

Climate Action Task Force Minutes

Tuesday, March 2, 2021 7:00 p.m.
Harrigan Centennial Hall/Videoconference

Task Force Members: Elizabeth Bagley, Kent Barkhau, Elizabeth Borneman, Molly Grear, Kathleen Kreiss, Darby Osborne, Catherine Riley, Caitlin Way, Caitlin Woolsey

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Task Force members present: Elizabeth Bagley, Kent Barkhau, Elizabeth Borneman, Molly Grear (videoconference), Kathleen Kreiss (videoconference), Darby Osborne, Catherine Riley, Caitlin Way, Caitlin Woolsey (videoconference)
Staff/Assembly: Secretary Gail Johansen Peterson (videoconference)
Others: Kord Christianson; Michelle Putz; Larry Edwards; Joel Hanson

III. CORRESPONDENCE /AGENDA CHANGES

None.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(not to exceed 3 minutes on topics off the agenda)*

Kord Christianson gave his personal thanks for the assistance the Climate Action Task Force gave for the e-tip submittal and letters of support.

Michelle Putz offered her availability to answer any questions the Task Force may have regarding the 2010 report. Michelle expressed her hopes for the scope of this Climate Action Task Force and that within that scope, based on the recommendations the 2010 Report recommended support for policy, specifically the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.

Larry Edwards would like to suggest that when the Task Force considers their scope, to include looking at whether the 2050 target is adequate. He would also like the Task Force to consider that under the Paris Agreement, a main part of that is that there be equity between the North and the South, and given our emissions per capita, if we should be on a faster time scale than 2050.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 16, 2021

M – Riley/ S – Barkhau: to approve the February 16, 2021 minutes. The motion passed by unanimous consent. There were no objections or comments.

VI. REPORTS

Chair: This section provides an opportunity to share anything of recent occurrence.

Chair Bagley met with City Administrator Leach. Deputy Clerk Henshaw provided notes and guidance on meeting procedures.

Task Force Members:

A Task Force member reported on a recent Assembly meeting discussion on bulk water sales. An Assembly member expressed interest in receiving input on climate change and impact(s) on water from the recently formed Sitka Climate Action Task Force. The Task Force member did not know if a formal request was made by the Assembly for input of the Climate Action Task Force.

Member Barkhau wondered if the Electric Department has a projection on warming trends and the impact(s) on the City and/or if the Task Force could receive a report.

City Staff: None.

Other(s): None.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Scope of the Task Force

Chair Bagley proposed the Task Force work on a quarterly cadence of reporting to the Assembly with targeted recommendations. She proposed quarterly reports as a good way for the Task Force to keep in step with what the Assembly can do and with what the Assembly would like from the assistance of the Task Force. A quarterly cadence would keep the Assembly on the Task Force agenda and the Climate Action Task on the Assembly's agenda. A few other City Commissions also brief the Assembly every three months or so.

Chair Bagley emphasized it is important the scope of the Climate Action Task Force focus on what the Assembly can do. City Administrator Leach highlighted three areas in which the City can take action: buildings, systems, vehicles. Chair Bagley elaborated on four areas she envisions the Climate Action Task Force can focus:

1. City owned infrastructure and assets (systems for energy, waste, water). City Administrator Leach offered to give Task Force members a tour of City infrastructures. Task Force member Kay Kreiss encouraged the Climate Action Task Force welcome the public to participate in this orientation to City owned infrastructures, and thereby build community support for Climate Action Task Force recommendations. Chair Bagley emphasized importance of knowledge of sustainability of City infrastructures and systems, doesn't just live within each member of the task force, and that it becomes the baseline of community knowledge. City Administrator Lynch is happy to direct staff to assist the Climate Action Task Force to determine what has been accomplished since the 2010 task force. This first quarter will be information gathering. Chair Bagley realized since there is no Sustainability Director position in the

organizational chart of City staff, the Climate Action Task Force becomes the volunteer sustainability director to look at planning and opportunities across departments, systems, buildings and vehicles – all that comprises City infrastructure and assets.

2. Exploring plans and other opportunities – The Climate Action Task Force can look at grants, garner resolutions of support, and act on state and federal opportunities.
3. Align sustainability efforts with the City’s 17 Commissions, Committees and Boards. Climate Action Task force members can liaison with other City Commissions, Committees and Boards to find opportunities.
4. Everything else: policy recommendations and connections to other groups already working on sustainability issues.

