

CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Economic Vitality Commission

5:30 PM
 July 21, 2021

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Alternate Meeting Format: On March 6, 2020 the Mayor declared a civil emergency due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 24, 2020 the Governor issued Proclamation 20-28 relating to the COVID-19 emergency and open public meetings. The proclamation has been extended. Due to these factors, the meeting was held using a remote meeting platform.

Commissioners Present:

Kathy McCorry, Chair
 Ashwin Muthuvenkataraman
 Art Freas, Alternate
 Chris Reichley, Alternate
 Anjali Remme, Alternate

Administration/Staff:

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic
 Development Manager
 Megan Curtis-Murphy, Senior
 Sustainability Coordinator

Commissioners Not Present (Excused):

Jon Edwards, Vice Chair
 Thomas Brown
 Tom Rogers
 Therese Garcia
 Corby Casler
 Joan Probala
 Christopher Beaudoin

Benton Coblentz, Economic Development
 Coordinator/Economic Recovery
 Coordinator

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM. McCORRY, Chair, noted that although a quorum is not currently present, MUTHUVENKATARAMAN is expected to join the meeting shortly. Approval of minutes was deferred.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Davis Hayes noted that emailed comments from Kristi Tripple, Vice President for Community Development, Rowley Properties, on the proposed Climate Action Plan were received and forwarded to all Commissioners prior to the meeting. There were no other comments.

AGENDA ITEMS

a) **Climate Action Plan Update, (D)**

Presented by:

Megan Curtis-Murphy, Senior Sustainability Coordinator

Curtis-Murphy made staff's presentation, including the purpose of tonight's presentation on the Issaquah Climate Action Plan (ICAP); some background on actions taken to develop the plan to date; and the proposed steps to review and approve the plan. She continued her presentation on the specific drivers and impacts of climate change on the City, including health impacts, economic impacts, flood risk, and wildfire risk; goals, targets, and metrics proposed for the ICAP; data from 2017 on the City's emissions, and projections from that data for future emissions and reduction targets; focus areas and goals, including strategies for achieving those goals; targets and metrics for each focus area; action types and criteria; and a proposed multi-criteria analysis to help the City evaluate the actions.

She asked for feedback from Commissioners on the goals and strategies, action types, and the multi-criteria analysis. She also highlighted the next steps in the process of engaging stakeholders, incorporating feedback, and creating a draft for review by the City and community.

FREAS asked whether staff is aware of any grants available to small businesses such as his to replace equipment that uses gas with more modern equipment that would create fewer emissions. Curtis-Murphy replied she isn't aware of anything specifically available, but will work with FREAS to connect with Puget Sound Energy about any possibilities.

McCORRY noted the data indicates that transportation is a large contributor to carbon emissions; about 30,000 City residents work elsewhere and about 30,000 people come into the City to work each day. She continued she would like to see the plan directly address working with regional partners for transit alternatives that would help reduce carbon emissions. Curtis-Murphy agreed, and said Stephen Padua, the City's Senior Transportation Planner, is working to ensure that the City's Mobility Master Plan coordinates with the ICAP. Padua is also active in regional transportation planning activities, she continued. In addition, the City works closely with large employers such as Costco to support vanpools and other commute trip reduction activities. McCORRY said it would be good to see that awareness of regional partnerships reflected in every one of the City's plans. She continued she didn't see wildfires addressed in the draft ICAP. Curtis-Murphy said future discussions on wildfires are planned. The City has been working with King County and other regional partners on developing a strategy that will apply region wide. We also plan to bring in forestry aspects of addressing wildfires as well, she added. (MUTHUVENKATARAMAN joined the meeting at this time, 5:57 PM.)

REICHLEY said the educational piece is very important. The public needs to hear "what's in it for me" as a resident, or as a business, for the City to get public buy-in. He urged educational efforts to begin now. For example, people should hear what it means to cut emissions, and what the impacts on businesses would be to make changes to cut emissions. REMME added the presentation was broad in scope. People are interested in specific actions that they can take as a business owner, or as a resident. Every business can take some action, and it would be good for the City to provide them with some recommendations on what they can do.

FREAS spoke in favor of educating people on how to use the bus system. He said he's very familiar with buses, having used them in many cities, but some people who are not as familiar may need some hand-holding or individual concierge-type services to help them achieve a greater comfort level with using the bus. McCORRY agreed. She noted Metro Transit may already have some tools to educate people but people may not be aware they exist, and spoke in favor of increasing opportunities for people to use the bus.

b) Commission Roles Discussion, (D)

Presented by:

Kathy McCorry, Commission Chair

McCORRY noted this discussion is a continuation from the last EVC meeting. Davis Hayes displayed several pages from the City's Strategic Plan (pages 33-34) on Social and Economic Vitality. She gave some context for what that section includes, and added some new information since the Strategic Plan was adopted.

