

PHOENIX ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY and SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MINUTES

May 13, 2026

Commission Members Present	City Staff Present
Penny Allee Taylor, in-person	Nancy Allen, Office of Environmental Programs (OEP), in-person
Sotiria Anagnostou, in-person	Lahayla Curiel, OEP, in-person
Darren Chapeman, Webex	Elizabeth Zima, OEP, in-person
Eric Gorseger, Webex	Erin Beasley, OEP, in-person
Caroline Lobo, Webex	Rosanne Albright, OEP, in-person
Sarah Porter, Webex	Katrina Gerster, OEP, Webex
Amy Scoville-Weaver, in-person	Carla De La Chapa, Office of Sustainability (OOS), in-person
Ginger Torres, Vice Chair, in-person	Emma Goethe, OOS, in-person
Kelly Barr, Chair, in-person	Joshua Bednarek, Planning and Development Department (PDD), in-person
Commission Members Not Present	Community Members Present
Kevin Groman	Maggie Soffel, Webex
Kathy Knoop	Martin Rodriguez, Webex
Andrea Odegard-Begay	Member of Public, Webex
Bill Sandweg	Member of Public, Webex
Colin Tetreault	

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 2:13 p.m. There were 9 members present at roll call.

2. Planning and Development Department – Sustainable Development Presentation

J. Bednarek (PDD) gave a brief overview of Phoenix’s development history. He noted that the city’s growth accelerated significantly after the invention of air conditioning. Phoenix covers 529 square miles and remains a large, fast-growing city with global visibility.

Planning and Development helps shape this growth, with the population projected to reach 1.95 million by 2030. Phoenix aims to be the most sustainable desert city in the world, though it faces key challenges including housing, drought, and heat. Policy is a tool the City uses to support responsible growth. The General Plan is updated every 10 years and has historically been well received; 75% of residents supported the previous update. The 2030 goals include 50,000 new dwelling units, 25% shade canopy coverage, and 100 Walkable Cool Corridors. Bednarek noted the dwelling unit goal has already been met. In response to Commissioner Taylor, he clarified that “new dwelling units” includes preserved and newly built homes, measured by certificates of occupancy.

Bednarek presented the General Plan map to show the overarching vision, along with the village core concept. The city was divided into 15 urban villages in the 1980s, with each core intended as a destination for jobs, retail, and services. Planning is a long-term effort, and policies aim to establish a foundation for future goals. The City is exploring a shift from suburban, sprawling development toward more compact, defined cores. Surface parking lots are the second largest land use after single-family homes, and were identified as a major opportunity for redevelopment.

Bednarek highlighted an upcoming Laveen Village workshop on May 16 to gather resident input on core centers and corridors; staff are seeking comments on desired amenities, areas of increased activity, and priority needs.

Bednarek presented a chart outlining intervention points for the General Plan based on community feedback. PDD and the City consider sustainability and density in relation to existing or planned infrastructure. In Transit Oriented Community (TOC) districts, the goal is to triple the number of residents by 2050. A long-term target is for at least 20% of Phoenix residents to live within a half mile of a public transit site. Supporting rezoning continues to include community input and collaboration, with emphasis on building long-term buy-in.

In response to Commissioner Gorsegrner, Bednarek clarified that form-based codes focus on the physical form and street-level experience of buildings rather than their specific uses. Downtown Phoenix adopted this approach in 2010, creating character areas, height zones, and a sustainability bonus system instead of regulating density or parking. This shift encourages investment by removing density concerns and supports walkability through frontage, shade, and residential interface requirements that visually connect buildings to the street. Cities like Mesa and Flagstaff use similar codes, which help attract residents and promote sustainable, pedestrian friendly development.

Recent development has highlighted challenges that are now prompting updates to the code, including stronger enforcement. For example, if a required tree is removed or damaged, it must be replaced—supporting long-term shade and walkability goals.

Commissioner Gorsegrner noted that while codes have historically been permissive, there is still room to strengthen environmental and quality standards. Bednarek emphasized pride in being strong development partners and effective administrators, highlighting recent efforts such as landscaping and water use requirements now embedded in

rezoning, dedicated historic preservation and reuse teams, and solar installation partnerships. He also referenced the tree replacement text amendment and stressed the need for EQSC support in advancing water and tree standards to align with broader sustainability goals.

