

**PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY
COMMISSION MINUTES**

February 19, 2026

Phoenix City Hall

Commission Members Present	City Staff Present
Darren Chapman	Mayor Kate Gallego, Mayor's Office
Eric Gorsegrner	Kailey Mullis, Mayor's Office
Kevin Groman	Willa Altman-Kaough, Mayor's Office
Kathy Knoop	Nancy Allen, Office of Environmental Programs (OEP)
Caroline Lobo	Beth Zima, OEP
Sarah Porter	Lahayla Curiel, OEP
Bill Sandweg	Katrina Gerster, OEP
Amy Scoville-Weaver	Carla De La Chapa, Office of Sustainability (OOS)
Colin Tetreault	TrixieAnn Goldberg, OOS
Ginger Torres, Vice Chair	Emma Goethe, OOS
Kelly Barr, Chair	Luz Jimenez, OOS
	David Hondula, Office of Heat Response and Mitigation
Commission Members Not Present	Community Members Present
Penny Allee Taylor	Sonja Klinsky, Arizona State University
Andrea Odegard-Begay	

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 7 members present at roll call.

The following Commissioners arrived and/or left during the meeting at the times listed below.

- Commissioner Groman arrived at 2:04 p.m.
- Vice Chair Torres arrived at 2:06 p.m. and left at 3:12 p.m.
- Commissioner Porter arrived at 2:09 p.m.
- Commissioner Chapman arrived at 2:13 p.m.

2. Review and approval of January 8, 2026 Minutes

Commissioner Tetreault made a motion to approve the January 8, 2026 minutes. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver seconded the motion, and it carried 8-0.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public requested to speak.

4. EQSC Strategic Planning

Chair Barr shared feedback from the survey sent out to Commissioners gathering feedback on their opinions on how the Commission currently operates and their preferences for EQSC areas of focus. This includes a strategic plan for the year, deeper engagement at the meetings, onboarding process for new members to provide history of the Commission, and review of scope and duties assigned to EQSC through the charter.

Commissioner Knoop thanked Chair Barr for this information and noted that she didn't realize that the charge of the Commission is to enact change and they can make suggestions rather than simply answer questions City Council has for them. Chair Barr replied that the charter includes language about being in consultation with the City Council and under the direction of City Management and they should keep this in mind, however their role is to use their work on the Commission to inform City Council through policy recommendations.

Commissioner Scoville-Weaver asked who sets the EQSC charter. Environmental Programs Administrator replied that EQSC is designed as a body of residents that it was set to make recommendations to send to Council and City Manager related to issues concerning environmental quality and sustainability and/or investigate issues sent to them by City Council and the City Manager. The charter and bylaws were created by the Commission and were updated in 2017 or 2018. They could be updated again by the current body of Commissioners.

Commissioner Knoop asked about the process needed to change the EQSC charter. Allen replied that staff will need to check with the Law Department and specifics within the bylaws, however the Commission can start thinking about what kinds of changes they'd like to make.

Chair Barr introduced Sonja Klinsky as the facilitator for today's meeting. She is professor at the Arizona State University School of Sustainability and will help with keeping the meeting on time and keep Commissioners focused on how the Commission can regroup moving forward. Having a facilitator also allows Chair Barr to participate in the meeting as an equal.

Klinsky asked Commissioners to go around the room and each share what about the Commission makes them excited and why they are giving their time to be a part of the Commission. Commissioner Knoop shared she is a Phoenix native and has seen a lot of change overtime and likes to see happy residents and wants to support the work to keep residents happy. Commissioner Gorsegrner joined the Commission after he retired and shared that he has a passion for land, water, and energy policy and is glad to have a meeting like this to push EQSC forward. Commissioner Lobo shared that she has a PhD in Sustainability and the built environment excites her and wants to contribute to helping bridge gaps and support effective policy within the community. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver works professionally around the city to mitigate heat using nature-based solutions and got involved with the Commission to make connections to help with these issues. Commissioner Porter shared that she is a water policy expert and issues tend to be more complicated, so she is motivated by the Commission to help work together to work through the complexity in order to guide good policy decisions. Commissioner Chapman grew up with a community garden from his grandparents and has a passion for creating greenspace and being a champion for sustainability. Commissioner Groman has experience with sustainable business connections and has seen great results and sees that the city has an opportunity to be a leader in sustainability. Vice Chair Torres grew up in Phoenix and wanted to get involved in climate workgroup to make a difference in her community, especially how to get youth involved. Commissioner Sandweg runs a sustainable business where his interest transitions from recycling to urban heat island, shade, and making sure businesses protect clean water, energy, and air. Chair Barr joined when she was working for SRP and found passion for sustainability and is looking forward to more engaging meetings where they can collectively make a difference. Commissioner Tetrault believes in creating a government that works for the people and the planet and has had several professional roles leading government sustainability consulting.

Klinsky thanked Commissioners for their powerful and succinct responses and welcomed the directors of the Office of Environmental Programs, Office of Sustainability, and the Office of Heat Response and Mitigation to present a brief overview of their offices and how the Commission can be helpful to them and their key projects.

Chair Barr provided a organization chart showing that the three offices report up to a different person within the City Manager's Office. She commented that she assumed they all would report to the same person, however learned that they didn't and wanted to share. This might be a topic for future conversations on whether these responsibilities are best in one place or consider if it is better that they are all spread out so more people take on responsibilities.

N. Allen presented on the Office of Environmental Programs and the key regulatory programs they oversee. The programs where EQSC could engage could be the Food Action Plan and Climate Action Plan. She also commented that the budget season is critical for determining how funding is allocated for programs citywide and encouraged EQSC to get involved to push for topics they support funding for.

Chair Barr asked when the budget process starts. Allen stated that budget hearings are in March and April when the city accepts comments on the trial budget. The budget is then discussed and adopted by City Council in June.

Commissioner Lobo asked if all departments contribute to creating the budget. N. Allen stated that departments were asked to provide 5% proposed cuts this year and no supplementals for additional funding were allowed. The budget is determined by city management and City Council. All three of their departments have small budgets so 5% cuts are more impactful than they are for larger departments.

D. Hondula presented the Office of Heat Response and Mitigation's key programs and noted that the Commission's previous recommendations lead to the creation of this office. The areas where the Commission could be impactful are serving as a conduit for community feedback and determining what the community feels the city does well or needs more focus on, creating a prioritization list of the office programs and initiatives, and connecting with professional and expert network connections.

Commissioner Lobo asked about the office's involvement with the heat resilience building policy initiative. Hondula stated that their office has one member on the advisory committee which is led by Planning and Development Department.

Vice Chair Torres asked if there are initiatives the office is trying to move forward that the Commission could help with. D. Hondula responded that the office looking closely at the cool roof policy recently passed by the City of Atlanta as this is a policy hole within Phoenix. They would need to determine how this policy would impact the current market and what the consequences of this kind of policy would be.

C. De La Chapa presented the Office of Sustainability's key programs and stated that the office previously focused on energy and electric vehicles and she realizes that the office needs to think beyond those topics. The office just recently got their Energy Access Plan approved by City Council and the Commission can help with determining connection to assist and how to effectively implement that plan. The Commission could also help guide the development of the Climate Action Plan stationary energy goals and how these are implemented.

Commissioner Lobo asked if the office has installed electric vehicle charging infrastructure. C. De La Chapa stated that the city has completed EV charging projects and had received a federal grant in January 2025, however this was rescinded after the inauguration. The city has around 80 charging stations with about 30 public facing chargers. The goal was to install 500 by 2030, however they are behind schedule and the lack of federal funding will make this goal difficult. The Commission could provide guidance on this goal and help figure out programmatic difficulties, specifically on workforce development and funding.

Mayor Kate Gallego and her team arrived, and she shared her vision for the Commission. The Mayor sees four priority areas: water conservation, climate action and emission reduction, clean tech economy, and heat response. She thanked the Commission for their work and welcomed more big ideas from them. The work the city is starting now will help shape the city for 2050 and will determine if the city will meet long term goals. Guidance and support from the Commission will make these goals possible.

Chair Barr thanked the Mayor for her time and applauded her support of sustainability during a time where national level support has lessened.

Commissioner Knoop asked if the City of Tucson has a similar sustainability committee they could talk to. Mayor Gallego was unsure but would assume so. Chair Barr stated that Tempe does and discussing it with them was a suggestion provided by a Commissioner in the survey.

Commissioner Tetrault asked how they as collective body can be more vocal on top of the work they do as individuals. Mayor Gallego asked that they crowdsource what is possible for responding to heat and to uplift those success stories. She also stated that in 2028 there will be another GO Bond campaign and they will need support and ideas for those projects. Polling from the last GO Bond was promising with support from both political parties for projects related to extreme heat. Increasing support for environment and sustainable projects will be important.

Commissioner Scoville-Weaver acknowledged that she is a newer Commissioner and today's meeting has informed her of the powers and duties of the Commission. She asked the Mayor what she felt was the most important duty they have.

Mayor Gallego responded that they are an advisory commission and making sure City Council has the best information is important and they can be responsive to what the Council needs to consider. As issues come to City Council having the Commission's support and explaining to residents why these issues are important, especially when it comes to a vote or are related to projects backed by taxes.

Chair Barr asked about the upcoming solid waste rate increase. Mayor Gallego responded that the city has ambitious waste reduction goals and has several green waste programs. There are stakeholders who feel these programs should be optional. Support for the rate increase will be important to come from EQSC to support these programs as program costs have risen significantly, including vehicle and labor costs.

