



MINUTES
Environmental Sustainability Commission
Regular Meeting of September 7, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 4:18 p.m.

Present: Nate Ivy, Carolyn Obata, Shreya Ramachandran, Steve Skala

Absent: Paul Kelley, Richard Godfrey

Oral Communications:
None.

Approval of Minutes:
Regular meeting minutes of June 1, 2023. Motion to approve by Commissioner Ivy; second by Commissioner Skala. Minutes approved unanimously.

Scheduled Items:

5.1 Nominate and Appoint a Vice-Chair

Following staff recommendation, Commissioner Skala motioned and Commissioner Ivy seconded the nomination of Commissioner Obata as Vice-Chair. Vice-Chair Obata expressed her gratitude for the nomination. The Commission voted unanimously to approve. Vice Chair Obata's appointment will continue through the end of the 2023 calendar year, and new or re-appointments for both the Chair and Vice Chair roles shall be made at the first meeting in 2024.

5.2 Staff Updates

Sustainability Manager Rachel DiFranco:

- East Bay Community Energy (EBCE) is changing its name to Ava Community Energy (Ava). The impetus for the change is because communities outside of the "East Bay" have joined EBCE – these include Stockton, Tracy, and Lathrop from San Joaquin County. While not an acronym, the name is inspired by the fact that Ava serves Alameda County and the Valley. The name change will go into effect in October 2023.

Community Development Director Dan Schoenholz:

- The state's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program has awarded a \$45.8M grant to support the "3900 Thornton" affordable housing project in Fremont. The project, led by nonprofit affordable housing developer

Resources for Community Development (RCD), will transform an underutilized vacant lot into a sustainable building with 128 affordable homes. Approximately \$4.3 million of the AHSC grant will go towards promoting clean transportation by supporting the Centerville Complete Streets project and improvements to the Centerville Train Station. Another \$6 million of the grant will go to the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission to replace an outdated Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) diesel locomotive with a modern zero-emission locomotive.

Sustainability Coordinator Kranti Kapur:

- Earlier this year, the ICLEI USA Action Fund awarded a \$1M grant to Habitat for Humanity East Bay/Silicon Valley to support the Home Electrification Equity Project (HEEP), which will support the upgrade of low-income homes in Fremont, Hayward, Oakland, and Berkeley to be all-electric and powered by solar energy. The cities are collaborating with Habitat to identify low-income homes that will benefit from the retrofits over the next year. The grant, made possible through funding from Google.org, aims to utilize data to form a model for climate-smart upgrades that can be replicated and scaled in communities across the country.

5.3 Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner Ivy shared the following:

- FUSD received the StopWaste Leadership Award for Excellence in Sustainability for creating roadmap towards climate literacy with its Climate Literacy and Environmental Education Network (CLEEN).
- A reusable pilot for school cafeterias is continuing to roll out at various schools through Fremont.
- FUSD is continuing Garden Learning opportunities for teachers and as well as the ACWD Project Wet trainings for science-based water education for teachers.
- FUSD will be moving forward with solar+battery storage installations at a number of schools.

Commissioner Skala shared the following:

- PW-Transportation has implemented traffic timing signal modifications on Paseo from up North to Fremont Blvd., which led to significantly reduced times at red lights.

Student Commissioner Ramachandran shared the following:

- Commissioner Ramachandran was elected as the Stanford Junior Class President and as Climate Policy Director for Sustainable Stanford.
- Stanford is in the process of developing a Climate Plan but is not engaging the students very well.
- Commissioner Ramachandran visited National Geographic's headquarters as part of the NatGeo Young Explorer series.
- Commissioner Ramachandran attended the UN Water Conference last spring and was the only student in attendance.

Vice-Chair Obata shared the following:

- Vice-Chair Obata shared her experience about different events she attended related to electrification and sustainability specifically relatable to Fremont.
- Promotion of the Fremont Green Challenge was successful at the Art & Wine Festival where Commissioners Obata and Skala volunteered to raise awareness about the FGC with residents.

5.4 *Climate Ready Fremont Final Plan*

At the June 1, 2023, ESC meeting, staff presented a draft of *Climate Ready Fremont*, the update to the City’s Climate Action Plan, for the Commission’s consideration. The ESC recommended that the City Council consider the *Climate Ready Fremont* draft and release the draft for a period of public comment. The ESC also provided comments for staff consideration in the preparation of the final plan.

