

# PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

March 12, 2026

Phoenix City Hall & Webex

<b>Commission Members Present</b>	<b>City Staff Present</b>
Darren Chapman, in-person	Nancy Allen, Office of Environmental Programs (OEP), in-person
Eric Gorsegrner, in-person	Lahayla Curiel, OEP, in-person
Kevin Groman, Webex	Katrina Gerster, OEP, in-person
Kathy Knoop, in-person	Carla De La Chapa, Office of Sustainability (OOS), Webex
Caroline Lobo, in-person	TrixieAnn Goldberg, OOS, in-person
Andrea Odegard-Begay, Webex	Emma Goethe, OOS, in-person
Sarah Porter, in-person	Felipe Moreno, Director, Public Works Department (PWD), in-person
Bill Sandweg, in-person	Lorizelda Stoeller, Assistant Director, PWD, in-person
Ginger Torres, Vice Chair, Webex	
Kelly Barr, Chair, in-person	
<b>Commission Members Not Present</b>	<b>Community Members Present</b>
Amy Scoville-Weaver	Sonja Klinsky, Arizona State University (ASU), in-person
Colin Tetreault	
Penny Allee Taylor	

## 1. Call to Order/Roll Call and Announcements

This meeting of the Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission (EQSC) was called to order with a roll call at 2:10 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 Chapman arrived at 2:12 p.m.
- Commissioner Porter arrived at 2:18 p.m.
- Vice Chair Torres arrived at 3:15 p.m.
- Commissioner Odegard-Begay left at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Knoop reported that federal funding for electric vehicle charging and fueling infrastructure is currently on hold. Under Build America, Buy America, the Administration is proposing to shift Electric Vehicle (EV) charging requirements from 55% to 100% U.S.-made content under the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program, which she stated is not currently feasible. Public comments are due Monday, followed by a 30–60-day federal review. General Motors is preparing comments recommending a phased approach. She added that EV charging construction will continue, but rural areas may face delays due to material availability.

## **2. Review and Approval of February 19, 2026, Minutes**

Commissioner Lobo made a motion to approve the February 19, 2026, minutes. Commissioner Knoop seconded the motion, and it carried 9-0.

## **3. Public Comment**

No members of the public requested to speak.

## **4. Solid Waste Rate Presentation from Public Works**

Public Works Director Felipe Moreno and Assistant Director Lorizelda Stoeller presented on the proposed solid waste rate increase.

Staff showed Commissioners a video that provided an overview of Public Works Department (PWD) Waste Division operations, which serve 425,000 households, process one million tons of material annually, and generate approximately 457,000 community contacts. The appointment-based bulk trash program has completed 152,000 appointments and saved roughly \$1 million. Daily operations include servicing 170,000 containers with 656 pieces of equipment and driving about 5 million miles annually.

Staff reviewed the City's Zero Waste 2050 goals, including a 50% diversion target by 2030. Phoenix's diversion rate is 33.3%, slightly above the national average of 32%. Traditional recycling has leveled off, and staff are focusing on circularity and expanding organics diversion.

Staff outlined essential public services supported by the rate, noting regulatory requirements and resource needs across personnel, vehicles, infrastructure, and health and safety. Phoenix owns its solid waste infrastructure (assets), which staff highlighted as a long-term advantage for flexibility, security, and program viability.

Cost trends since 2019 show a 32% increase in personnel costs, a 52% increase in equipment costs, and a roughly 40% increase in construction-related costs. Staff noted similar challenges nationwide.

Staff described operational efficiencies that have extended landfill life and saved more than \$1 million annually, including engineering strategies that build upward instead of digging downwards. Commissioner Lobo asked staff about the environmental impacts of building landfills upward instead of digging. Staff responded that obtain appropriate permitting, and staff stated that all cells are all lined. They emphasized expanding current landfill capacity is more cost effective than developing new sites.

Commissioners discussed future landfill uses, water consumption, organics, methane-to-energy potential projects, potential parks and trails on closed landfills, and solar development at the 27th Avenue closed landfill. Staff noted that the timeline for development on a closed landfill can vary depending on the project. Staff also commented that reclaimed water is used to keep the dust down; the fact that organics largely contribute to methane gas production and that diversion of organics reduce the amount of methane produced; Phoenix does currently flare methane. Phoenix landfills produce fewer emissions than most nationwide.

