

# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

## Meeting Agenda Sustainability Commission

**Officers:** Chair Katie Riley, Vice Chair Angie Bowers, Secretary Carol Voisin

**Members:** Elizabeth Bagley, Kent Barkhau, Aurora Taylor, Fernanda Zermoglio

**Staff Liaison:** Bri Gabel, Sustainability Coordinator

**Assembly Liaison:** Kevin Mosher

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Tuesday, May 2, 2023

6:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

**II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA**

**III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES**

Approve the April 4, 2023 minutes

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

**V. REPORTS**

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. Decide the Next Steps for Executing the 2023-2024 Annual Work Plan Goals

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

B. Steve Behnke, Chair of the Energy Subcommittee of the Juneau Commission on Sustainability (JCOS), and Denise Koch, Deputy Director of Public Works and JCOS staff liaison on CBJ's process for developing their community renewable energy strategy

C. Approve Sustainability Commission's Stakeholder Support Form ETIPP Application

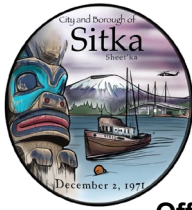
D. Approve Support Letter for Sitka Local Foods Network and Transition Sitka's Community Garden Concept

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

**IX. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA**

June 6th at 6 PM in Harrigan Centennial Hall, room 2

**X. ADJOURNMENT**



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

## Meeting Minutes Sustainability Commission

**Officers:** Chair Katie Riley, Vice Chair Angie Bowers, Secretary Carol Voisin

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Tuesday, April 4, 2023

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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### I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

**Chair Riley called the meeting to order at approximately 6:02 P.M.**

**Present:** Katie Riley (Chair), Elizabeth Bagley (left at 8:10), Kent Barkhau (telephonic), Angie Bowers, Aurora Taylor (arrived at 6:15), Carol Voisin, Fernanda Zermoglio, Kevin Mosher (Assembly Liaison, arrived at 6:45).

**Absent:** None

**Staff:** Bri Gabel (Sustainability Coordinator), Amy Ainslie (Planning Director)

**Public:** Larry Edwards, Eric Jordan, Lisa Sadleir-Hart, Joel Hanson, Barbara Bingham, Leah Mason

### II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

No agenda changes.

### III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

Approve the march 7, 2023 minutes.

**Bowers moved to approve the March 7, 2023 minutes.**

**Motion PASSED 6-0 by roll call vote.**

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

Lisa Sadleir-Hart reported on the Electrification Expo with 130 attendees and 20 experts. The most interest was in heat pumps and how to finance new ones in homes.

### V. REPORTS

**Staff:** Gabel requested commissioners let her know their summer schedules for attending meetings for quorum monitoring. She reported on the Yale Climate Change Communication webinar on public perceptions of the Inflation Reduction Act would share a link when available.

**Chair:** Riley gave an update on her presentation to the Assembly presenting the commission's work plan, which was unanimously approved.

**Commissioners:** Voisin thanked Riley for a detailed and well delivered presentation of the commission's work plan to the Assembly.

**Bagley** congratulated Gabel on her recent Sitka Daily Sentinel interview.

### VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**VII. NEW BUSINESS****A. Recommend the Assembly Fund a Sitka-based Heat Pump Assessor via Alaska Heat Smart**

Andy Romanoff, Executive Director of Alaska Heat Smart (AHS), outlined his request for the Assembly to provide \$10,000 to fund a Sitka-based heat pump assessor. AHS received permission to allocate some money from the Department of Energy (DOE) to fund some assessments and incentives for low-income homes in Sitka, but the continuation beyond the initial assessments would be contingent on securing other funding sources. The Sitka assessor would be trained by the Juneau assessor that would be in town and the \$10,000 would continue to support more assessments after the initial DOE funding was expended.

Leah Mason supported the Alaska Heat Smart's request.