Mayor Gallego stated that testifying at City Council meeting is important as many of the people who show up are unhappy with the city. They are the ones who take time out of their day to get their voice heard. Often times people who are happy and support the city's work do not come and it is important to also hear those voices.

Mayor Gallego suggested the Commission think about procurement opportunities that the city could use to make a difference. The city has a budget of \$5 billion, and this is an opportunity where small changes can add up to make a difference.

Commissioner Gorseigner asked how Commissioners can stay involved with what the city and City Council are working on. Mayor Gallego and Willa Altman-Kaough responded that every City Council Office and many departments have a newsletter. Also, Commissioners can read the council packets for each meeting to get an in-depth understanding of what is going on within the city.

Commissioner Sandweg asked if Mayor Gallego anticipates that the federal government will transition from avoiding support to actively blocking support for climate action programs. Mayor Gallego responded that we've already seen changes such as the removal of the GHG Endangerment Finding. There are some federal investments that have remained, however several funding programs supporting EV charging and solar projects have slowed and been removed.

Mayor Gallego had to leave the meeting as she had another obligation. Chair Barr and several Commissioners thanked her for joining them.

Klinsky transitioned to asking Commissioners what topics to cover and how these topics should be addressed and wrote Commissioner responses on the white board.

Commissioner Sandweg suggested looking at the city's data center policy and recent zoning changes related to data centers, especially looking at water and energy use. Commissioner Lobo agreed and suggested expanding to chip manufacturers as well.

Commissioner Porter suggested looking into heat mitigation such as cool roofs, building codes, and building materials,

Commissioner Tetrault suggested looking into access and affordability of energy and water for residents. There is a potential to identify and address gaps.

Commissioner Groman stated Phoenix has a big start up community and it is missed opportunity to not have a voice and support for these companies that are working on environmental issues. Commissioner Porter stated that many business express interest in making changes, however the type of changes aren't really going to make a difference. There is another opportunity instead for businesses to invest and create partnerships that will enact change and make a difference.

Commissioner Knoop suggesting reinvestigating the previous EQSC recommendation to hire a city tree forester and evaluate the effectiveness of current tree planting funding. This is an area of improvement, and the city needs a forester to direct projects citywide. There is an opportunity to save money by having a centralized person coordination tree planting efforts.

Chair Barr stated that the city has many plans and the Commission could do an inventory of the plans so they can understand what already exists and how the Commission can encourage implementation. N. Allan stated that the latest General Plan has an inventory of all city plans.

Commissioner Tetreault stated that the Commission used to have a better connection with stakeholders and bringing them to the table to provide their perspectives. There is a need to reengage and use stakeholder feedback to inform their Commission recommendations. The Commission also needs to be focused on only one or two topics a year and build subcommittees to push their work, which can include members who are not on the Commission.

Commissioner Lobo stated that the Commission has a process they need to follow and it is often hard to navigate which can prevent them from getting involved at times. Klinsky suggested creating a guide for examples of how the Commission can provide feedback, including types of engagement they have completed before.

Commissioner Scoville-Weaver agreed that the Commissioners need to use their voice better. She also questioned how the Commission will measure success.

Commissioner Porter cautioned that many Commissioners don't see every issue the same way and making a unified statement may be difficult. Commissioner Groman agreed and stated that the previous letters have been good, however they can also do better at including footnotes or detailing discussion on differences of opinions.

Commissioner Porter stated that advanced water purification will be critical for the city's resilience and that Commission should learn about it and feel comfortable discussing with a wide audience. The Commission should also create a statement of support.

Chair Barr thanked everyone for their engagement and applauded that the Commission covered a lot of ground within this meeting. This conversation will continue and over the next few months they will develop a plan for the year. The next meeting in March will have a presentation from the Public Works Department on the proposed solid waste rate increase and this conversation can continue after that agenda item. She asked for confirmation if Commissioners can still attend future meetings in person.

Commissioners agreed that there is a need to attend in person; however, noted that in person participation would be easier if the meeting was an hour earlier. There was also suggestion to have meetings every other month and potentially longer meetings every other month.

Chair Barr agreed that a slightly earlier meeting is preferred and suggested waiting until after the summer to move meetings to every other month since the next few months are anticipated to have presentations

Commissioner Scoville-Weaver made a motion to change the meeting time to 2 to 4 p.m. moving forward and will continue monthly until June or July when the Commission will take a summer break and reconvene with a potentially new meeting schedule in August. Commissioner Groman seconded the motion, and it carried 10-0.

Chair Barr reminded Commissioners that there are two vacancies and asked Commissioners for suggestions for specific people or topic areas to fill these roles. Commissioner Groman stated that the Commission needs to evaluate what topics aren't already covered by experts on the Commission. Chair Barr suggested including members from the energy utilities and/or members from TSMC.

Chair Barr reminded Commissioners that the next meeting will be March 12th at 2 p.m. and looks forward to continuing the energy they had for this meeting.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katrina Gerster, Environmental Quality Specialist