. Commissioner Tetrault raised the importance of long-term public policy planning, including sustainable tax structures and revenue to fund ongoing sustainability work, acknowledging current budget limitations. Chair Barr also referenced Colorado River concerns and their implications for future economic development and will prepare a summary of the discussion.

6. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items

Future agenda items will likely include a discussion on the Colorado River. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver suggested including a heat-related presentation or inviting a representative from ASU. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver asked whether the upcoming 122 Conference in December will affect EQSC's work, and Vice Chair Torres provided background, noting the conference aims to drive national investment in environmental initiatives in Arizona. Representatives from the 122 team could attend a future meeting to

discuss program tracks. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver also recommended inviting Dr. David Hondula back to provide an update on future funding.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emma Goethe, Management Assistant II