Climate Action Task Force Members provided their insights about the scope: Kent Barkhau added planning would fall into the assets category; Caitlin Woolsey thanked Chair Bagley and said based on the research all have done so far of other communities, task force efforts were most successful when they had immediate action, like short term recommendations – this fits in perfectly with quarterly reports – and thorough community involvement – so having the intentional connection with City commissions and organizations in the wider community is perfect; Kay Kriess would like the policies the Climate Action Task Force recommends to motivate others beyond Sitka City Staff to take action – whether those be incentives, information or proposals; it would be great to see Sitka’s contribution to lowering the global problem of emissions reduction; other members agreed that informing community members is critical, and balancing the best way to get the information out (perhaps through the City Public Information Officer) will be key to task force efforts; engaging community members with immediate short term efforts for climate solutions would be ideal; an “end point” will be determined. Speaking as a member of the public, Kord Christianson identified the Climate Action Task Force is all about change management and it will be important to identify change compared to what – so it will be important to measure it: “if you can’t measure it you can’t manage it”, so at the outset it will be important to determine a greenhouse gas baseline; from that the Climate Action Task Force will need to make a business case for energy savings.

Chair Bagley summarized the comments, noting the City Administrator will appreciate the Task Force approaching the City as a unified voice. Given that, the Climate Action Task Force will ask the City Administrator for the following:

- A copy of the E-tip proposal
- Tours of the City departments/infrastructures
- Updates to what has happened since the last task force

C. Landscape review of other climate efforts within and outside of Sitka

Each member was assigned to and reported on plans in other localities.

- a. **Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands, BC near Dixon Entrance)** – Caitlin Woolsey noted the similarities to Sitka; Their plan started with community engagement and recognized their adaptive capacity; government and finance were key barriers, so Sitka should make special efforts to help the Assembly with policy and finance.
- b. **Toronto** – Caitlyn Woolsey reported Toronto made a plan to make a plan; in the meantime, they made some short-term actions, garnered community engagement, focused on education and awareness building. Build up economic development and help those most vulnerable to increase adaptability.
- c. **Makah Tribe and the San Juan Islands in Washington State** – Molly Grear reported that in their planning efforts, each had a big focus on different resources and how they would change and the community would be impacted due to climate change. The language centered on self-sufficiency.
- d. **Minnesota** – Kay Kriess reported on a set of tools prepared in Minnesota. This state is way ahead of Alaska in its commitments made quite a while ago to decrease carbon emissions. The tools developed for municipalities help them estimate what their greenhouse gas emissions are, what sectors they are from and how they can get the greatest result by targeting sectors emitting greenhouse gasses. This gets back to understanding where a municipality is starting from. Kay Kriess wondered if it's even possible to obtain such measurements in our area, since tools do not yet exist for Sitka. She advocates Sitka not spend precious time to measure what it cannot, but rather just get on with solutions that are already known to be needed. Chair Bagley reported Kord Christianson has offered to share his expertise in the area of measurement.
- e. **Juneau Commission of Sustainability, Climate Action Plan and Renewable Energy Plan.** Katie Riley reported broadly on the history of the Juneau efforts, which began in 2004-05 with Mayor Bruce Botelho, who wanted a scientific basis before making any decisions on climate change on Juneau. That report was released in 2007 and from that report, the commission was established and then the Climate Action Plan was written. In 2018 the Renewable Energy Strategy was adopted to implement the Climate Action Plan. They faced funding and political challenges. Annually, the strategic goals of the Commission are aligned with the Juneau Assembly goals to help move priorities forward. Four subcommittees exist: Renewable energy; solid waste; public outreach and engagement; and sustainability indicators and impacts. The main difference between the Juneau Plan and Sitka Plan is that Sitka's focus is on the municipal owned buildings, whereas the Juneau Plan includes recommendations and pathways to reduce emissions from a variety of parts of the community including businesses, state, federal, municipal and private residences and a renewable energy use and increasing conservation measures, energy efficiencies and electrification of their vehicle fleet. Yearly reports on what they have done date back to 2010.