Riley raised a concern that the financial benefits from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) may overlap with the program. Romanoff explained that this would fund assessments of the readiness of a home to receive a heat pump, not fund the heat pumps like rebates through the IRA would when they came into effect. Zermoglio asked if an assessment was required for the IRA rebate, and how else it might educate homeowners. Romanoff explained that it was not required but an assessment may help homeowners decide if the rebate is a correct choice for them. Bagley suggested the outlined budget be more specific for the \$10,000, specify whether it was a one-time request, and any other staff time that may be required as the Assembly would need those details.

**Taylor moved to recommend that the Assembly fund a Sitka-based heat pump assessor through Alaska Heat Smart.**

**Motion PASSED 7-0 by roll call vote**

**B. Draft a Letter of Support for Sitka Local Foods Network and Transition Sitka's Community Garden Concept**

Joel Hanson presented on the community gardens concept for two, ½ acre locations on Osprey and Jarvis Street. He explained the six qualifications that every garden site required and how these sites fit. He provided an overview of the timelines and tasks required to develop the gardens and how they would be managed. He has requested letters of support from other community organizations and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska.

Lisa Sadleir-Hart stated that the need for gardens is clear with many food stamp recipients and gardens provide a rich resource for those recipients. Eric Jordan supported the concept but made note of the toxic pollution for gardens from diesel bus emissions during tourist season. Barbara Bingham expressed support for the community garden concept and the letter of support. Mason suggested that the gardens can be a source for composting.

Commissioners inquired if other avenues for funding besides the city had been explored and support for the concept was expressed. Gabel explained the process to provide the letter if was pursued to have up to three commissioners draft the letter before it was brought back to the commission for approval at the next meeting in May. Voisin, Taylor and Bowers volunteered to draft the letter of support.

**Bowers moved the Sustainability Commission draft a letter of support for Sitka Foods Network and Transition Sitka's community garden concept.**

**Motion PASSED 7-0 by roll call vote**

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**C. Recommend a Sustainability Commissioner\* for Appointment by the Assembly to Serve on the Tourism Task Force Motion**

*\*per Resolution 23-11, the Sustainability Commission may recommend either a member of the commission or a member of the public for the sustainability seat on the Tourism Task Force.*

Barbara Bingham elaborated on her credentials for serving on the task force. Bagley asked how the commission could support Bingham and if there was a way to include a spot for discussion with her in future meetings. Riley indicated that she would work with staff to determine the best way to create an opportunity to hear from Bingham at future commission meetings. Zermoglio noted the commission was in a good position to provide guidance and reliable resources for sustainability issues, particularly around tourism. Gabel clarified that Bingham would not represent the commission, the same way that no one member represents the will of the entire body and would act independently with commission support.

Sadleir-Hart, Mason, and Larry Edwards voiced support of Bingham's recommendation.

**Voisin moved to nominate Barb Bingham as the Sustainability Commission's recommendation to the Assembly for the Tourism Task Force Motion PASSED by 7-0 by roll call vote**

**Bowers moved to table Item D until after Item E was addressed. Motion PASSED by 6-0 roll call vote**

**D. Approve the Energy Transition Partnership Project (ETIPP) Application Resolution Draft**

Mason voiced her support for the application.

**Bowers moved to approve the ETIPP Application Resolution Draft Motion PASSED by 6-0 roll call vote**

**E. Decide the Next Steps for Executing the 2023-2024 Annual Work Plan Goals**

Gabel explained that the ETIPP application process had been overhauled and was very different from the original 2021 application. In her discussion with Rob Jordan, the regional partner, he explained that only two letters of support were required and encouraged quality of quantity. Per Jordan's recommendation, the Assembly and the Sustainability Commission be the primary sources, and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, should they choose to participate. She clarified that the city was applying for the technical assistance, not the commission, and that while the commission would be heavily involved in the scoping process and conduct public engagement, she would handle writing the application. Barkhau, Zermoglio, and Riley volunteered to draft the Sustainability Commission's stakeholder engagement form for commission approval at the May meeting.

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

Jordan stated that three years ago the city declared a climate emergency. He opined that we are not moving fast enough and that there needs to be more recognition of the emergency.

Mason reminded the commission that the community energy plan needed to engage the community.

**G. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA**

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 6:00 P.M., Harrigan Centennial Hall.

**H. ADJOURNMENT**

**Chair Riley moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Seeing no objection, the meeting ADJOURNED at 8:40 P.M.**

Minutes By: Carol Voisin, Secretary

## **ETIPP Stakeholder Form Answers**

**Katie, Fernanda, Kent**

### **1. What ETIPP applicant are you supporting? \***

The City and Borough of Sitka

### **2. What is your name? \***

Katie Riley (Chair), Angie Bowers (Vice Chair), Carol Voisin (Secretary), Elizabeth Bagley, Kent Barkhau, Aurora Taylor, Fernanda Zermoglio

### **3. What is your organization? \***

Sustainability Commission of the City and Borough of Sitka

### **4. What is your role? \***

The sustainability commission works to catalyze a healthy community now and in the future by proposing solutions to environmental, social, and economic concerns of the City and Borough of Sitka, its partners, and community members. In our purview, we advise the Sitka Assembly on sustainability issues and facilitate opportunities for public comment, input, and education on these issues.

Our 2023-2034 work plan, which was endorsed by the Sitka Assembly in March 2023, contains the primary goal of developing a community renewable energy strategy. The Commission's role in this proposal will include continuous engagement throughout the process, from helping outline ideas during scoping, to crafting a thorough public engagement strategy, to making policy recommendations and technical review of the findings. At the end of the project, we will work to advance the strategy, its findings and recommendations with the assembly, look for funding pathways, and educate the broader community on the information and goals contained within.

### **5. What is your email address? \***

### **6. What is the relationship between your organization and the applicant's organization?**

The sustainability commission is a municipal commission that serves as an advisory body to the City of Sitka. The Sitka Assembly created the Sustainability Commission via an ordinance in 2022. We act as an advisory body to the Assembly on what kind of approaches and actions that you can take to address issues like reducing fossil fuel use, sustainable transportation options that leverage locally generated energy, etc. We also work with city staff to do public outreach to understand community priorities, and work as a conduit between the public and the city on sustainability issues.

### **7. If the applicant is selected, how will your organization benefit from the results of their proposed ETIPP project? If applicable, how will your organization be negatively impacted by the project?**

**The Sustainability Commission exists to support the City of Sitka and its Assembly in the effort to provide for long term benefits of all citizens.** Crafting a community renewable energy strategy will help us build off the information gathered during the first Energy Transition Initiative partnership (ETIPP) project that Sitka engaged in. It will help us extend the life of the power we currently have by identifying conservation measures, while laying the groundwork for what the community wants to see as far as future generation and utilization of that capacity. Our organization will benefit, as will the rest of the community, as we are citizens of Sitka that will feel the impact of rate hikes and other costs associated with the development of more renewable energy. Thus, we have a vested interest in increasing efficiency and conservation, while also identifying future priorities for development and what we would want to see that energy used for.

We think that creating a community renewable energy strategy to help establish a shared vision of Sitka's energy future will help our commission achieve our goals of advising the assembly what they can do to make our broad community a more self-sufficient, energy independent entity and lower community-wide greenhouse gas emissions.

We do not anticipate any negative impacts to our commission by this project.

**8. If the applicant is selected, how do you think the community will benefit from the results of their proposed ETIPP project? If applicable, how will the community be negatively impacted by the project?**

This proposed ETIPP project will help our community in 4 main ways: 1) create a shared understanding and ownership around our energy goals and Sitka's energy future; 2) help Sitkans save money, 3) enhance the local economy, and 4) make our community more self-sufficient and energy independent. 1) Since this is a community renewable energy strategy, we will be looking to engage broad swaths of the public to share their priorities, thoughts, and concerns regarding renewable energy development and use in Sitka. Engaging in these conversations with stakeholders early, often, and throughout will help more citizens understand what it takes to power our community and what future demand might look like as we transition to a clean energy economy. We hope that by working to create a shared understanding and local buy-in, this will lead to a more cohesive community and more support for clean energy goals. 2) Energy conservation and efficiency will extend the life of our current investments, and save money on energy bills in the long run, especially considering the high cost of burning diesel in a rural Alaskan community. 3) We expect that part of the project will identify workforce development demands and needs going out 5, 10, 20, 30 years into the future, which will create opportunities for local businesses to plan for this future and create new jobs/make investments as needed. 4) By planning for future energy demands and expected use, we will be able to craft a development strategy that fits the needs of our community, which will increase our chances of reducing our consumption of fossil fuels.

We also expect that this technical assistance will help chart the course for energy investments and community action for the City of Sitka. We think that the community will benefit from having

better defined community decarbonization goals and aligning with federal climate goals, and funding sources.

**9. Are there any other organizations that you feel should be involved in the applicant's proposed ETIPP project? \***

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska is the local tribal government, and is a critical partner in this process. It is up to them whether or not and how they want to engage and where they see overlap between this process and their Strategic plan and goals. We would be very appreciative of their engagement.

The electric department will have technical information and expertise that will be critical to this project.

**10. How do you anticipate engaging with the applicant's ETIPP project? (Please select all that apply.)**

Check all boxes

**11. Is there anything else you'd like to share? \***

We envision the Commission playing a critical role in developing and leading the public engagement process, which is critical to the success of this project.

As a community, we really benefited from the first round of ETIPP technical assistance, which assessed and identified several opportunities for renewable energy development around Sitka and did some of the cost-benefit analysis for these options. However, the appetite in the community for more renewable energy development is mixed. Some folks understand that in order to save money in the long run (by staying off the diesel generators), we need to build out more renewable energy to provide for the expected growth in our community, especially with the new hospital being built. However, other folks are still frustrated with the debt accrued by expanding the Blue Lake dam years ago and the rate increases that have subsequently occurred.

By developing a community renewable energy strategy with continued technical assistance from ETIPP, we see an opportunity to bring the broader community along in their understanding and support of the actions that Sitka will have to take to continue relying on renewable energy strategy. This community buy-in and support will be essential to ensuring that the data gathered and options analyzed during the last round of ETIPP funding are able to be pursued and implemented.

# DRAFT

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sustainability Commission of the City and Borough of Sitka expresses our unanimous support for the conceptual development of a Community Garden in Sitka, as proposed by community member Joel Hanson at our regular April meeting. This is a collaborative effort between two Sitka based non-profit organizations—Sitka Local Foods Network and Transition Sitka.

The concept of a community garden project fits squarely into the commission's intent and goals, as codified by Sitka's General Code 2.15.060.B. Creation of a community garden directly reflects four goals of the commission, including Diminution of Sitka's supply-chain fragility, Food security enhancement, Solid waste consumption reduction, composting, recycling, and reuse; and Robust and healthy local ecosystems and natural communities (SGS 2.15). This project aligns with these goals, as well as the city's five-year strategic plan and the comprehensive plan.

A community garden would have a variety of benefits, including wellness through gardening, provision of locally sourced, healthy foods, and increased food security for Sitka residents. It presents the potential to increase composting through structured programs and designated sites. It also increases equity among Sitka residents by providing land space essential to gardening to renters and apartment dwellers who lack resources and legal right to self-start gardening. Land is the essential resource to provide food to Sitka, and this project cleverly leverages city land resources to provide a plethora of diverse social and environmental benefits.

The Sustainability Commission is a newly formed city commission. In March 2023, our annual priorities were proposed and voted on by commissioners, then approved by the Sitka City Assembly. We acknowledge the value of a community garden and its potential for positive impacts on community members and the environment; further, we recognize the fervor and initiative that this project and its creators embody. The benefits from a community garden, coupled with the clear alignment with city goals led us to our full support for the concept and proposal of Development of Community Gardens in Sitka.

Signed,

Sustainability Commissioners