On June 20, staff presented the draft plan to City Council. A summary of the ESC’s comments was included in the City Council staff report. Council asked clarifying questions and offered comments on the plan. After discussion, City Council voted unanimously to release the draft *Climate Ready Fremont* plan for a period of public review and comment.

From June 21 to July 31, 2023, the draft was made available for the public to review and provide feedback through the MyFremont community engagement platform. A total of 777 participants visited the project page, and 77 of those directly contributed in either discussion forums, polls, and/or asked questions. After closing the topic on MyFremont, staff worked to prepare a revised version of *Climate Ready Fremont* incorporating relevant comments and concerns from the ESC, Council, and the public.

Staff presented this revised final draft of the *Climate Ready Fremont* plan to the ESC and requested feedback and input from the ESC. The ESC feedback related to the following themes / topic areas:

- **Vehicle-to-grid integration:** Vice-Chair Obata suggested that bi-directional charging and vehicle-to-grid integration be referenced more specifically within actions related to grid modernization.
- **Low carbon construction:** Vice-Chair Obata stressed the importance of low carbon materials in building construction. Staff responded that low carbon materials are included in actions related to buildings and energy.
- **Active transportation:** Commissioner Skala stressed the importance of walkable amenities and destinations and support of active transportation options as listed in the City’s Active Transportation, Mobility Action, and Trails Strategy Plans, especially for last mile commutes. Staff identified areas where stronger reference to active transportation options for last mile trips could be incorporated into the plan.
- **Transportation demand management:** Commissioner Skala suggested that carsharing be included more significantly in the plan. He also highlighted the

importance of subsidized transit vouchers for youth, seniors, and riders with disabilities. Staff responded that these could be incorporated.

- **Parking and TODs:** Commissioner Skala inquired about establishing stronger parking regulations (minimums and maximums), especially in transit-oriented development (TOD) areas. Staff responded that TODs are highly regulated by the state, but the City has more authority over non-TOD areas. Staff also stated that regulations around parking are balancing act as we want to encourage development in transit rich areas, but if we limit parking too much it could discourage developers from building there altogether.
- **Materials reuse:** Vice-Chair Obata highlighted the importance of material repair and reuse. Staff shared that there is a Bay Area Deconstruction Workgroup that Environmental Services participates in, and that reference to it can be included in the plan.
- **Permeable pavement:** Student Commissioner Ramachandran stressed the importance of permeable pavement for reducing the risk of flooding as well as for groundwater recharge.
- **Urban forest:** Commissioner Skala highlighted the importance of trees not just for carbon sequestration but also for reducing the urban heat island effect. Commissioner Ivy also suggested that tree planting efforts within City parks should specifically be called out in the plan.
- **Mental and emotional effects of climate change:** Commissioner Ivy stressed the importance of addressing the effects of climate change on mental health, and suggested that it be integrated more significantly in the plan.
- **Community engagement:** Student Commissioner Ramachandran suggested that the City create a Volunteer Coordinator position. Staff responded that requests for positions will not be part of the plan update, but that the desire for more coordination of volunteer opportunities will be shared with relevant departments.

The following Public Comments were made in relation to this item:

- Lisa Danz (Citizens Climate Lobby): Strengthen land use regulations where the City has the authority. Consider eliminating parking minimums citywide and establishing parking maximums.
- Abe Mazliach (Citizens Climate Lobby): Increase efforts towards electrification and educate residents on the benefits of adopting electrification.
- Caroline Harris (Tri City Ecology Center): Focus on public engagement for awareness around continuing efforts to reduce GHG emissions and creating healthy livable society.
- Maria (Fremont resident): Prioritize transit-oriented housing developments for ease of access and increased green mobility. Provide more accountability and visibility into actions implemented towards reducing emissions.

Commissioner Skala then motioned to approve the plan with staff to incorporate various inputs from Commissioners to the best of its ability. Commissioner Ivy seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend the final *Climate Ready Fremont* plan to City Council.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel DiFranco". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Rachel DiFranco
Sustainability Manager