

Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

March 4, 2021

1:00 p.m.

Retreat Meeting Minutes

PSC Commissioners Present: Jeff Bachrach, Ben Bortolazzo, Jessica Gittemeier, Mike Houck, Katie Larsell, Oriana Magnera, Steph Routh, Katherine Schultz, Chris Smith, Eli Spevak [Valeria McWilliams, incoming PSC member]

City Staff Presenting: Andrea Durbin, Sandra Wood, Donnie Oliveira, Andria Jacob, Joe Zehnder; Sam Diaz, Amanda Watson (Mayor's office); Rico Lujan Valerio (Commissioner Rubio's office); Maja Haium (City Attorney's office)

Documents and Presentations for today's meeting

Chair Spevak called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Chair Spevak: In keeping with the Oregon Public Meetings law, Statutory land use hearing requirements, and Title 33 of the Portland City Code, the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission is holding this meeting virtually.

- All members of the PSC are attending remotely, and the City has made several avenues available for the public to watch the broadcast of this meeting.
- The PSC is taking these steps as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to limit in-person contact and promote social distancing. The pandemic is an emergency that threatens the public health, safety and welfare which requires us to meet remotely by electronic communications.
- Thank you all for your patience, humor, flexibility and understanding as we manage through this difficult situation to do the City's business.

Welcome & Introductions

PSC members and staff shared their names, roles, and a sentence about "what you do when you're not giving all your time to the PSC."

Greetings from Mayor Wheeler's and Commissioner Rubio's Teams

Amanda Watson is Sr Policy Advisor for Mayor Wheeler.

Sam Diaz is in Mayor Wheeler's office, assisting on COVID-19 relief and recovery.

Sam: We are excited to have Commissioner Rubio as the Commissioner-in-Charge for BPS, working with Rico as a unified front with the PSC. This week is the one-year mark since Oregon's first COVID-19 case. The City shifted our work to remote shortly after. Thanks for everyone to your continued commitment to public service and your ability to quickly adapt.

It is alright to slow down! The office wants to help support the PSC on the "needs to have" and the "nice to have". The City has new relationships because of where we're at. We hear from the economists

quite a bit – into a k-shaped recovery. Economic hardships and evictions will continue to hinder our most vulnerable communities. I encourage the PSC to reach out to our office, and we now have quarterly check-ins with PSC Officers. Clear strategies that include recovery as a consideration are important.

Amanda noted the recent PSC interviews and the Mayor's commitment and note of how important the PSC is to the City in looking forward and building our city. PSC members bring so many perspectives and diverse backgrounds to our work. Thank you for your commitment.

Rico is the Policy Director for Commissioner Rubio. Thank you for having me in this space today. Team Rubio is excited to be part of BPS and work with the PSC. There are so many foundation things and work that have significant impact on changes for our city. A big priority we have is COVID-19 recovery, specifically how it's affecting our BIPOC communities. We are very honest and acknowledge what we know and what we don't know. We rely heavily on your and the bureau and your expertise in how we can best serve Portlanders and our community.

Today's Agenda

Commissioner Schultz: Today we are exploring whether the PSC should be playing a greater role in advancing the City's climate and sustainability goals; how the PSC should focus our work; and how to structure the work. After the brainstorm of scenarios, we will look for some alignment so we can make recommendations on how we feel the PSC should be engaging on this piece of work in the Commission's future.

Looking Back

Commissioner Schultz shared the [list of sustainability projects](#) that have come before the PSC since its inception in 2010. The purpose of the PSC as currently codified is:

The Planning and Sustainability Commission advises City Council on the City's long-range goals, policies, and programs for land use, planning, and sustainability. In making recommendations and decisions, it considers the economic, environmental, and social well-being of the city in an integrated fashion. The Commission has specific responsibility for the stewardship, development and maintenance of the City's Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plan, and zoning code. The Commission is committed to effective public involvement and leadership in its work and in the decisions it considers. (33.710.040.A)

Many of the sustainability projects we've seen have come before us as briefings with little time for workshopping and providing strategic input – which is part of our conversation about if the PSC is the body to be providing more input on these projects; and if not the PSC, is there a recommendation about revising our charge or a different commission that should be? A next step will be to prioritize the work that comes before the PSC.

Commissioner Smith noted he was on the Commission at the time of the merger (Planning Commission and the joint City/County Sustainable Development Commission). The logic was that we were mainstreaming sustainability work, and there is a benefit to look at planning and sustainability as a whole. I'm wedded to the idea that having the work with one commission is an advantage and should continue. The challenge is how we manage the workload.