Staff described how PWD has deferred cost increases as much as possible by pursuing grant funding and implementing cost-saving measures; deferrals of projects are no longer sustainable. The Solid Waste Division operates as an enterprise division, meaning that they generate their own income, with approximately 90% of revenue from residential service fees; remaining revenue comes from commercial gate rates and recyclable sales. The Solid Waste Division does not receive funding from the Phoenix general fund. Staff showed that operational costs are attributed to employee salaries, equipment, contracts, commodities, and costs such as administrative fees. Expenditures are outpacing revenue, and increasing the fund balance is a priority.

The Solid Waste Rate Advisory Committee recommended a multi-year rate increase beginning with a \$6 adjustment in July 2026, followed by an additional increase of \$6 in

2027 and an increase of \$5 in 2028. From 2029 through 2033, there would be a 0-5% inflationary increase each year. All households pay the same rate. Staff noted that in order for this rate increase to go into effect, City Council approval is needed.

Staff also proposed increasing the curbside green organics rate from \$5 to \$10.83, which could enable program expansion. Commissioners discussed participation, subsidies, and affordability. Commissioner Porter asked staff if an affordability study has been conducted for the rate increase. Staff responded they are currently working with an economist from Arizona State University to better understand the solid waste service offerings and operations in comparison to other cities. As well, staff has future plans to pursue affordability modeling for solid waste municipal services.

Staff reiterated the urgency of the rate adjustment and described expanded partnership with the City's Human Services Department for Project Assist. Community outreach will take place in March, with a presentation to Mayor Gallego and City Council on April 22. Staff requested a letter of support for the rate increase from the Commission.

Commissioners asked about container replacement costs (\$2.5 million annually), reuse pathways of damaged cans through the future Resource Innovation Campus, scaling composting options, and opportunities to increase recycling revenue.

Commissioner Porter encouraged prioritizing affordability and conducting future affordability studies. Staff acknowledged community concerns and noted that they have focused outreach efforts to engage with fixed-income, senior, and working households. Commissioner Lobo asked whether it is best to do an affordability study or rate increase first. Staff responded that they would do an affordability study but also emphasized the immediate need for action to respond to the fund balance. The inflationary component allows incorporation of future study data.

N. Allen (OEP) noted that PWD previously planned a rate increase that was later canceled, contributing to the urgency of the current proposal. Staff reiterated that the department is at a financial tipping point. The Commission agreed to prepare a letter supporting the first three years of the proposed rate plan, along with additional recommendations including an affordability study and ways to expand projects before the inflationary period.

## **5. EQSC Strategic Planning**

E. Goethe (OOS) and L. Curiel (OEP) briefly introduced themselves as the new City liaisons for the Commission, and K. Gerster (OEP) outlined the transition of responsibilities for

support and liaison functions. Chair Barr introduced Dr. Sonja Klinsky (guest-ASU) to continue the Commission's strategic planning discussion.

Dr. Klinsky reviewed key thematic bundles from the strategic plan and led discussion on topic prioritization and the Commission's use of its authority. The group discussed scope, alignment with City goals, timeliness, and leadership. N. Allen emphasized the Commission's advisory role to City Council. Commissioners generally supported an outcome-driven framework with flexibility for City alignment.

Chair Barr highlighted the importance of leadership and encouraged members to identify issues they are personally committed to advancing. Commissioner Lobo suggested aligning the Commission's work with the City's 2050 goals rather than current Council priorities; the Commission agreed this framing helped narrow focus.

Dr. Klinsky reviewed notes from the prior session and summarized key thematic bundles: sustainable economic development, heat and the built environment, water security and innovation, solid waste and circularity, and land planning and rehabilitation. Vice Chair Torres asked whether Rio Reimagined falls under land planning, which staff confirmed. Commissioner Porter suggested adding a column to identify areas where EQSC can have measurable impact. Chair Barr added that while the categories do not capture every issue, EQSC can support staff by helping connect City departments with needed stakeholders to help the City implement its approved plans.

N. Allen noted that departments are navigating their work amid shifting federal mandates and changing conditions, and that the Commission brings an outside perspective that could help departments identify how to achieve their goals. She emphasized the importance of demonstrating progress and determining which elements of existing plans should be prioritized, noting the absence of a central data hub.

Dr. Klinsky facilitated discussion on defining EQSC's scope—whether the Commission's role is accountability, support, or a blend. Vice Chair Torres noted prior implementation challenges when EQSC recommendations were not adopted due to differing departmental priorities. Dr. Klinsky reiterated the need for clarity on how EQSC intends to engage and opened the discussion to preferred areas of focus.

Commissioner Porter suggested amplifying EQSC positions by coordinating with organizations and commissions doing similar work. Commissioner Lobo emphasized two-way information sharing between EQSC and external entities. Commissioner Groman asked whether EQSC sees itself as an oversight body or a platform for positive engagement. N. Allen clarified that the Commission's role is to make recommendations,

not oversight. Commissioner Groman added that while accountability tools are limited, EQSC must represent its constituents.

C. De La Chapa (OOS) noted that EQSC could recommend improved governance structures or processes based on its expertise. Chair Barr stressed the value of sharing ideas and raising awareness, particularly noting that the City is not currently on track to meet its 2050 goals. Commissioners expressed agreement.

Dr. Klinsky asked which thematic bundles stood out. Commissioner Lobo referenced existing community-informed plans and questioned how they align with 2050 goals. Dr. Klinsky proposed EQSC review City plans and cross-walk them with the topical areas previously identified.

Commissioner Knoop noted difficulty staying current on City activities. C. De La Chapa suggested increasing member awareness through departmental presentations. Commissioner Knoop proposed having someone regularly review and summarize Council agendas.

N. Allen highlighted the upcoming budget hearings and encouraged engagement, noting most departments were asked to propose a 5% budget reduction. Commissioner Groman cautioned against duplicating work already underway in other departments. Dr. Klinsky recommended establishing a one-month timeline for defining EQSC work priorities. Commissioner Lobo and Chair Barr expressed interest in hearing from Community and Economic Development.

Commissioners generally agreed that heat and sustainable economic development should be priority focus areas. Chair Barr requested a consolidated list from Heat Response and the Office of Sustainability outlining their key needs. N. Allen noted the upcoming April 21 State of the City address.

Commissioner Lobo referenced past challenges, including limited visibility into the EV Plan, and emphasized the need for EQSC to stay ahead of emerging City projects and priorities. She also expressed interest in understanding Councilmembers' priority initiatives. N. Allen explained that priorities typically originate from the Deputy City Managers (DCMs) or the Assistant City Managers (ACMs).

Commissioner Gorsegrner noted that the upcoming GO Bond process presents an opportunity for EQSC to influence both project selection and approach, ensuring sustainability remains central to discussions. Dr. Klinsky asked how broadly EQSC intends to focus—on the full budget or specifically the GO Bond. Vice Chair Torres reflected on prior GO Bond processes, noting that many items were already developed before the

Environmental and Sustainability Subcommittee for the GO Bond became aware of them due to internal City workflows.

N. Allen reported that the 2023 GO Bond program is midway through implementation and that internal planning for the 2028 GO Bond is underway. The CMO intends to distribute funding across multiple needs rather than concentrating on a single category. N. Allen notes that the City is actively trying to expend its 2023 GO Bond funds and that the 2028 cycle will build on lessons from the 2023 GO Bond cycle and emphasize selecting executable projects.

Commissioner Gorsegrner expressed concern that unique or high-impact projects not tied to longstanding needs could be overlooked. Chair Barr agreed and recommended reviewing current plans to identify potential projects requiring GO Bond support. Commissioner Porter suggested cross-walking GO Bond categories with existing City plans.

Chair Barr requested that the Office of Heat Response Mitigation, OOS, and OEP share their GO Bond funding needs. She concluded by identifying sustainable economic development and heat and the built environment as the Commission's two primary focus areas.

Commissioner Knoop will monitor Council meetings related to economic development and heat. Commissioner Lobo recommended inviting the Economic Development Department to present. Chair Barr will prepare a letter of support for the Solid Waste Division. Commissioner Porter suggested exploring the use of AI to support the cross-walk effort. N. Allen recommended focusing on specific plans, beginning with the Energy Access Plan, Shade Phoenix Plan, and the General Plan. No members were assigned to crosscheck the plans at this time.

## **6. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items**

No additional announcements were made.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emma Goethe, Management Assistant II