

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m. There were 11 members present at roll call.

The following subcommittee members arrived at the times stated below:

- Aimee Esposito at 5:08 p.m.

2. Review and approval of September 29, 2020 Minutes

ACTION:

Subcommittee member Tabitha Myers made a motion to approve the October 27, 2020 minutes. Subcommittee member Hazel Chandler seconded the motion, and it carried 12:0.

3. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

4. 2021 City Budget Process and Opportunities for Providing Community Input

Chair Torres asked the Budget and Research Department to come discuss the city budget process and how the subcommittee and public can best advocate for tree planning and adding the Tree Administrator position through the upcoming budget determination process. Amber Williamson from the Budget and Research Department overviewed the budget development process, including community input, shaping the proposed budget to council and adoption. The annual budget process begins at the beginning of the previous fiscal year with estimating expenditures and revenues which develops into the outlook for the general fund budget. This information is then shared with the City Manager's Office and Council. A trial budget is shared with the community in April when they facilitate community budget hearings to get feedback on what the community's priorities are and what they would like to see added, services they would like to reduce, and give them an opportunity to speak to their councilmember. All the comments go to the entire council for their consideration as they prepare and approve a final budget in June. In early 2020 the city began using FundPhx which is an online, interactive tool for the public to balance the budget themselves and send to the council. The tool is now available for the upcoming budget process at phoenix.gov/fundphx. Specifically, any new positions need to be approved by council, either during the budget process or via department request based on demand throughout the year. Funding needs to be identified for that position and would need to make sure the budget is balanced in the general fund. The costs for adding the position included salary, pension, benefits, city facility costs and IT assets resulting from the additional position. The public can voice their concern and request an additional position through the FundPhx tool or directly contacting Budget and Research Department, councilmembers, or the specific department for the position.

Chair Torres sked what the timeline was from today to the budget being approved in June. Williams stated that the budget process begins in July of each year for estimated department expenses and projected revenue, which has been an added challenge considering the uncertainty caused by Covid-19. In March, the council is given a general fund status and 5-year projection which shows council if

there will be a surplus or deficit when planning for the upcoming budget. In April, the community budget hearings occur, which will be virtual this year. In May, the proposed City Manager's budget goes to council and they hear all the community input. The council can then direct staff to make adjustments to the budget before the final budget is presented in June and approved before July 1st, when the fiscal year begins.

Subcommittee member Hager asked if the city has a sense of how the budget will be for next fiscal year. Williams stated that projections are hard to estimate, and they won't know until next year. There is added difficulty with CARES Act money currently expiring at the end of the year with potential to be extended, but that is not guaranteed. The CARES Act money has allowed the city to offset some costs that would usually come from the general fund. Additionally, right before Covid hit the city was able to begin collecting retail online sales tax which will impact revenue estimates for the next year. This new tax revenue is need so comparing against previous year estimates is a challenge at this point. The revenue data is expected to be available in the spring to be most accurate.

Subcommittee member Myers asked how much of federal CARES Act funding is left and what it is earmarked for? Williams stated that all funding decisions are documented online at <https://www.phoenix.gov/COVIDrelief>. Deputy City Manager Jeff Barton is going to council next month with proposed solution on how to spend rest of the funds. Most of the money has been going to help the community, through microbusinesses, utility assistance, and different initiatives to help residents of Phoenix through the pandemic.

Subcommittee member Esposito thought the FundPhx tool was good and applauded the accessibility during Covid. However, there wasn't a specific option to recommend funding for the Tree Administrator position as may fall under multiple departments so how can the public make this comment within the tool. Williams stated that all comments are compiled once you balance the budget to describe what was added and removed from each section to maintain a balanced budget. You can add the comment within the specific line item you choose to adjust. The comments will be summarized and sent to the council starting in December as part of general information packet.

Chair Torres asked if there was any way to provide a comment as a group that would go in the council report. Amber suggested you could use the FundPhx tool as a group or you could email or call the Budget and Research Department.

5. Tree and Shade Administrator Business Case Working Session

Chair Torres asked for a report from the smaller group that was working on developing the business case. Subcommittee member Myers stated that subcommittee member Rodriguez did much of the heavy lifting and called the cities with similar positions that Chief Sustainability Officer Mark Hartman had provided. The key takeaways were that Sacramento is most similar to what Phoenix should look to emulate. They had a more hands-off approach to private property and was more inclined to not have a lot of city oversight. This might make it more palatable for conservative council members and

residents. Another takeaway was that the position should not be called “Tree Administrator” and instead should be about on urban forestry so it is not only focused on trees. The position needs to include the whole infrastructure of this position. The cities recommended that the funding for the position should not a part of the general funds and should have a separate line item for that position with its own funding so it is more secure. Also, Phoenix should not include artificial shade or heat island as it would be too much. The position should be more focused on tree and vegetation infrastructure. There is a certification that the position should require. Subcommittee member Rodriguez clarified that the certification is the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist.

