

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH**  
**Planning Policy Commission**

6:30 PM  
 August 12, 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:*

Ron Faul, Chair  
 Jason Voiss, Vice Chair  
 Joy Lewis  
 Nina Milligan  
 Matt Monahan  
 Richard Zaragoza, Alternate

*Administration/Staff Present:*

Christen Leeson, Senior Planner  
 Minnie Dhaliwal, Director, CP&D  
 Megan Curtis-Murphy, Sr. Sustain. Coord.

*Commissioners Not Present:*

Sara Bader (Excused)

**CALL TO ORDER**

FAUL, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Minutes of July 8, 2021 were approved as presented.
- b) Minutes of July 22, 2021 were approved as presented.
- c) Minutes of July 22, 2021. MILLIGAN will email a correction to page 18 to staff. Minutes were approved with correction noted.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**REGULAR BUSINESS**

- a) **Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Land Use Element - Climate Change Policies, (D)**

*Presented by:*

*Megan Curtis-Murphy, Senior Sustainability Coordinator*

Curtis-Murphy made staff's presentation. She gave some background on the Issaquah Climate Action Plan (ICAP), including engagement with the Council, community, and boards and commissions; the risks that climate change poses for Issaquah and surrounding communities; background and 2017 baseline data about Issaquah's emissions; and projections for the future under several scenarios. She explained the six goals proposed for the ICAP (climate change, building and energy, transportation and land use, materials and consumption, natural systems and water resources, and community resilience and wellbeing) and briefly referred to the policies for each goal (pages 25-26). She concluded her presentation with next steps in the review process (page 22-23). FAUL asked for questions and comments on the six goals as presented.

## A. Climate Change

Commissioners asked for clarification and more details about A-2, "Conduct education and outreach in the community." LEWIS asked whether receiving a summary of meetings held with stakeholders after each discussion is a possibility. Curtis-Murphy explained we are in the public engagement process now, and we will be presenting the results of that to PPC, together with all public comments received, including a comprehensive summary. She said more detailed activities will be part of the action items to be developed for each policy.

LEWIS said she would like to see more details added to the policies about how these goals will be accomplished. She also said she would like to see a legislative policy, as noted in a recent email from Ann Fletcher, added to Goal A.

MILLIGAN asked how does the ICAP interact with the Central Issaquah Plan (CIP). Curtis-Murphy explained how staff is ensuring that all the City's plans, either already adopted or being adopted, such as the CIP, ICAP, Storm and Surface Water Master Plan, and so on, "talk" to each other.

VOISS asked for staff's thoughts about the pros and cons of leaving the policies vaguer right now. He also asked why not include A-3 ("lead by example... for municipal operations") citywide. Curtis-Murphy explained the structure of the ICAP and how each policy will have actions associated with it and gave examples. She continued the City has control over trying to achieve 100-percent renewable sources of energy by 2025 for its operations, and we want to make sure we are doing those things. The City can also provide resources for the community.

FAUL asked how the goals in A-1 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were established, and whether they can be changed. Curtis-Murphy replied the City can set its own goals, but these goals were primarily set through regional planning efforts. The state adopted these goals, she continued, and it makes sense to align with the region. She gave more details about the City's previous reduction goals and the evolution to the current goals. FAUL said a resident can elect to get 100 percent of its energy from non-greenhouse gas emission means, so technically the City could hit the 50 percent mark now. What is stopping the City from working with Puget Sound Energy to get to 50 percent now. Curtis-Murphy explained the work the City has done with PSE in the past, including optional programs for residents, and the PSE programs now in place at the City, including participation in PSE's Green Direct Program. She added the state's requirements for electric utilities and other reduction targets will also help the City reach its emission goals.

## B. Building and Energy

MILLIGAN asked what would be needed to require that all new municipal buildings use solar energy, or to be solar-ready, and would that language be in this policy. Curtis-Murphy replied at the action level, the policy is to have all municipal buildings use renewable technology, but it doesn't specify which technology. She gave examples and information about energy use at municipal buildings now and referred to B-2. As for solar-ready buildings, she continued, that would be an action under B-5. MILLIGAN asked do we have language in the policies to require all-electric buildings. Curtis-Murphy replied B-3 would cover that; it would cover actions to educate, provide incentives, and do requirements.

