

MINUTES

CITY OF FORT COLLINS • BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



Air Quality Advisory Board REGULAR MEETING

Monday, May 20, 2024 – 5:30 PM

222 Laporte Avenue, Colorado River Room

1. CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

2. ROLL CALL

- Board Members Present –
 - Mark Houdashelt (Chair)
 - Dan Welsh (Vice Chair)
 - Maria Moore
 - Michael Cheesman
 - Kaori Keyser
 - Adam Schmidt
 - Jeremiah Gorske

- Board Members Absent –
 - Michael Johnson
 - Matt Ayres

- Staff Members Present –
 - Selina Lujan de Albers, Staff Liaison
 - Carolina Mendez Torres, Program Assistant
 - Kendra Boot, City Forester

- Guest(s) –
 - Dr. Margit Hentschel

3. AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes to the published agenda.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Dr. Margit Hentschel discussed her work with the City on wood smoke emissions standard and recommendation for a ban on outdoor recreational wood burning. Hentschel discussed the cancer and other health risks associated with wood smoke and noted Fort Collins does not have any after hours smoke complaint responders.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lujan de Albers outlined the minutes clarifications that were requested for the March minutes.

Welsh made a motion, seconded by Keyser, to approve the minutes of the March meeting as amended. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Chair Houdashelt outlined clarifications to the April meeting minutes. Welsh also provided some clarifications regarding the Air Quality Monitoring Advisory Committee (AQMAC) meeting that was mentioned in the minutes.

Welsh made a motion, seconded by Schmidt, to approve the minutes of the April meeting as amended. The motion was adopted unanimously.

6. PREVIOUS BUSINESS

Chair Houdashelt noted the Board previously sent a recommendation to Council regarding a number of state air quality bills, some of which passed and some of which failed by the conclusion of the session. Additionally, some of the bills were killed in exchange for the passage of two other bills and an agreement that specific environmental groups would not support or sponsor any legislation or ballot initiatives related to oil and gas until 2028, and the oil and gas industry would also not push any legislation or ballot initiatives until 2028.

Chair Houdashelt noted one bill that came out of this agreement increases the enforcement mechanisms for ozone pollutants. The other bill requires the oil and gas industry to pay production fees based upon the number of barrels produced with the money going to fund clean transit and wildlife/land remediation. Chair Houdashelt stated changes will make the state heavily dependent on further revenue from oil and gas, making oil and gas regulations more difficult moving forward as decreased production would result in less revenue for the state.

Chair Houdashelt stated Council will be considering the second reading of the 2050 tax climate initiatives funding at its meeting tomorrow.

Chair Houdashelt stated he, Welsh, and Lujan de Albers had a meeting with the NRAB Chair Metcalf, Vice Chair Stewart, and Honore Depew, the NRAB staff liaison, to discuss the upcoming joint meeting. He noted the budget will likely be a main topic; however, the budget offers have yet to be released, which may make having the meeting in July difficult.

Lujan de Albers noted the new accessibility law prohibits the posting of materials in PDF form; therefore, the City is working to develop a new avenue to release the budget information with a goal of early June, but it could be as late as the beginning of July.

Chair Houdashelt noted the best day of the week for the joint meeting was also discussed and requested members consider what days may work prior to the agenda planning section of this meeting. He also noted Council recently had a session aimed at detailing its priorities.

Additionally, Chair Houdashelt noted the Chair and Vice Chair elections will be held at the next meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Urban Forestry Strategic Plan (UFSP)

Kendra Boot, City Forester, will provide an overview of a draft Urban Forestry Strategic Plan (UFSP) – called Rooted in Community – to seek Board feedback and support for its adoption. The Forestry Division has been working with Davey Resource Group on the first UFSP for Fort Collins, and City Council will consider its adoption on August 20th. (Action)

Kendra Boot, City Forester, noted the urban forest consists of the trees that grow within the built environment, and it includes public trees along streets and in public spaces, as

well as private trees. Boot noted the UFSP addresses all trees within the Fort Collins growth management area and looks at providing a 20-year vision for those trees.

Boot outlined the existing canopy coverage in Fort Collins and stated there is a 14% canopy cover city-wide and a 12.5% canopy cover when including the growth management area. She noted the Forestry team maintains about 60,000 trees within the city limits and stated those public trees tend on the younger side.

Boot discussed the public engagement efforts that were part of the UFSP formation, including an online survey, three public meetings, and focus groups. The results of the public engagement showed that people like public trees, would like additional resources around caring for private trees, and are somewhat concerned about development and trees.

Boot discussed work with consultant Davey Resource Group to develop a vision focused on equitably distributing the tree canopy across the community, ensuring everyone has access to trees on their properties, dealing with more insect and disease issues resulting from climate change, and dealing with drought events. Boot outlined the eight recommended strategies that were developed as part of the Plan and noted each includes foundational initiatives and transformational initiatives.

Boot discussed the City's tree inventory tool and partnership with CSU extension. She noted there are other opportunities for engagement with the community on tree maintenance and planting and opportunities for additional partnerships.

Boot outlined the next steps for the Plan, including Council consideration on August 20th.

BOARD QUESTIONS

Welsh asked if there are concerns about the extent or health of the urban canopy as it currently exists, particularly given the Emerald Ash Borer issues. Boot noted there is a section of the Plan that addresses future insect and disease challenges. She stated ash trees make up 33% of the canopy cover and staff has been working to plant diverse, drought-tolerant species on public property and on influencing the same for development projects. She also noted no ash trees have been planted on public property in Fort Collins since 2003, and the trees cannot be sold to be planted.