Commissioner Houck primarily saw the PSC as having more gravitas or attention that the SDC seemed to have. My interest on serving on the PSC was to provide a natural resource background and integrate

that into City planning. Nature in the city is vitally important, though I was told there is no place for nature in the city – so I am definitely on the same page as *Commissioner Smith* about keeping one commission.

Looking Forward

Andria provided a bit about the past work, ground us in the actual emissions inventory, and discussed where we've come since 2015.

Presentation

We are very far from achieving our 2030 and ultimate 2050 goals in terms of carbon reduction. Emissions (sector-based analysis) are largely from transportation, which have been ticking up recently. Buildings and how we heat/power/plug in our homes are the next biggest, but these have decreased a bit.

In 2015, we look at how we measure emissions – in terms of what we consume in addition to the sector-based analysis. We need to look at both the sectors and the things we consume.

Commissioners Magnera: How much is the lack of progress due to local policy and/versus state and larger?

- Andria: Most decarbonization comes from the State level policies (e.g. energy efficiency). Transportation is more a local issue, but funding is tied to State and Federal funding and policy. There are many more decision points for moving around than there are for things like building policy. We want to look at what is in our control and activate those levers going forward. We have an advocacy role in the other spheres but not much control.

The 2015 Climate Action Plan added an equity and racial equity lens and input. Climate Justice by Design is a human-centered design effort that BPS staff is helping to support. Andria's team is working on decarbonization of the grid, transportation, and building systems.

The pathways to net zero carbon (slide 10) shows the various sectors that we need to work on to get there. Even all these pieces may not get us to our goals.

Specific projects: carbon from the built environment mostly comes from existing buildings. We are looking at regulatory pathways to establish a performance standard to squeeze the carbon out of existing buildings (e.g. energy efficiency). Electricity coming in has to be renewable.

Commissioner Houck: I was hoping we would hear something about adaptation. A lot is embedded in the CAP, but there is a separate document – the Climate Preparation Strategies that we need to keep front and center. I noted in the opening slide the CAP was illustrated but not the Climate Preparation Strategies. I have expressed concern in the past that while elements of the CPS are embedded in the CAP the full SPS should accompany the CAP. This is the arena regarding sustainability that I hope the PSC will be more engaged in in the future.

Commissioner McWilliams: With implementation in the future years, how is the bureau thinking about equitable workforce development in these sectors?

Andrea touched on the 3-year strategic vision and the work we have been doing over the past year. We have been thinking about better structuring our work at BPS and also bringing in adaptation focus as well. Some of this work is about reorganizing our work. Some changes we've made internal to BPS is to integrate our transportation and building teams into one (Andria's team). Elevating community benefits and establishing a focus through our climate work, which includes wealth generation opportunities and integrating this into our work. Part of the strategic planning process for BPS right now is to look at integrating our environmental planning team into the sustainability work. So we are making structural changes to support the goals.

Waste collection, climate work, PCEF, and sustainable consumption make up our sustainability programs at BPS. Lots of the work we're doing have specific programs that roll up into these larger buckets of work. Many are ongoing programs, not policy- or legislative-related.

Donnie added that we're shifting our role as a regulator in the waste sector to a tool to generate wealth for BIPOC communities and women-owned businesses. We're looking at the waste utility in a different way. This is still conceptual at this point, but it's new.

Commissioners Houck: We had lots of interesting conversation about the role of nature in the city from our Portland Plan and Comprehensive Plan conversations – valuing nature for its intrinsic value. I don't see anything about protecting ecosystem health and biodiversity, but I hope we'll see this in the future. This is part of working with BES, Parks, PBOT and others to restore and protect natural systems in the city.

PSC's Role in Advancing the City's Sustainability Work

Four scenarios were offered:

1. Planning Commission (status quo)
 - Commission focuses on land use and transportation planning.
2. (Sustainable) Planning Commission
 - Commission focuses on land use and transportation planning
 - AND brings a stronger sustainability/climate lens to land use and transportation planning work.
3. Planning & Sustainability Commission
 - Commission focuses on land use and transportation planning
 - AND brings a stronger sustainability/climate lens to land use and transportation planning work
 - PLUS is an ongoing advisory body for sustainability/climate policies and programs.
4. Two Commissions: Planning Commission and Sustainability/Climate Commission
 - A Planning Commission:
 - Focuses on land use and transportation planning
 - AND brings a stronger sustainability/climate lens to land use and transportation planning work.

A Sustainability/Climate Commission:

- Is an ongoing advisory body for sustainability/climate policies and programs.

