

PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

June 12, 2025

Phoenix City Hall Online Using Webex

Commission Members Present	City Staff Present
Allee Taylor, Penny, Webex	Nancy Allen, Office of Environmental Programs (OEP), in person
Barr, Kelly, Webex	Beth Zima, OEP, in person
Chapman, Darren, Webex	Katrina Gerster, OEP, in person
Groman, Kevin, Webex	Joshua Uebelherr, OEP, Webex
Knoop, Kathy, Webex	Kailey Mullis, OEP, in person
Sandweg, Bill, Webex	Carla De La Chapa, Office of Sustainability (OOS), in person
	Trixie Ann Golberg, OOS, in person
Tetreault, Colin, WebEx	Carlos Aguilar, OOS, in person
Lobo, Caroline – Chair, in person	Jose Morales, OOS, Webex
Torres, Ginger – Vice Chair, Webex	Carla Da La Chapa, OOS, in person
Porter, Sarah, Webex	
Commission Members Not Present	Community Members Present
Gorsegrner, Eric	Wayne Warrington, Webex
Weaver, Amy	Cecilia Riviere, ASU University City Exchange Rio Reimagined Initiative, Webex
	Whitney Warman, American Institute of Architects, (AIA), Webex
	Mark Carlisle, Webex
	Whitney Warman,
	Peter Rasmussen, AIA, Webex (presenter)

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 3:06 p.m. There were 10 members present at roll call.

Commissioner Kathy Knoop shared an update regarding recent federal legislation, One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), passed over the Fourth of July holiday. Barr highlighted its implications for sustainability, particularly in the realm of electric transportation. Kathy noted that the federal electric vehicle (EV) tax credits for EVs are set to expire on September 30, 2025. In addition to the EV provisions, Kathy mentioned that the bill includes other sustainability-related measures.

2. Review and approval of June 12, 2025 Minutes

Commissioner Barr made a motion to approve the June 12, 2025 minutes. Commissioner Knoop seconded the motion, and it carried 10-0.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public requested to speak.

4. Architecture 20-30 Challenge

Chair Caroline Lobo opened the meeting by introducing Whitney Warman, Chair of the Committee on the Environment for the Arizona Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and Pete Rasmussen, AIA. She also introduced the 2030 Challenge, an initiative developed by Architecture 2030 aimed at addressing the role of architecture in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Pete Rasmussen shared his screen and delivered a presentation relevant to both Phoenix and the national architectural community. His presentation covered the origins and goals of the 2030 Challenge, the commitment process, reporting mechanisms, current progress, collaborative efforts within the profession, and future directions.

He explained that the built environment accounts for approximately 42% of greenhouse gas emissions. In response, a roadmap was established in 2005 to incrementally raise efficiency goals, promote renewable energy offsets, and encourage sustainable practices. In 2010, the AIA formally adopted the 2030 Commitment. Although 135 firms signed on in the first year, only 56 were able to submit data due to the lack of enforcement and reporting tools. By 2023, nearly 500 firms were actively participating and reporting, resulting in a 50% reduction in predicted energy intensity over the past two decades and more than 24,000 projects submitted.

Rasmussen attributed this progress to three key factors: collaboration among peers and committees such as the Committee on the Environment (COTE), advancements in technology that have made sustainable practices more accessible and cost-effective, and leadership from universities and municipalities that have adopted supportive codes, incentives, and tax credits.

Looking ahead, he emphasized that carbon has become the central metric of sustainability, with firms exploring new construction methodologies, materials, and practices that actively sequester carbon. Many firms have signed onto the AIA Materials Pledge, which focuses on five pillars: human health, social equity, ecosystem health, climate health, and the circular economy.

Whitney Warman spoke briefly about learning opportunities and her role as Chair of the Committee on the Environment. Pete Rasmussen noted that his sustainability committee has implemented rules requiring all projects to adhere to both the 2030 Commitment and the Materials Pledge. The committee aims to develop best practices and remove barriers for smaller firms that may lack the resources to adopt energy-efficient strategies.

Rasmussen also referenced the AIA's Ten Principles of Design Excellence, which are available at [AIA.org/design-excellence](https://www.aia.org/design-excellence). He expressed a strong belief that architecture should positively impact lives and that the 2030 framework holds architects to a higher standard.

Trixie Anne Goldberg asked about the specific requirements for firms that sign onto the 2030 Commitment. Kelly Barr inquired about the role of LEED certification within this framework. Rasmussen responded that LEED and other rating systems complement the 2030 Challenge, serving as platforms upon which additional sustainability efforts can be built. Darren Chapman raised a question regarding biowaste, composting, and the circular economy. Caroline Lobo acknowledged APS and SRP for their collaborative contributions to sustainability efforts.