Subcommittee member Rodriguez spoke to Atlanta, GA; Austin, TX; and Sacramento, CA, which all have a smaller geographic footprint than Phoenix and they have an aggressive forestry program. It was recommended that Phoenix doesn’t buy more than you can chew and the position and work need to be well defined in its responsibilities so it is sustainable and have room to grow over time. Many of the cities have more than 30 people in their Urban Forestry Departments which included developers, perimeters, inspectors, and field workers who relocate trees. One person was not enough, but Phoenix needs to start somewhere. The City of Phoenix lost Richard Adkins when he quit, who Rodriguez mentioned had the specific ISA certification and would have fit well in this role. Also, the finding for this position and its work needs to be funded so that it will not be defunded during low budget periods. The City of Austin funds their program from planning and development fees. The City of Sacramento has a property tax funds their program. All cities recommended that this position has oversight over other departments working on trees and landscaping. Other departments may have different policies and would need oversight from the city’s lead arborist to determine what is best. All departments would have to go through an internal permitting process for tree removal process. Even with robust programs the cities still have difficulties meeting the needs of the residents. There is a need to hold people accountable for trees.

Subcommittee Myers mentioned that the position needed to be flexible enough to grow with perceived need of the city. Subcommittee Rodriguez mentioned that there may be a need to take a tiered approach and plan in stages for the next 5 or 10 years.

Chair Torres noted that the cities contacted have different climates than Phoenix and asked if there were any desert cities with similar tree positions or how to adjust the program to fit our needs. Subcommittee member Rodriguez noted that it is not about specific tree species and what is best for each city. Phoenix may have a greater need for an urban forestry program than the other cities because trees grow more easily there compared to Phoenix and more oversight is needed for them to thrive here. Albuquerque may be the next closest city with a desert climate. Subcommittee member Meyers noted that Tucson may have a program or may be in the process of developing one. Subcommittee member Esposito conformed that Tucson is at a very beginning stage with their Million Tree Initiative. One part of the initiative is hiring a forestry manger or supervisor. Tempe also has a tree program with Richard Adkins as a tree position, who previously worked with the City of Phoenix. Tempe is much smaller than Phoenix so that is one thing to consider. There likely isn’t a perfect fit for Phoenix to model in terms of political, spatial footprint, and climate aspects.

Vice Chair Allen mentioned that a low hanging fruit to determining characteristics of the urban forestry position is looking at Richard Adkins’ old position in Phoenix to see how it was described within the Parks Department to start out. Subcommittee member Hondula mentioned that the group wasn’t sure they had a great understanding of where that money

has gone for Adkins' position. Chief Sustainability Officer Hartman clarified that the position has been refilled, however the work Adkins did speaking at conferences and having a large network as part of his external work is not a part of the role officially. The role is focused on tree planning in Park and they have a set plan to reach a 25% tree canopy in all parks by 2025. The position is only for Parks where Adkins was part of coordination in other departments.

Subcommittee member Halperin asked what the perceived goal of the position would be and it is was to conduct a tree canopy inventory or maybe raise money and advocate for tree initiatives. There is a need for someone in this position to be politically savvy with urban design aspect to effectively advocate and promote program. Subcommittee member Rodriguez agrees that the person filling the role would need have those skills and the ISA certification would cover these skills. Subcommittee members Meyers, Rodriguez, and Vice Chair Allen all agreed that the subcommittee will need to advocate that the position requires that ISA certification. Chair Torres asked if Phoenix already has someone with this certification within the city. Chief Sustainability Officer Hartman stated that there are many arborists and contractors that are certified within the city and there is funding for maintaining trees, but this position would allow need to look at how to grow the canopy. The position would need to build and move the program forward. One idea for funding may be require the position to bring in grants and partnerships that would at least equal the amount for the position to offset the cost and fund itself. Subcommittee member Esposito asked if this was an expectation within any other position in the city. Hartman said it is not common so it might be a hard weight to bare, however grants will need to be a part of this role for growth to occur even if is not directly written in the position. Chair Torres agreed that grants will help the position and program grow over time.

Vice Chair Allen reiterated that the ISA has multiple certifications and the subcommittee should look into who in the city already is certified in positions and if anyone has the municipal certification specifically. Subcommittee member Rodriguez doesn't believe most of the positions in the city would have the certification as they are tree trimmers and not certified arborists. The verification is very specific and requires a general certification as well as many years of experience beforehand. The threshold is high and that is what is needed for this position. She also noted that applying for and receiving grants is often time consuming and may take away from the intended goal of the position to require this time split.