Dan asked if the Forestry Department is involved with fire resiliency and fuel management. Boot replied in the negative and stated reliance is placed on the Community Wildfire Protection Plan which is managed by Poudre Fire Authority. She noted public engagement around updating that plan will be forthcoming.

Michael C. asked if the Forestry Department also works on planting native scrub brush in addition to trees. Boot replied there are only about 23 native tree species in Colorado, and only about five are deciduous. She noted the large maturing shade trees are desirable for street trees as they provide the most benefit over time, which makes utilizing only native trees difficult.

Adam asked about the priority moving forward as part of the document seems to reference an equitable distribution of trees and part of the document seems to reference replacing trees. Boot replied both are priorities since this plan looks at both public and private trees. She stated the formation of a tree planting program was one of the recommendations and that may come in the form of a private tree planting program and a public tree planting program with prioritization areas.

Adam suggested moving some of the transformational initiatives relating to air quality and public perception to foundational initiatives, specifically 'link tree activities to health, social, and environmental data, and to civic data (transit ridership, cycling/pedestrian statistics, City outcome areas) as available,' and 'annually or biannually report to the public on tree activities.'

Michael Cheesman asked if air quality impact projections of the envisioned canopy versus the existing canopy were considered to be measured. Boot replied that could be considered and noted there are benefit projections in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, sequestration, and other emissions as part of the tree inventory. Michael suggested that analysis could likely be done quickly with the help of a consulting firm.

Welsh noted having studies and public support could help the program with getting funding through things such as the new 2050 climate tax. Boot noted the Forestry Department did submit a budget offer to Environmental Health that was related to the climate tax to help with getting more trees planted on public property.

Chair Houdashelt commented on a previous City plan related to the climate benefits of urban forestry and stated that while there is a climate benefit, it is not part of the current greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory, so it does not help the City reach its GHG emission reduction goals, and one cannot make a valid argument for doing it as offsets. He stated that he thinks the UFSP is great, but it would be controversial to include it in the GHG inventory, as it is complementary to, but not part of, Our Climate Future.

Chair Houdashelt stated the densification efforts that were part of at least the original Land Use Code changes would have reduced requirements for trees. Boot replied it is unlikely requirements would be reduced, though it is difficult with zero lot lines or higher density buildings to include trees. She stated staff is working on some different policies around incentivizing tree preservation first then looking at different ways to mitigate, and those items will come as part of phase two of the Land Use Code updates. She noted the tree policy sits primarily in commercial corridor sections of the Land Use Code and there are no tree policies around single-family residential homes. She also noted Council will be discussing the phase two updates at a June 11th work session.

Moore asked if there are initiatives for the private sector. Boot replied the only current program is the Community Canopy Program which offers 1,000 trees for sale each year at a cost of \$25 each.

Moore stated tree maintenance information is lacking in the community and suggested there is more that can be done to maintain the private tree canopy. Boot noted there is some federal grant funding that will be offered over the next six years around urban and community forestry and staff is looking at applying for some of that funding, though that will likely require some partnership with other surrounding small communities as much of the funding is focused on disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Jeremiah noted the guidance on what constitutes an environmental justice community may be changing at the federal level.

Michael Cheesman commented on the possibility of partnering with larger organizations for funding assistance. Boot replied the Department has lacked the capacity to do research on partnership opportunities, though it could be considered in the future.

Boot outlined the options for the Board to weigh in on the Plan as part of Council's packet prior to the August 20th meeting.

Chair Houdashelt stated it could be helpful for Council to know if there is a prioritization of the recommendations, though that could be done after adoption of the Plan. Boot replied some of those details will be considered later; however, she would like to include a prioritization list or a timeline as part of the final draft.

Chair Houdashelt expressed overall support for the Plan and stated the Board could take up a formal recommendation at an upcoming meeting.

b. Board Member AQ Interests

AQAB Board members will discuss their air quality interests to facilitate future AQAB agenda setting and help staff prepare their June presentation about Fort Collins' Air Quality Plan and programs. (Discussion)

Chair Houdashelt stated his primary interests lie in the funding and implementation of things to help the City reach its climate goals and in transportation, including electric vehicles and active modes.

Gorske expressed interest in the urban canopy in terms of air quality measurements as well as wildfire smoke, particularly as it impacts the most vulnerable populations.

Schmidt expressed interest in improving wildfire smoke preparedness, urban forestry, and growing public outreach regarding air quality.

Welsh expressed interest in ozone, including ozone precursors stemming from industry, transportation, and lawn and garden equipment, and wildfire smoke community impacts and preparedness.

Moore stated her interest lies in public outreach regarding indoor air quality, specifically targeting gas stoves and wood fireplaces and pits. She noted the Healthy Homes program does some of that outreach but could be more robust in those areas.

Keyser expressed interest in ozone, particularly given we are in a non-attainment area, and public outreach regarding things like electrification.

Cheeseman expressed interest in wildfire impacts on air quality and better decision-making around that and climate change mitigation. He stated one of the reasons he joined the Board was to get involved in local and state level policy making. He also commented on being part of a program called Voices for Science through the American Geophysical Union which provides micro-grants for events that are science policy or outreach focused.

Lujan de Albers noted the Board would need to amend its bylaws in order to include public outreach in its purview.

Welsh noted part of the grant funding for the AQMAC is specifically for community outreach and communication with emphasis on disproportionately impacted communities.

Chair Houdashelt summarized the members' interests.

c. Agenda Planning

AQAB Members will develop an outline for future meeting agendas based upon the 2024 AQAB work plan, Board member interests, and the City Council 6-month planning