At a minimum, this is a Sustainable Planning Commission currently.

Commissioner Bachrach: It seems that the starting point is that I believe the current code says we're supposed to do both planning and sustainability commission.

Commissioner Smith: We have the luxury, being one degree removed from the electoral process, to focus on policy better than Council. When policy goes through us, we can bolster it without being in the fully political decision-making role that Council is. So we bring lots of value in doing that. All the areas that Title 33 says we can have hearings and make recommendations on can all benefit. So I want to have the broadest jurisdiction possible. But some conflict has been about whether the PSC and BPS workplan need to be the same way and what the mechanisms may be. We are not locked into the silos of the commission form of government.

Chair Spevak: I think it helps our group providing policy input to the city hasn't been happening – but I think in part this is a workload issue.

Commissioner Larsell: I think there is a capacity problem. But what would work best for the climate work? If we're spending lots of time on it, does that help advance it? PCEF is a huge part, and it's completely separate. I'm feeling humble in all this.

Commissioner Schultz: Yes, there is work that some work isn't coming through us, but we are trying to tease it out.

Commissioner Magnera: Where is land use going in Oregon? One focused on climate, one focused on equity / justice. Scenario 2 is appealing to me because it acknowledges where land use is going in terms of the State approach; and it helps it hone that we're focused on the intersection instead of being a gatekeeper for all the sustainability work. What do we want to do versus our capacity – this is a happy medium and still be ahead of the curve for planning commissions.

Commissioner Bortolazzo: Is there perhaps another question, which might be aspirational, but is there an opportunity for a project-by-project level to bring in a stronger sustainability lens from the beginning? Not just the policy and regulatory views with sustainability then overlaid, but all together from the beginning of a project?

- *Commissioner Schultz:* So, for example, do you think the EV policy should come through the PSC? Should we be doing more of this work as well?
- *Commissioner Bortolazzo:* This is my dilemma. There is a capacity issue – it would be great to have this, but the constraints of time and effort are key. I agree with *Commissioner Magnera* that perhaps scenario 2 is a good option.

Commissioner Bachrach: I agree with this almost wholehearted except “but we should keep the two commissions together.” I think we can be more conscious of sustainability, just like equity has become a more important lens in everything we do. I just don't think we have the capacity to be good stewards of both planning and sustainability/climate. That deserves a public commission focused on it to devote as much thought and attention as we do to land use issues and policies. I think #2 works, but I think it would be a mistake to do this without suggesting a public body that is responsible for sustainability/climate. That is a huge body of work that's incredibly important, and it deserves its ow

commission to focus on it wholly. If we had a sustainability commission, they could come and provide testimony or ideas/considerations to us as a planning commission. I think #2 is our sweet spot.

Commissioner Houck: As I mentioned, I was excited about the combined commission because the concept of sustainability was raised considerably because this commission makes recommendations to Council. I would want, if it is a separate commission, to have the same gravitas as the PSC has in our influence/stature to Council. If it doesn't, then forget it. Another tension is about the working relationship between the PSC and BPS staff. We are reactive to what is brought to us, but we would like to see the commission have impact on what we'd like to see before us. This is a dynamic. An argument for a separate commission would be that they would be in a position to create their agenda with staff.

Chair Spevak: I'm hearing that votes for #2 are really votes for #5 (a separate commission). More expertise, diverse, more leadership opportunities, work with other bureaus. This is how they do it at the County. They work with staff on a workplan. But is the City ready to do that?

Commissioner Routh: We have an opportunity – there are bodies that are advisory that involve frontline communities that are emerging in some of the climate and sustainability work. I'm moving towards scenario 2 because it can create space for more leadership. So I'm questioning between 2 and 5.

Commissioner Magnera: The question of a sustainability and planning commission. I think it adds a level of bureaucracy if we add another commission. We can make a short-term plan, but we may find ourselves in another realm of government in the next years. That direction is focused on more accessibility rather than less. We are not representative for a lot of people in Portland. Does a separate commission truly acknowledge those most affected by the climate crisis? Planning is a rather rigid situation and has very specific scopes and regulations. But climate needs a slightly different approach to how you create accountability. The more expansive a climate process, the better I think.

Commissioner Schultz: The importance of planning commission has had to date, elevating sustainability through our commission has been important. But with the world's struggles and what we have to tackle today, I'm thinking we flip this to be a climate commission that planning projects comes through.

Commissioner Bachrach: I think there is a function the planning commission should play and has to statutorily. We are responsible for Title 33. The nuts and bolts of planning and development through this lens are necessary. This is a requirement for cities in the state of Oregon.