LEWIS expressed concern that not all green energy is clean energy and gave examples. She said do these policies need more language that states all the energy the City is using comes from a clean source (B-2), and the City is not just relying on our private partners to verify that. Curtis-Murphy replied PSE's Green Direct Program, which is open to their large employers and municipalities, quickly filled up. She gave more details about the PSE's wind and solar farm that will be supplying that renewable electrical energy and noted that the City has received regular

updates about it. LEWIS spoke in favor of adding language in B-2 about being able to enter into private-public partnerships. On B-5, she said she would like to see more about the City generating electricity onsite, and gave examples. She continued she is looking for these policies to be fine-tuned to explain more specifically how we are going to achieve these things. She also said she would like to see a section added about upgrading public buildings to have net-zero emissions, and more discussion about whether the City wants to adopt more net-zero emissions citywide. Curtis-Murphy said on B-5, she agrees it does include a lot of options and doesn't focus on any one pathway, such as solar. She added solar is a main technology right now, but there are others as well.

ZARAGOZA agreed with earlier comments about adding language to B-5 about onsite generation of energy. He said he agrees it doesn't need to be specific to one type of technology but generating energy onsite is best and he agrees with previous suggestions to add that language.

FAUL spoke in favor of having an analysis portion of the plan to determine whether it is more efficient for some municipal buildings to have onsite energy, or to leverage PSE's resources and purchase energy through PSE.

### **C. Transportation and Land Use**

MONAHAN asked has any thought been given to approaching the State about expanding HOV lanes on I-90 throughout the City. Curtis-Murphy said she don't know the answer and agreed that HOV lanes could have greenhouse gas emission benefits. The focus has been on getting people out of cars in general, but HOV lanes could also be beneficial.

LEWIS asked how the pandemic and changes in behavior, such as using public transportation, could impact this timeline. Curtis-Murphy said that data is being collected on a regional basis, and there are gains and losses as a result of behavioral changes as a result of the pandemic, including about transportation. LEWIS said she would like to see stronger language added to C-2 about City investment in the charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. Curtis-Murphy agreed and said that language will be included at the action level, which is in development now.

MILLIGAN referred to language in C-3 about decreasing auto reliance and described how many parts of Issaquah require that people drive to get basic services ("food deserts"). She suggested adding language that would address selectively inserting micro-commercial retail zones in residential areas that need it. She said the idea is that people need to have their regular needs available within 15 minutes of walking, or roughly 1/2 mile.

ZARAGOZA spoke in favor of telecommuting as a way to get people away from using cars. He asked about the use of shuttles from hillside communities like the Highlands to get people to stores and services, and spoke in favor of providing places for people to have access to high-speed internet services for telecommuting. He asked if the City could do some research on telecommuting, and whether it is something that could be supported as part of a program to reduce reliance on cars. Leeson added a Comp Plan policy exists that directs neighborhood zones to allow services to be located there; that policy will be addressed again in the Title 18 update. She also described a shuttle program the City developed with Metro, which was shelved when Metro lost funding. She said hopefully that program can get going again.

FAUL spoke in favor of the Walk and Roll program strategy, which encourages people to use bike paths, walking trails, etc. to access shopping destinations. Curtis-Murphy agreed and said C-1 tries to capture that. Does it need more specific language, she asked. FAUL said the language used is a little vague, especially "active" ("... advancing shared, active, and public transportation modes.").

ZARAGOZA agreed. Leeson added the Comp Plan contains a goal to “Provide safe and comfortable streets that encourages people to travel by walking, bicycling, and transit.” She suggested that the ICAP include a cross-reference to that policy rather than duplicate it. FAUL agreed.

MILLIGAN added work on the Mobility Master Plan focused on mobility options that are destination-oriented, not just to the transit center. She said that reference might be appropriate here. Leeson said the Mobility Master Plan forms the Transportation Element of the Comp Plan. Staff will make sure all necessary references are made.