Commissioners raised questions about water capacity, forecasting, infrastructure retrofits, parking heat mitigation, and tree planting challenges. Bednarek explained that Phoenix's water outlook depends on development type, but current projections are manageable if growth shifts toward lower water demand. He noted that street upgrades typically occur through development or major funding sources, shaded parking requirements remain low, and permitting can complicate tree installation. Treating trees as infrastructure introduces additional considerations like water needs and long-term impacts. Chair Barr requested that Bednarek return for a deeper discussion on how the EQSC can further support these initiatives.

3. GO Bond Overview

R. Albright (OEP) provided an overview of the General Obligation (GO) Bond process from the perspective of a department that has completed it. The 2023 program followed a long gap in GO Bond programming since 2006. Albright noted that typically bond cycles have themes; the 2023 cycle focused on City projects, while the 2006 cycle emphasized facilities and public-private partnerships. A 2006 example included a partnership with ASU and a health institution for land acquisition.

The process is led by the City Manager's Office (CMO) and Budget & Research (B&R). B&R conducts a capital needs study about two years before each cycle and evaluates proposals across land acquisition, facility improvements, and operating costs, with operating costs closely scrutinized. Proposals go through several refinement phases and require full justification. B&R recommends projects to CMO, who then coordinated with City Council. A citizen GO Bond Committee, with members appointed by the Mayor and Council, and its subcommittees also reviews proposals.

In 2023, departments requested roughly \$1.4 billion, but only \$500 million was available. The bond package included an Environmental and Sustainability section, though there is room to strengthen it. Committees review projects for alignment with their goals. Albright noted that community advocacy can significantly influence funding; heat was not originally considered in the 2023 cycle but was added due to community input. Priorities for the 2028 cycle are still unknown.

Albright relayed that subcommittees review proposals critically. Appearing before a subcommittee does not guarantee funding. Of the \$500 million of funding available in the 2023 cycle, about \$26 million went to sustainability-related projects. Projects not selected may pursue other sources of funding such as grants or general funds or may reapply for funding in the 2028 cycle.

The 2028 process is already underway. Departments are identifying projects, with initial submissions to B&R expected in November. OEP plans to advocate for more brownfields and food systems funding, such as community kitchens in City facilities.

Albright reviewed typical capital project categories, including land acquisition, design, and construction. Projects must be deliverable within five years of receiving bond funding. Departments must consider council and community priorities and use existing plans to support proposals. For 2028, proposals will require key performance indicators, as well as feasibility, schedule, and budget impact assessments.

Chair Barr noted that sustainability is a crosscutting priority that should be included in project criteria. Albright recommended raising this with B&R when they brief the Commission and gave a rough timeline for the upcoming bond cycle: summer and fall 2027 for finalizing proposed projects, followed by review by the citizen GO Bond executive committee in 2028.

Opportunities for EQSC include advocating for City-led and public-private projects, highlighting the benefits of external partnerships, and serving on subcommittees or the executive committee. Chair Barr encouraged EQSC members to bring forward ambitious ideas for the 2028 GO Bond, particularly on heat and sustainability.

4. Review and Approval of April 9, 2026 Minutes

Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve the April 9, 2026 minutes. Commissioner Scoville-Weaver seconded the motion, and it carried 9-0.

5. Public Comment

No members of the public requested to speak.

6. Food Action Plan Letter Review

Vice Chair Torres thanked the City for its work on the Food Action Plan, noting its strong community and equity focus, and emphasized the importance of ensuring the City has the capacity to implement such an ambitious effort. Albright agreed, explaining that resource limitations are exactly why the plan has a large focus on community partnerships. Torres added that Local First will submit a support letter and encouraged other commissioners and partners to do the same. When asked about funding, staff clarified that specific requests will be determined as projects develop. Chair Barr noted that the City does not shoulder this issue alone and asked about regional collaboration. Albright shared that cities like Tempe and Avondale are interested, and efforts are underway to revitalize the Maricopa County Food Coalition with interest also at the county level.

Commissioners agreed that names will be added to the bottom of EQSC's support letter as the commission formalizes its endorsement.

Commissioner Gorseigner made a motion to approve the Food Action Plan Letter. Commissioner Lobo seconded the motion, and it carried 9-0.

7. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items

Tentative future agenda items include a presentation from Dr. David Hondula in June, Community and Economic Development in July, and B&R in August. There will be dedicated time for Commissioners to brainstorm 2028 GO Bond projects. Chair Barr encouraged EQSC to brainstorm questions based on the presentation from PDD to bring to the Community and Economic Development presentation in July. Vice Chair Torres suggested having Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) come to present around the same time as Community and Economic Development. June, July, and August meetings will be 100% virtual.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emma Goethe, Management Assistant II