McCORRY referred to the information in the agenda packet on industry trends (page 39) and growth projections for 2018-2023 (pages 43-44). She suggested that EVC members carve out time over the next year to look closely at this data and help create a picture of what the industries that create "wage earning jobs" (e.g., computers and mathematics) require, and how the City might be able to support those industries as potential employers. She continued EVC

could develop a list of potential businesses, broken down by industry, that would create the kind of jobs that would support the goals in the City's Strategic Plan. REICHLEY agreed that doing research on what industries to target would be useful, as well as how to keep big employers like Costco and REI doing business in the City. FREAS suggested also looking at small businesses that larger businesses rely on, and encouraging them to locate in the same area. He suggested also going into the community and asking small businesses what their needs are. For example, he continued, it is difficult to find HVAC and small-project carpenters that can meet the needs of small businesses.

McCORRY asked staff whether that kind of effort would be helpful for staff. Davis Hayes replied yes; building on our existing assets, meaning our large employers already here, is likely to have the most success. She said some data may be available about "retail leakage," and will do some research and present it to EVC members. McCORRY suggested each Commissioner look at the Labor Market report (included in the agenda, and which Davis Hayes will re-send) and come up with their top three takeaways for discussion at the next meeting.

REMME suggested also hearing from a commercial real estate broker about what they are experiencing in terms of retail space in the City. MUTHUVENKATARAMAN noted the Super Supplements store in closing in three days. He said he spoke to an employee who indicated that people are doing more shopping with Amazon instead of going to retail stores. Commissioners discussed changing shopping patterns, particularly retail going to online sales only. McCORRY said her understanding is that shopping centers may have vacancies but there are waiting lists of businesses who want to locate there. Davis Hayes confirmed that is correct, especially in the Highlands and at the Commons. MUTHUVENKATARAMAN noted there was work on the former Justice store next to Target for a new business. FREAS said his business has experienced increased online sales in recent months. MUTHUVENKATARAMAN said retail sales outside the major urban areas are doing well, but more urban areas are seeing a shift to more online shopping. FREAS noted downtown Seattle as a shopping destination is not what it used to be, a trend that could be good for Issaquah.

REICHLEY said when he looks at the report, he will use the lens of what businesses need that are reimaging, rebuilding, or recovering as a result of the pandemic, and then try to figure out what would be helpful. Businesses trying to recover, for example; what do they need.

Coblentz gave a recap of seven Business Retention Evaluation interviews held earlier this year in which EVC members participated. He briefly described the nature of the businesses interviewed, and gave details about the feedback received from them on trends and issues they are facing. He said two pieces of feedback stood out: uncertainty due to Covid restrictions and uncertainty and difficulty with recruiting employees. He said the businesses were appreciative of the opportunity to speak to City representatives, including EVC members.

REICHLEY suggested that BRE-type interviews be scheduled using a virtual or online platform, not just as an annual activity. Staff made a note of it. Davis Hayes said staff does do year-round interviews with businesses, but perhaps a note could be added to the City's website for a business to contact staff at their convenience rather than waiting to be contacted by the City. The Commissioners offered other ideas for reaching out to businesses on a more frequent schedule.

REPORTS

- a) Business Openings, Closures, and Industry Trends. As noted previously, Super Supplements and Justice are both closing/closed in the Commons shopping center on Gilman Boulevard. REICHLEY noted his branch of Harborstone Credit Union is

expanding its staff. FREAS reported on success in getting shipments of supplies from Europe. The Commission discussed general shortages of cars and computers, as well as delays in getting other products and materials. MCCORRY noted a relatively new business, Union Marine, is a large employer with over 100 employees. Staff will check on the latest developments in constructing the new Evergreen Ford dealership.

- b) City Council Report Out. Coblenz described the funding the City is receiving through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (\$11 million) and explained his new role in administering those funds.

Davis Hayes gave information from the Community Survey on residents' perceptions of life in the City of Issaquah (pages 47-48). McCORRY noted that "... a good place to find a job" ranked lowest of the quality of life indicators. Do we know what type of resident responded to the survey, she asked. Knowing that might help us understand what kind of jobs people are not finding in the City. Davis Hayes said she doesn't have that kind of detail, but will dig deeper and see if more information is available.

Davis Hayes reported that the City Council will begin holding its meetings in a hybrid "virtual and also in Council Chambers" fashion beginning August 2. The Commission briefly discussed the pros and cons of meeting virtually versus in-person meetings; most indicated they are open to either option.

- c) 2021 Schedule. Davis Hayes said right now it appears EVC will have a quorum for its August meeting; staff will confirm. The meeting will be held virtually. She noted staff will be contacting EVC about rescheduling the September meeting because of a conflict with a holiday and will be sharing the evolving schedule on the City's Title 18 update process. The Commission also discussed asking the Mayor and/or City Administrator to attend the October meeting. Davis Hayes suggested Commissioners discuss what they would like the Mayor to address at an upcoming EVC meeting. McCORRY also suggested that EVC provide the Mayor with information about EVC's objectives and activities.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a) MOVED BY FREAS, SECONDED BY REICHLEY that minutes of the June 16, 2021 meeting be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 5-0. (Alternates voted as regular members.)

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, it was the consensus of all Commissioners present that the meeting be adjourned at 7:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary