

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Environmental Board**

6:30 PM
December 13, 2023

Tibbetts Manor, 750 17th Ave.
NW, Issaquah

MINUTES

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Board members:

Jamie Finch, Chair
Nancy Davidson
Anne Newcomb
Prajakta Ghatpande
Tom Anderson
Alix Lee-Tigner

Administration/Staff:

Stacy Vynne McKinstry, Sustainability
Manager
Kathleen Hillery, Civic Spark Fellow

Christian Geitz, Planning Manager

Janet Wall, Alternate
Dixie Bair, Alternate

*Youth/young adult members.

Don McQuilliams, Vice Chair (unexcused
absence)
Joy Lewis (excused absence)
Ashwin Manoharan* (unexcused absence)
Ashwin Kannan* (excused absence)

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair FINCH called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chair introduced the minutes, which were included in the agenda materials. The minutes were approved as presented by unanimous consent.

- a) Minutes of November 8, 2023

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public were present, nor submitted written comment.

AGENDA ITEMS

- a) **Natural Environment Checklist (D)**
Presented by:
Christian Geitz, Planning Manager

CHRISTIAN GEITZ, Planning Manager, presented a brief background on the Natural Environment Checklist, the implementation of the Title 18 Update, and the Department of Commerce's Adaptive Management feedback process. GEITZ provided an overview of the current project application and evaluation process using the updated Title 18 code. GEITZ sought input from the Board regarding tracked criteria in the Natural Environment Checklist and feedback for what additional criteria to include.

Board Member FINCH asked for clarification about what projects require application of the Natural Environment Checklist. Currently the checklist only covers Level 4 and Level 2 projects.

Board Member DAVIDSON provided several comments regarding the Board's role in tracking impacts on environment, including whether the current process and checklist is missing projects that may impact critical areas. DAVIDSON requested clarification on whether the Natural Environment Checklist tracking spreadsheet used by staff is tracking project plans versus actual development. GEITZ responded that the Natural Environment Checklist can track all planned and actual projects with an impact on the environment and critical areas if that is desired by the Board. Board Member DAVIDSON suggested adding an annual and cumulative impact tracker to establish trend analysis of planned versus actual development impacts over a calendar year. Board Member DAVIDSON also requested additional tracked criteria that demonstrate progress on climate action in Issaquah.

Board Member LEE-TIGNER suggested tracking how many native species were planted versus non-native ornamental species and voiced support for the current metrics tracking methodology.

Board Member FINCH asked for clarification on whether critical aquifer recharge areas (CARA) are considered a critical area subject to inclusion in the neighborhood checklist. GEITZ confirmed that CARA was included under the definition of critical area, but staff are seeking additional guidance from the State. Board Member FINCH offered consideration for what metrics might be important to track for insight and learning about trends in the jurisdiction, not just in the context of wetlands or critical areas, such as tree canopy during development planning in non-critical areas. Board Member FINCH asked if staff are identifying challenges with applying the Title 18 Update in the way that it was intended and if staff are capturing this information somehow in their tracker. Board Member FINCH asked how we turn a code checklist and tracking data into action and inform future priorities.

Board Member ANDERSON asked if there has been any standardization of tracking within sustainable development, generally, that Issaquah staff could incorporate into their project evaluation process. GEITZ responded that the Department of Commerce has a guidebook on adaptive management for administrators for what to measure, how to measure, and questions to ask themselves about what they want to learn. VYNNE MCKINSTRY added that staff have reached out to other jurisdictions to better understand any tracking mechanisms they use for projects and have not yet come across any examples.

Board Member FINCH asked for clarification about the use of data. GEITZ responded that all project data can be leveraged to assess whether development within Issaquah meets state requirements and that staff do take an adaptive management approach by evaluating impact and updating codes as needed.

Board Member LEE-TIGNER suggested there could be more stringent metrics besides observational to effectively monitor how Title 18 impacts project development.

Board Member GHATPANDE asked how many projects have not been required to use the Natural Environment Checklist and which ones have been required to use it but are not completed. GEITZ responded that two have been required since the Title 18 update but not yet completed, while twelve have gone through the Checklist process.

Board Member FINCH asked for staff recommendations on improvements to the Natural Environment Checklist given experience in other jurisdictions. GEITZ suggested that the proposed approach would allow for trend analysis and support monitoring.

Staff will incorporate input from the Environmental Board into the Natural Environment Checklist and return to the Board in the summer of 2024 to present an analysis of project impacts.

b) Annual Report and Self Analysis (A)

Presented by:

Stacy Vynne McKinstry, Sustainability Manager

Reflection on Self Analysis

VYNNE MCKINSTRY reminded the Board that the annual report is required to the Council by the 31st of December each year. VYNNE MCKINSTRY provided highlights from the 2022 Environmental Board self-analysis and discussed how 2022 feedback from the Board was addressed. VYNNE MCKINSTRY summarized the results of the 2023 Environmental Board self-analysis. There was consistent feedback about the need for the Environmental Board to set priorities, dive deeper into topics, and engage with City leadership.

VYNNE MCKINSTRY opened the floor to board members for additional reflection. Board Member BAIR offered that it takes time for new members to get up to speed and feel like they can offer meaningful comments. A preparation document and/or orientation with the annual work plan and agenda could provide additional support for new Board members. Board Member GHATPANDE shared that she recognizes where her expertise was valued on the Board and appreciated the opportunities to connect with Staff or consultants after/in-between meetings. Board Member GHATPANDE also enjoyed the field trips. Board Member DAVIDSON offered that the Board needs to decide what is important and identify core priorities, then bring new members up to speed along the way. It is also important for the Board to stay focused without jumping from topic to topic based on administration needs. Board Member FINCH suggested finding an internal board member mentor for assistance to get up to speed. Board Member FINCH agreed on the need to create priorities to ensure work plan reflects that and that agendas are more structured with time allotments for presentations. Board Member NEWCOMB encouraged new members to ask questions to facilitate their own understanding as it may enhance the general Board cohesive understanding. Board Member FINCH suggested some creative ways to include post-meeting thoughts within a formal meeting structure. Board Member FINCH questioned whether the Board had a good understanding of the public's priorities for climate, sustainability, environment and how they can create access points for including public perspective.

VYNNE MCKINSTRY provided options for a structure to generate 2024 priorities and asked for input. The Board members generally agreed to a less formal structure for a meeting that would allow for socializing and priority setting. Board members also emphasized the need for youth and community engagement in setting priorities and suggested ways to set criteria for what topics come to the Board. VYNNE MCKINSTRY will work with Board Chair FINCH and Board Vice Chair MCQUILLIAMS on scheduling and developing the retreat.

Approval on Annual Report

Board Chair FINCH asked for revisions to the 2024 Annual Board Report. Board Member DAVIDSON requested the report be amended to add another section relating to the holding of a Board Retreat with participation from City staff and executives to participate in the setting of priorities.

Board Member DAVIDSON MOVED to approve the annual report as amended, pending language approval by Board Chair and Vice Chair. Board Member NEWCOMB SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

VYNNE MCKINSTRY provided updates on City Council action. VYNNE MCKINSTRY acknowledged the 3 reports included in the Board's packet.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

VYNNE MCKINSTRY previewed topics for the January meeting and highlighted dates for upcoming meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 PM.