Commissioner Magnera: A community focus is really important, and that's the Climate Justice by Design Work. There is a climate body – I don't think a commission is quite right since it's an older way of doing things – that will fit within the needs of communities who are working on this. We need something more accessible and less formal that may limit the way some people feel working in certain spaces. I don't think a sustainability commission similar to the planning commission is quite right.

Commissioner Smith:

Commissioner Bortolazzo: I'm not sure we need another City body. Looking at scenario 4, it's kind of breaking up the commission as we know it and flipping the two elements. What I like about it is it might force the hand to create a more streamlined and simplified code.

Commissioner Smith: I need to know more about what's happening with the Climate Justice by Design process. That will inform the decision to a great degree. I suspect it doesn't make sense until we see how the form of government shakes out. The interesting thing about the planning role is that we don't entirely control it – the State controls much of what a planning commission does. We do have the ability to contain this a bit with a subcommittee process that can act on the PSC's behalf.

Commissioner Gittemeier: I've been trying to take all this in. The charter review and perhaps what the people of Portland want their government to look like. For me it's interesting to take part in this discussion. Focusing on our legal requirements and how that works with all the other options is an interesting conversation.

What feels realistic and right for this body to be focusing on?

Chair Spevak: We might consider an interim strategy until Climate Justice by Design launches.

Commissioner McWilliams: It would be helpful to know what and where all the other bodies/commissions are to better understand where the gaps may be.

Andrea: Climate Justice by Design is being developed. Community partners to identify climate actions that provide community benefits. It's going to take time to develop, and we're not sure what it looks like. It's a community-driven process with the City and County. We work very closely with community on proposals (e.g. EV ready code, Waste Equity, PCEF, etc). We are convening but it's different community partners depending on the specific issue.

Commissioner Schultz: The thing that I have is that because you have a conversation, it limits some people's participation. For the PSC, there are community members who drive the project to the point that it gets to us. Then the PSC has a hearing. This is much broader cross-section of folks commenting on what's going to happen (I think). In the other process, is there a notion about how you keep adding to get voices from the entire cross-section of the city?

- *Andrea:* comment periods, City Council hearings. But the land use process is unique to land use related issues. Lots of work the City does doesn't have the same process as the PSC.

Commissioner Bachrach: With the climate justice group, we are supposed to be the sustainability commission. So I think we're hanging if there is a conversation around these issues outside of our commission. This goes back to our original questions framing today's discussion.

Andrea: There is a clear role for the PSC. The Comp Plan prioritizes racial equity, climate, and engaging with community better.

Maja: One way to think about the capacity, which is a good approach, is the statutory obligations under the code. How much time for that versus how much time is leftover to devote to sustainability issues is a question. This is how we should look at this... is there capacity to add on after the statutory needs of the planning commission?

Commissioner Gittemeier: For sustainability work, is there some work not going through community organizations? Or is it all going to the community?

- Andrea: Some work is simply programmatic in nature. So it depends. But when we're developing new policies, we are starting with community, which is a big shift based on the climate emergency declaration – centering community in climate planning work.

4 @ Planning and Sustainability Commission

7 @ focus on Sustainable Planning Commission with questions about what that looks like about a second commission. (hybrid between scenario 2 and 3).

Commissioner Schultz: Do we want to just focus on what we are and let another commission discussion happen outside of the PSC conversation? Narrowing down the possibilities:

- Scenario 2: we do land use planning and transportation and the build environment with climate work.
- Scenario 3: scenario 2 plus all the other work in BPS.

Joe: In the Comp Plan, the expectations for the level of work including carbon reduction are clear. So the quality of work staff has to do to work with you is something we have and want to work with you better. This advances the climate work as well. Planning work is climate work, and we can bump that up more.

Next Steps

Commissioner Schultz noted we should better define Scenario 2, since that's where we landed. Then, how do we work to prioritize the work that comes through the PSC? There is more opportunity to iterate and move forward from here. But this is a bit more of a consensus on how we recommend the PSC does its work.

Chair Spevak: Scenario 2 in our conversation is good, but as written I don't see the built environment necessarily addressed. Building performance standards are important, and we can see what of that can be included in our scope outside of just Title 33.

Next Wednesday, Council will be appointing our next PSC Commissioners. Valeria will fill the currently open position. Joining us in June will be Johnell Bell, Gabe Sheoships, and Erica Thompson.

Adjourn

Chair Spevak adjourned the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

Submitted by Julie Ocken