5. City of Phoenix Sustainability Initiatives

Carla De La Chapa, Chief Sustainability Officer, was the second presenter. Carla thanked Pete Rasmussen for his presentation and expressed interest in touring Phoenix buildings and collaborating further with AIA. She shared her background in environmental science and energy efficiency, including her work in Texas where she helped develop San Antonio's first climate action plan. She is currently involved in integrated resource planning to support grid decarbonization and community education on sustainable practices. Carla praised Phoenix's Climate Action Plan and Mayor Gallego's leadership, noting the city's bold goals and initiatives.

Carla discussed the Energy Access Plan (EAP) being developed for the C40 Cities initiative. The plan involves collaboration with utilities to decarbonize municipal operations and outreach efforts to build community resilience against climate change and rising energy demand. She invited the committee to provide feedback on the EAP draft in the fall and introduced Carlos Aguilar, Office of Sustainability, to present further details.

Carlos Aguilar began by identifying the energy sector as the source of 72.3% of greenhouse gas emissions. He also highlighted issues related to energy poverty, including high energy burdens, heat exposure, and heat-related deaths. He advocated

for a clean and just energy transition that shifts from fossil fuels to renewable sources while ensuring equitable access to reliable and affordable energy. Aguilar noted that the City of Phoenix spends nearly \$80 million annually on energy for its operations, with the Water and Aviation departments being the largest consumers. He outlined two primary strategies to address these challenges. First, the city is implementing sustainable energy projects such as lighting upgrades, onsite solar installations, and partnerships with SRP to procure clean energy. Second, the Energy Access Plan aims to reduce energy burdens by increasing participation in low-income energy programs by 25% by 2030. He defined a high energy burden as spending more than six percent of household income on energy bills and presented data showing that over 584,000 Phoenix households are affected. He also shared a sobering statistic: of 156 indoor heat-related deaths, 85 percent involved non-functioning air conditioning units, 12 percent had units that were not in use, and the remainder had no electricity.

Chair Caroline Lobo asked for clarification on energy usage in water services, which Aguilar explained includes water treatment and delivery. She also inquired about neighborhood services, which encompass community and senior centers.

Commissioner Kelly Barr asked whether non-functioning air conditioning units were due to lack of maintenance or inability to pay. Carlos Aguilar suggested it was likely a combination of both. Carla committed to investigating further and thanked Kelly for raising the issue. Kelly commended the presentation and described it as a strong start to the city's energy planning efforts.

Carla concluded the discussion by emphasizing the importance of community outreach and thanking attendees for their engagement.

6. Climate Action Plan: Sustainability

Following the Energy Access Plan presentation, Chair Caroline Lobo introduced Commissioner Darren Chapman to provide feedback on the sustainability components of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and to assist the Office of Environmental Programs (OEP) with community-informed insights.

Darren began his presentation, titled "A View from a Dark Alleyway," by sharing a personal anecdote. He spoke about a friend he had while living unhoused in North Carolina, emphasizing the bleakness of their shared circumstances. His story served to underscore the importance of inclusive dialogue in climate planning. Darren expressed deep appreciation for being invited into spaces where decisions are made, noting that such inclusion offers hope to individuals who have experienced hardship and now see a path toward positive change.

He outlined the strategic framework of TigerMountain Foundation (TMF), which centers its Climate Action Strategies around five pillars: mitigation, adaptation, finance, collaboration, and education. Darren described TMF's efforts in advancing renewable energy transitions through solar power, agrivoltaics, aquaponics, aeroponics, and sustainable water sourcing in partnership with SRP. He also highlighted TMF's commitment to sustainable agriculture, including the use of electric and manual farm

equipment, cultivation of native and desert-adapted crops, water conservation techniques, and soil enhancement through composting and mulching.

In the area of water management, Darren emphasized practices such as maintaining drip irrigation systems, watering during cooler hours, harvesting rainwater, applying mulch, and advocating for policies that support conservation. He also addressed climate resilience and public health, advocating for the integration of climate action into infrastructure planning, the mitigation of heat index effects through tree planting and shade structures, and the provision of resources to vulnerable populations.

Darren's presentation further covered sustainable transportation initiatives, including making alternative modes of transit affordable and accessible, expanding public transportation options, promoting cycling, supporting electric vehicles, and incentivizing climate-friendly transportation choices. On the topic of food security, he discussed the use of high-yield, drought-resistant crops, diverse growing methods, and strategies to reduce food waste.

He concluded by discussing the importance of public and private investment in green finance, emphasizing collaboration among climate-focused organizations and the need to connect government entities with citizens to shape effective climate policies. He also touched on carbon markets and zero-waste principles, advocating for a transition to renewable resources and the adoption of net-zero frameworks.

Darren closed his presentation with a quote from Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Commissioner Colin Tretrault responded by commending Darren for his spirit, joy, passion, and authenticity. He expressed appreciation for Darren's perspective and asked whether there are additional areas the City or the commission should be considering more deeply.

Darren expressed heartfelt gratitude for Colin's remarks and recalled past occasions when Colin brought students to visit TigerMountain Foundation.

7. Climate Action Plan: Equity

Vice Chair Ginger Torres reviewed and provided feedback on the Equity Chapter of the Climate Action Plan. Ginger began by expressing that she had more questions than answers after reviewing the chapter, particularly regarding accountability and implementation.