- f. **Hawaii:** Caitlin Way's research on Hawaii found that Hawaii, the Big Island, is taking leadership over the Hawaiian Islands and setting the example for the rest. They are hosting a sustainability summit this year. They are focused on negative impacts that are occurring, such as the rise of sea level and its impact on resources, infrastructures and communities. The Pacific Island Climate Change Cooperative commissioned an analysis to help them understand the barriers and to address the impacts of climate change on their ecosystems. The impact model could be helpful to Sitka's subcommittees. They are also members of a Mayor's climate network, which might be helpful to the Sitka Assembly. They pledged to lead by example, with a transportation goal of renewable powered fleet by 2035. They have a department of research and development under their sustainability department. They used the Closed Loop Fund for most of their funding.
- g. **Anchorage:** Caitlin Way reported the web site for Anchorage is very interactive. Anchorage's approach is similar to Juneau's community-based approach. Their website has a lot of info graphics. They partnered with UAA and with Alaska's Commercial Property Assessment and Clean Energy Administrative Platform. A grant was recently received for their first electric garbage truck. They are part of a coalition that released messaging to urge Alaska leaders to take a strong stand on climate change.
- h. **C40 City's Network:** Elizabeth Bagley reported on this network for major metropolitan areas that has a lot of helpful information and inspiration.
- i. **Portland Oregon 2020 Final Progress Report:** Elizabeth Bagley highlighted this five-year report's focus on the importance of centering equity as a way to see what had been accomplished rather than what is planned – what they are doing, not just what they are talking about; they identified their barriers. The appendix shows the objectives and subsequent actions.
- j. **San Francisco Climate Action Plan:** Elizabeth Bagley found this to be a robust community feedback process which could be a good example for Sitka to meaningfully engage with community. Different lenses are used for each of their strategies. When reporting to the Assembly, the Sitka Climate Action Task Force will have to apply different lenses to recommendations (financial, equity, greenhouse emissions or avoidance).
- k. **Barcelona's Climate Action Plan:** Elizabeth Bagley liked how visual the plan appeared. The visualization made the concepts visible and relatable – this type of presentation and messaging will be important to help people to care.
- l. **Business Pumped on Climate Change:** Elizabeth Bagley reported on this San Francisco based partnership of businesses to meet the City's climate goals.
- m. **Cohort of Alaska Communities for Climate Planning:** Kent Barkhau researched this group that was just emerging prior to the pandemic; when the shutdown occurred in Spring 2020 the effort for funding stopped. The coalition, comprised of University of Anchorage, Alaska Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks and the municipality of Anchorage, continues to meet and share experiences. A toolkit was put together that is potentially useful:

reference to the academic paper, indices of climate plans, worksheets and documents from climate action workshops, climate action funding and resources.

- n. **Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska:** Elizabeth Borneman reported on a CCTHITA document which focuses on climate impacts prevalent in Southeast Alaska: weather pattern changes; coastal erosion; ocean acidification and the marine food web; forest habitat changes and adaptations; invasive species; human health impacts. Since this was written by the Tribe, there are no mitigation actions geared toward the municipality. There is a good overview of federal, state, local agencies, local non-profit and private entities that would be partners in climate actions.
- o. **Kodiak:** Elizabeth Borneman reported Kodiak does not have a climate adaptation plan and they did not elect to include climate change in their multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan. The City did work with Kodiak Electric Association and helped fund the purchase of a renewable energy powered shipping cranes which will help them get away from diesel. They put in a fly wheel and battery energy storage to help level out fluctuations of energy from their winter wind, so they are able to store their excess wind energy for quieter times when the energy is needed. There was also a purchase of a hydroelectric facility from the Federal Government. Basically, all of their energy is locally owned renewables (99.5%); occasionally they will use fuel for something. They met their challenge to produce by 2020 100% of the town's demand for renewable energy in 2014. There is also a carbon sequestration study at Afognak Island used by multiple groups. A group from Harvard studied how much carbon is being sequestered by that specific space of 8200 acres. They used this to give carbon credits to groups that wanted to purchase that carbon offset. So, there was a little bit of that financial use of the space the City gave toward that conservation district.
- p. **Alaska Center Meeting on Climate Connections – Lessons from Presenters:** Darby Osborn reported on a recent meeting to gather lessons from presenters to apply locally. The general manager of Anchorage's solid waste services has a goal that by 2030 all solid waste service vehicles will be electric. Toward that end they applied for an energy conservation grant from Grants.gov. On Grants.gov is the Department of Energy's electric vehicle demonstration program, a good place to look for funding. This was used to purchase the City's first electric bus. The effort is to turn all medium duty vehicles to electric and develop battery storage so that electric infrastructure could then charge vehicles. Another presentation provided a 2017 paper from the Northstar Borough Sustainability Commission giving advice: work on multiple issues with sub-committees; make a business case for action to galvanize and mobilize the business community; importance of energizing others, reaching out and collaborating with others in the community. Kodiak was cited as a good model and resource.

Chair Bagley thanked the members for their thoughtful and thorough presentations. She will collect all the information provided to her by each member so that it can be aggregated to be discussed more deeply at a future meeting(s).

A member of the public was invited to provide information on the greenhouse gas inventory. Kord Christianson referenced the 2003-2006 study. Kord Christianson encouraged the Task Force to establish a new, current baseline. Information might be available from the State; letters of support and introduction could be provided from the Mayor, Administrator and Assembly. Many businesses will provide this information, and there will be places where the Task Force will have to make guestimates. The Federal Government has set three or four baselines since the mid-1990's to the present. Initially the estimates were rough and since then policies were established to assist the ability to gather better information. In terms of the big picture of Sitka, the sources of energy are fairly simple in terms of energy inputs because Sitka is an isolated community: electric department, fuel companies, firewood, a tiny bit of solar here and there, boats and airplanes come and/or leave with fuel. This is a fairly short list to identify an energy baseline or make guestimates. Work with policy to make sure you can obtain the information. The Alaska Department of Environmental Quality has information on fuel tanks over 500 gallons. If the Sitka Climate Action Task Force cannot identify and understand what sectors of the community are the largest sources of greenhouse gasses, how do you know what to push for and how to make change? If the Task Force doesn't know what is happening on sea levels, temperatures and rainfall, how do you know there is change? It takes ground work to develop this critical baseline. A business case and sometimes an emotional case is needed to garner community support. A baseline is not a fixed endpoint, every year it becomes more refined and the information must be most recent. The 2020 greenhouse gas footprint of the Sitka Electric Department is less than 5 tons for all of the electricity generated in 2020; Sitka is 99.8% hydro and less than 2% diesels (primarily to make sure that if needed, the diesels are operational). To be successful, the Task Force must have the facts and in order to know where it is and thereby know where to go.

Brant Brantman spoke as a member of the public to introduce Sitka Rain Power Project. He offered the support and assistance from Sitka Rain Power Project toward the work of the Sitka Climate Action Task Force. Assuming there is excess hydro capacity, every time someone buys an electric car or puts in a heat pump there is the benefit of replacing oil with hydro and there is the benefit of measurement of every kilowatt sold. Sitka's meters are a great source of determining how many tons are replaced. For each electric car and each heat pump brought into town, it becomes a fairly easy extrapolation of how much oil is replaced with water spilling over the dam. Sitka has a unique opportunity with extra hydro to directly replace carbon with hydro.

Kord Christianson explained the concept of interruptible power – this is power the Sitka Electric Department can turn off when it doesn't have it. Sitka has two hydro dams that function as batteries – when the battery is full, the water is spilled over and the energy is lost. This occurred this past year. There is a rule curve that calculates how much water is behind the dam at any given time of year, what the expected rainfall is, how much is needed to charge the battery and if above the rule curve, it is known how much energy can be sold. One of the most effective ways to use that energy is for heat. All the schools and three municipal buildings are on interruptible power. Last year, about 6% of the total energy the Electrical Department sold was used for interruptible power. This translates to about 2400 tons, over 60% of the 2003 baseline that set a 25% reduction by 2020. The accuracy of the 2003 baseline is not exactly known. Nevertheless, the community can say it met the goal set in 2003 to reduce greenhouse gasses. There is a need to update the baselines. The Chair thanked Mr. Christianson for providing a taste of what the Task Force needs to know about the City electric department. City Administrator Leach will be contacted for additional information.

Larry Edwards spoke as a member of the public to thank the Chair for the information provided by Kord Christianson. Mr. Edwards suggested the Task Force recommend the City push at the State level for a change in the law so that the quantity of fossil fuel used is not proprietary information.

Member of the public Joel Hanson thanked everyone for the good homework completed by each Task Force member. He emphasized how much the public is extremely interested in what the Task Force is doing. He encouraged the Task Force members to send all communications through the Clerk's Office so that the public can also be included. He recommended Task Force members attend meetings of the other Boards and Commissions, both to better align efforts and learn more about open meetings process and Robert's Rules of Order.

The Chair and Task Force members thanked the members of the Public for comments and recommendations. Task Force members confirmed commitments to learn and abide by public process with a goal of including the public.

D. Subcommittee focus areas

The Chair proposed a list of sub committees. Sub committees can be revisited on a quarterly basis. Five sub committees were listed: greenhouse gas baseline (including insights and updates from the 2010 plan); policy recommendations; grants and opportunities; community engagement; and City infrastructure and assets (including information gathering for alignment with other City Boards and Commissions). Process for assigning members to sub-committee(s) was discussed. Member Caitlin Woolsey

requested equity be a core value in all the work of the Task Force. Task Force members will inform the Chair of subcommittee preferences via the Clerk's Office.

IX. PERSONS TO BE HEARD (*not to exceed 3 minutes on topics on or off the agenda*)

The Chair thanked the public for participation at this meeting provided earlier. There were no further comments from the public.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Agenda items for the next meeting:

- Task Force position on water topics being considered by the Assembly, if desired by Assembly – the Chair will consult the City Clerk
- Sub Committee Focus areas
- Chair will report on Task Force City Requests:
 - o Information – etip proposal
 - o Infrastructure Tours
 - o 2010 Update
 - o Department presentations
 - o 2003-2007 inventory

Reflections on this date's meeting:

The Chair would like to end each meeting with a reflection of those present. She invited members to leave with her brief answers to two questions (written on the sticky note provided earlier):

- what went well and
- what could have been done better

Next meeting was scheduled for March 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., Harrigan Centennial Hall/Videoconference

M – Katie Riley/ S – Darby Osborn moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seeing no objections, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Attest:
Gail Johansen Peterson, Secretary