Chair Torres called the group to finalize the business case by the end of the next meeting in December so it can be sent to the Environmental Quality and Sustainability Commission (EQSC). The subcommittee needs to define and build out the costs and benefits to justify position and circulate before the next meeting. The smaller group within the subcommittee will meet before the next UHITS meeting and will be ready to discuss with the whole group at the next meeting. Vice Chair Allen suggested that everyone read through the Tree and Shade Master Plan as it has some of the values for the position and might be a good place to start to pulling data. Subcommittee member Rodriguez suggested looking into data on the effect of trees for businesses and how do tree and shade assist with businesses. These kinds of data will appeal to the councilmembers and would be helpful for the case. Subcommittee member Spartan noted that there is a big human health case for trees and data and statistics for the costs of healthcare due to heat and negative air quality and how trees would reduce those costs is also good data to include.

Subcommittee member Hondula asked if city staff had advice of what to include in crafting an argument on trees and downstream investment. Chief Sustainability Officer Hartman

recommended drafting a list of 5 benefits that the position will bring in simple terms. Focus on what the impact will be and have the documentation and data to back up your claims prepared, but the simpler the better. Subcommittee member Rodriguez agreed that simple messaging is best, and she plans to discuss with the councilmembers personally with this approach.

Subcommittee member Esposito asked if there are studies that detail the viability and interest in moving to Phoenix if there were more trees. Phoenix has suburbs that are cooler and is already competing with them. In 10 or 20 years when people are considering if Phoenix is a permanent home for them will trees become a factor. Subcommittee member Bettis said that there are current studies looking at the economic impacts of business closure, workforce productivity, tourism, and business attraction and retention. Future models are being developed and aren't ready yet for these topics.

Chair Torres asked where the subcommittee would get information on what the costs would include for the position. Chief Sustainability Officer Hartman Mark stated that the costs would include the base salary plus any additional loading that comes from benefits that will vary. Newer employees require about 20% or so and a person who has been employed for an extended time within the city need up to 50%. The amount of loading would depend on how senior the position would be and where the new hire would fall between salary ranges step 1 through step 9. Chair Torres clarified that for an example salary of \$100,000 it would cost \$120,000 to \$150,000 in total. Hartman confirmed and noted that a salary for this position may range from \$70,000 to \$100,000.

Chair Torres asked that the sub-group working on the business case would meet again before the next meeting to discuss and prepare a draft to share with the subcommittee based on the items discussed. This draft will be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Text Amendment Status and Opportunities for Providing Community Input

Josh Bednarek and Tricia Gomes from the Planning and Development Department (PDD) discussed the update to the text amendment. PDD is continuing to engage with internal stakeholders, such as the Parks, Law, and Neighborhood Services Departments. There will be a meeting next week with the development community. PDD is on track to collect all comments and report back to EQSC in December. The public hearing process will start in early 2021. Subcommittee members can send any feedback to Bednarek and Gomes via email.

Chair Torres asked if subcommittee members had any comments on the text amendment and asked that members provide comments to city staff now or at future public meetings.

Subcommittee member Bettis asked what the process is for notifying others interested stakeholders. Bednarek instructed members to send information to other contacts and copy Bednarek and Gomes on those emails.

Subcommittee member Rodriguez mentioned that Neighborhood Services Department (NSD) has oversight but in the text amendment there isn't any teeth for holding someone accountable for landscaping. Gomes clarified that NSD is tasked with enforcing Chapter 41 of the city code and the text amendment added language to the areas where enforcement from NSD or Prosecutors office wasn't strong enough. The text amendment

includes enhanced language for stronger enforcement. The city and NSD are looking for compliance instead of going to court. The end goal is to have compliance. NSD has a good compliance record in the 90% range.

7. Continue Discussion: Development of city policy to prioritize tree plantings/shade corridors in vulnerable communities

Agenda item 7 was not discussed due to time and issues with subcommittee members unable to view the map provided by Erik Wilson with the Streets Transportation Department during the last meeting. City staff will follow up to resolve the issues and redistribute the link when it is ready.

8. Announcements and Review of Future Agenda Items

Chair Torres stated that the next meeting will be focused on working to finalize the business case and asked for suggestions on future agenda items. Subcommittee member Bettis offered that she can provide information on what The Nature Conservancy is doing regarding vulnerability for a future meeting. Subcommittee member Hager asked that the subcommittee hear from the Regional Urban Forestry Roundtable for an update on their work and how their efforts work together with the subcommittee.

9. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katrina Gerster, Environmental Quality Specialist