Ginger asked who is responsible for ensuring that the values outlined in the Equity Chapter are upheld and where one should go to obtain satisfactory answers. In response, Nancy Allen, Environmental Programs Administrator, explained that much of the equity framework was inspired by models from Colorado and incorporated into Phoenix's CAP. Although the City received approval to establish an equity office, that office has not yet been created, and its current status remains unclear. Nancy clarified that while the City does have an Equal Opportunity Department (EOD), it is focused on internal compliance and does not fulfill the broader equity mandate required by the CAP or the C40 framework, which distinguishes equity from environmental justice.

Ginger followed up by asking whether the team had taken steps to ensure that the equity values were being actualized. Nancy acknowledged that implementation has not occurred and that there is no formal tracking program in place. Caroline then asked who is currently responsible for overseeing equity efforts. Nancy responded that equity falls under the purview of individual departments and is dependent on departmental leadership. She added that while equity factors are considered in projects across the city, there is no centralized enforcement mechanism.

Caroline asked whether equity and environmental justice are being treated as separate sections in the current version of the CAP. Nancy replied that they are not separated in this version, although future discussions may address that distinction. She noted that the Office of Environmental Programs (OEP) and the Office of Sustainability (OOS) lack the staffing capacity to track equity comprehensively. She also cited administrative uncertainty as a complicating factor.

Ginger asked whether the City remains committed to equity under the current federal administration. Nancy affirmed that both the City and the Mayor are strongly committed to equity principles. She stated that the City Manager's Office supports elected officials in this effort, though staff are cautious with language and messaging. Despite these challenges, Nancy emphasized that progress is being made, particularly through the work of the food and energy teams. She stressed the importance of community involvement in building trust and encouraged commissioners to serve as bridges between the government and the communities they represent.

Ginger acknowledged the City's efforts in community engagement but noted that more could be done, despite the costs in time and resources. She asked fellow commissioners whether there are creative ways to gather feedback on the CAP that have not yet been explored, such as setting up booths at community festivals like Indigenous Peoples Day downtown. Nancy responded that translation costs pose a barrier to broader outreach and requested support from commissioners in advocating for expanded communication resources beyond Spanish.

Ginger suggested engaging schools and students more actively. Nancy agreed but noted that outreach efforts have primarily targeted high schools and have lacked consistency across districts. Ginger advocated for including younger students, citing their increasing awareness of climate issues. She and Commissioner Andrea Odegard-Begay, both Girl Scout leaders, proposed partnerships with youth organizations.

Caroline recommended increased collaboration with the Neighborhood Services Department (NSD), which is deeply embedded in schools and communities. Kailey Mullis added that outreach to elementary schools has been attempted but finding reliable contacts remains a challenge. Caroline suggested attending annual conferences for school superintendents and school boards to establish connections and potentially present on the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Food Action Plan (FAP), and Energy Access Plan (EAP).

Ginger inquired about the status of the Office of Sustainability's Sustainability Officer program, which had previously been managed by Arizona State University (ASU). Carla confirmed that ASU continues to oversee the program but is keeping it regional. Ginger expressed interest in expanding the program to other schools in the Phoenix area. Nancy acknowledged that financial constraints are a limiting factor but encouraged commissioners to submit recommendations, noting that funding may follow.

Commissioner Kelly Barr shared that she has been in conversations with Nancy, Carla, and Carlos about enhancing ASU's involvement with the CAP, EAP, and FAP. She emphasized that many students are enthusiastic about these initiatives and that outreach should be leveraged to ensure each plan receives equal attention.

Commissioner Torres asked about the status of the priorities listed in the final section of the Equity Chapter and whether the City remains committed to them. Nancy confirmed that all goals from the 2021 plan will remain in place. She added that the City will communicate the status of each goal and provide explanations for any that have not been implemented. As a council-approved document, the CAP should be upheld, though delays and challenges may occur.

Nancy also noted staffing issues within the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, citing budget constraints, retirements, and leadership changes as contributing factors. Ginger expressed concern that the office has not been established despite years of discussion and emphasized the need for someone to take responsibility for its creation.

Chair Caroline Lobo indicated that she would follow up with additional questions and send them to Nancy Allen. Commissioner Torres concluded by stating that she had recently completed a round of community meetings on the CAP and expressed interest in presenting those insights at a future Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission (EQSC) meeting.

8. Climate Action Plan: Water

The fifth and final scheduled presenter was Commissioner Sarah Porter, who was prepared to speak on the Water Chapter of the Climate Action Plan. However, due to time constraints, specifically, the fourth presentation concluding at 4:47 p.m., Commissioner Porter was unable to deliver her presentation before the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

9. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items

It was confirmed that Commissioner Andrea Odegard-Begay will speak at the next commission meeting on August 14, 2025, about the waste management component of the Climate Action Plan.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kailey Mullis, Environmental Programs and Innovation Specialist