#### **D. Materials and Consumption**

LEWIS asked about the City’s waste generation data (D-1). Curtis-Murphy said the City does track waste diversion on an annual basis, and provided data. LEWIS asked how do we reach our targets. Curtis-Murphy replied overall we want to have zero waste of resources by 2030, so anything that can be recycled and composted will be. She continued the goal was 70 percent at one time; now it is everything that is possible and has resource value. LEWIS asked how are we going to get to zero waste by 2030. Curtis-Murphy replied some can be done at the local action level, and gave examples such as repair cafes. Regional efforts are also ongoing, she stated, and gave examples. LEWIS said she wishes more of that strategy could be reflected in D-1. She also spoke in favor of adding a municipal waste management policy as D-4.

#### **E. Natural Systems and Water Resources**

The Commissioners addressed E-1, “Achieve 51 percent tree canopy of total Issaquah acreage.” Among the primary discussion points were prioritizing tree canopy where it will help protect the health of rivers and streams; the importance of prioritizing native species, species that grow fast, and that have greater carbon capture capabilities; what the current accurate tree canopy percentage is; whether the City should look to increasing its tree canopy percentage to a number higher than 51 percent; how the City’s canopy percentage is calculated, whether or not nearby DNR-owned forests are included in the calculation; and the danger of letting economics drive decisions about promoting greater tree capacity in the City. It was the consensus of Commissioners that the tree canopy item (E-1) needs further discussion.

The Commissioners also discussed the use of chemical-based pesticides and herbicides, and their impact on the environment and water system. Curtis-Murphy noted some of those concerns are more sustainability-oriented than climate-oriented, and are included in the Sustainability section of the Comp Plan. Staff made a note of all the comments.

#### **F. Community Resilience and Wellbeing**

LEWIS said a serious gap in this document is addressing the resources needed to get to green energy. It is important to look at the entire whole of the actions to enact these policies. She spoke in favor of reducing overall energy use, which is partially addressed in the Building section. Upgrading to more modern technologies and infrastructure is critical, but so is addressing how we can change by decreasing our energy use. There are a lot of ways to do that, she continued, but there is no language here about reducing energy consumption and being a community that isn’t increasing its energy needs. MILLIGAN agreed. The only really green thing to do is to use less energy. She said with that in mind, we should look again at Goal A. FAUL agreed we need to look at not only renewable energy but also using less.

ZARAGOZA said he has questions about climate-related emergencies, such as property damage due to flooding, trees damaged by heat waves, and so on. Are there funds available for those climate emergencies, he asked. Curtis-Murphy said the ICAP will include actions that are intended

to prepare us for emergencies, such as creating cooling centers. The City has also hired a new Emergency Manager, who will be putting a climate lens on the situations we know are coming, such as wildfires, heat waves, and flooding. The ICAP also speaks to working with the community to help them prepare and understand what is happening.

### **Public Comment**

Connie Marsh said a table of public comments should follow along with this process, with all comments given at meetings, not just listing them at the end. The public doesn't know if its input has been heard or not. She spoke to the 51-percent tree canopy issue and said PPC and other stakeholders all seem to agree that the number should be higher. She also spoke about the need for a more clearly articulated vision in the Comp Plan about what this climate action plan is; what is the end goal. The language is from 2015 and needs to be updated. The conversation about where the City is going is what is missing. Who are we, what do we want to be? The ICAP has too much jargon; use more English in the ICAP so people can better understand it. Also, a major thing missing is addressing our failures, such as the use of pesticides on municipal property. The policies here need to be broad enough to cover what you want to do, but not so broad that it allows you to do nothing. These policies are so broad that you could do absolutely nothing. The Master Mobility Plan does not address congestion, for example, which the public has said is its number-one concern. The City needs a vast education effort; you can see that from the survey. We have I-90 through our City, and we need to provide services for people wanting to do long-distance travel by electric vehicles. Finally, the ICAP is a strategic and implementation plan, not the Comp Plan's policies, goals and vision.

Julian Mydill expressed his interest and concern on a variety of topics, including transportation and land use policy; the need to make the City's codes better accommodate more housing options to reduce reliance on cars; using roadway shoulders for bikeways instead of separated bikeways; avoiding creating bikeways that don't go anywhere people want to go; parking minimums; the heat island effect on trees; the region's cloudy climate and solar power; and the City's need to elaborate its position on landfill incineration.

### **Discussion**

FAUL revisited E-1, "Achieve 51 percent tree canopy," and asked specifically why can't the City aim for something higher, like 60 or 75 percent. He discussed how the City relies on DNR forested land on West Tiger to determine its tree canopy, but that property will eventually be for sale. How can we protect what is on Tiger Mountain, and grow the 51 percent; and how do we reduce consumption of toxic landscape materials. VOISS noted the City doesn't control forest management practices of our surrounding mountains, but those forests are used in our canopy percentage. Is it correct that DNR can sell the forests on its land, he asked. Curtis-Murphy said she's not sure what percentage of hillside is within the City limits, but most is state- or county-owned. VOISS said it appears that PSE's Green Direct program is only available to municipalities. Is that another opportunity to lobby PSE to extend the program, he continued. He also noted that many of the activities we have discussed tonight will take City resources, at a time when the City also has other issues it needs to take care of. So it is a regional effort, but if we jump out ahead of our partners, the costs will come from the City's coffers and not from state and county resources.

ZARAGOZA asked how developers make decisions about which trees to plant, and in the case of parking lots, how is the tree requirement calculated. Leeson said PPC will be having that conversation when the landscaping section of Title 18 is discussed. Dhaliwal added PPC will be looking at that in depth at its September 9 meeting, and staff will present information on the City's current code, a gaps analysis, and so on.

LEWIS asked how funding will be allocated to move forward with the action items. Curtis-Murphy gave information about the City's annual budgeting, which is in process right now. She said an implementation plan is part of the ICAP. She continued staff anticipates having action items for PPC's review at the next meeting, but likely not the implementation plan.

LEWIS said she would like to see a policy on preserving bogs as natural carbon sinks. Staff made a note of it.

ZARAGOZA asked has the City done any mapping of zones and neighborhoods that are at a higher risk for experiencing climate change impacts, including higher-risk populations such as elderly people. Curtis-Murphy replied some of that happens with the City's Human Services team. She said we are looking at demographics to help prepare a needs assessment, including using new tools. Generally speaking, high-risk areas are located along the I-90 corridor. We are not quite at the level of mapping, she continued, but are focusing on equity and identifying our most vulnerable populations.

FAUL said based on Commissioner comments, he would like to see the promotion of natural carbon sinks and actions that move us toward zero use of toxic landscape chemicals in the next iteration of the ICAP. Curtis-Murphy said PPC has provided a lot of good input tonight about what is missing from these policies. VOISS noted the public feedback has also been very valuable and referred to recent emails and the matrix in the agenda packet. He continued he isn't sure that the City can require that legal pesticides not be sold in the City but can make sure the municipality isn't using harmful pesticides. The City can also take the lead in what it requires in its development agreements with large builders. ZARAGOZA agreed that carbon sinks should be addressed in the policies. He said he is on the fence about banning pesticides but educating the public about reducing pesticide use would be great.

## REPORTS

### a) Council Updates

*Presented by:*

*Christen Leeson, Senior Planner*

Leeson said PPC will have another opportunity to ask questions about chemical and pesticide use, trees, and so on when Gary Schimek, Public Works Engineering, is present at PPC's October 14 meeting. Dhaliwal reported the draft sign code was discussed at a Council study session on July 22 and is scheduled for a public hearing at a Council meeting in September for adoption. She briefly described the latest changes to the draft sign code.

### b) Public Comments on Title 18 Code Update

*Presented by:*

*Minnie Dhaliwal, Director, Community Planning & Development*

Dhaliwal noted the matrix of public comments in the agenda packet includes comments received from June to August. She noted staff is maintaining a comprehensive list of all comments received. She also noted staff will email PPC members information about the differences between a vision, goals, policies, action items, and code.

## OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Upcoming Schedule. Leeson described upcoming meetings in August, September and October, and said staff will be working on a new schedule to accommodate additional meetings. She asked whether PPC members would like to revisit the ICAP before the

public hearing on October 14, and the consensus was “yes.” She also mentioned that Valerie Porter, Associate Planner, and Stephen Padua, Sr. Transportation Planner, will be joining the City’s long-range planning group.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to conduct, FAUL adjourned the meeting at 9:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe  
Recording Secretary