

**MINUTES FOR THE CLIMATE & ENERGY ACTION PLAN ad hoc COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, December 14, 2016**  
**Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way**

**1. Call to Order**

Councilor Rich Rosenthal called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Committee members Bryan Sohl, Jim Hartman, Cindy Bernard, Roxanne Beigel-Coryell, Louise Shawkat, James McGinnis, Stuart Green and Greg Jones were present. Staff member Adam Hanks was present. Committee member Marni Koopman arrived late. Committee member Claudia Alick was listening via speakerphone. Committee members Claire Pryor and Isaac Bevers were absent.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**McGinnis/Bernard m/s to approve the minutes of November 2 and 16 as presented.**

**Discussion:** None. **Voice Vote:** All Ayes. **Motion Passes.**

**3. Public Input**

Robert Block-Brown – stated he was pleased with the number of people attending the open house. He also thought the general information there was good and presented well. He is concerned because the committee members made it clear they wanted the ordinance approved either before or with the plan approval but it is not clear that this will be done in that timeframe. He is also concerned with how the staff position will be created and where in the org chart that position will be placed. He believes it needs to have management level skills as well as a clear understanding of climate science.

Allie Rosenbluth – thanked the group for their work. She thought the open house was good and gave some recommendations for future events such as having the flyer in Spanish to targets groups we may have left out of the process. She stated that the group needs to hold people accountable for the pledges they made at the open house. She was upset that there was no expression of clear support for the ordinance at the open house and she would appreciate if the group talk about it clearly at the January study session with Council.

*Committee member Marni Koopman arrived 3:39 p.m.*

James Stephens – thanked the group for allowing the 10x20 display in the lobby outside of the open house. He had several good discussions there. He stated that one thing that came up in those discussions was the environmental impact of solar installations. He isn't worried about this as the City always thinks these things through completely. He stated that solar arrays help to shade the ground which supports a more diverse environment for plants and animals. He stated that on January 10<sup>th</sup> there will be a demonstration of an electric bus in Ashland. The company giving the demonstration will then move north to Medford, Grants Pass, Eugene, etc.

Huelz Gutchen – stated that he thinks the plan is good but there will be lots to change in it, which is okay because it's a living document. He stated that Portland is now requiring all homes being sold to have an energy audit which much be shown in the real estate listing. He thanked those

who had read his double-bundle e-mail and encouraged the rest to read it. He would like the group to create a list of definitions of terms so that everyone is on the same page.

Ray Mollett – he agrees with the rest regarding the good open house attendance. He stated that page 19 of the plan was his favorite because it lays out the vision and goals. He believes we need to consider things like offsets to meet those goals. He thinks other cities with plans will be doing the same thing. However, there needs to be a good discussion of how much money is spent here versus other locations.

#### **4. Icebreaker**

The group did a teambuilding icebreaker around the question what do you most want for Christmas?

#### **5. Open House #3 Recap/Debrief**

Rosenthal stated he was pleased with the turnout and thanked everyone for their participation and assistance. He has received positive feedback from the community. Hanks gave an overview of what information from the open house is already on the commission's webpage and what information will soon be there.

Group discussed their observations of the open house. In general they were pleased with the turnout and thought the question and answer period was useful and fostered good dialogue. They generally were frustrated that the implementation plan, even a very rough version, was not part of the open house as that's the "meat" of the plan. Group raised concerns that there will not be enough time for the committee to really review the implementation plan before everything is presented to Council.

#### **6. Draft Plan Review**

Rosenthal thanked the committee members who submitted comments and markups to Hanks. Those have already been sent to Cascadia along with some policy-level comments and suggestions from city staff.

Group expressed some of their concerns with the plan including; the 'what's possible' section needing to be clearer, lack of reference to the 8% goal throughout the plan, lack of reflection of Ashland as a tourist destination, needing better context for numbers - particularly related to graphics, needing to highlight that they are science-based targets so they can be updated as science changes. Additionally, the group would like the 8% reference to be a call-out in the plan, rather than just included in the appendix. Hanks stated he had already made this request of Cascadia.

Koopman raised a concern that none of the strategies reflect equity (the beginning statement is not enough) or co-benefits. McGinnis stated he was under the impression that equity would be a consideration of every strategy or action taken, so specifically calling it out each time wasn't necessary. Group agreed that as this was their intention it could be left as-is.

#### **7. Carbon Offsets**

Hartman gave an overview of why he believes offsets must be included in the plan in order to

achieve the 8% goal each year (see attached memo).

Sohl asked if the group had already voted to leave offsets as an option. Group agreed they thought they had (from the July 6, 2016 minutes, “Group generally agreed to, ‘retain the option to include carbon offsets, if we can’t achieve goals/targets by any other means.’”). Sohl stated he would rather not have offsets be a specific part of the plan but rather leave the option open for consideration. Alick (by speakerphone) asked if there were anything in the plan prohibiting use of offsets. Hanks stated no.

Group discussed use of offsets and whether they should be specifically called out in the plan and whether they should have limits on usage. Beigel-Coryell stated offsets should be a last-resort option, that we should focus instead on spending the money in our own community for long-term improvements rather than spend it outside our community in order to achieve only a short-term goal achievement.

**McGinnis/Beigel-Coryell m/s to ask Cascadia to draft a strategy for consideration regarding offsets for inclusion in the plan. Discussion:** Bernard stated she wants to be clear that we should not start with offsets - they should be a last resort for achieving reduction goals. Beigel-Coryell raised concerns that once they are used, there won’t be an easy way to stop using them. **Voice Vote: All Ayes. Motion Passes.**

## **8. Implementation Plan**

Hanks reviewed the upcoming work plan and timeline. Group discussed the timing of the proposed ordinance.

## **9. Geos Survey Results**

Koopman stated that the full report will be coming in a few weeks. There were over 1,000 respondents, which was far more than anticipated. She hopes the response numbers will help Council see that there is support for the plan. The results also should help the future commission to know where the City can supplement efforts already being taken in the community.

## **10. Next Meeting**

The upcoming meeting schedule is as follows:

January 4, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

January 23, 5:30 p.m. preview of plan at Council Study Session (please note: this date is subject to change)

## **11. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Diana Shippet, Executive Assistant

## Should You Buy Carbon Offsets?

Posted April 28, 2016 by Brian Palmer on The Natural Resources Defense Council Website

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/should-you-buy-carbon-offsets>

### A practical and philosophical guide to neutralizing your carbon footprint.

If you want to go carbon neutral, you could do what Daniel Suelo did. In 2000, Suelo moved into the caves in Arches National Park, where he forages for food, buys nothing, and doesn't own a car. He's also sworn off heating and cooling devices.

You don't have to go quite that far, though, to live a carbon-neutral life. (Nor should you—Suelo's lifestyle raises some serious legal and environmental issues.) Start by reducing your emissions. Then, after you've done all you can to shrink your personal carbon footprint, it's time to consider buying offsets.

You've almost certainly been given the opportunity to buy carbon offsets. Some airline websites, for example, offer the option to buy them from third-party sellers to counterbalance the considerable carbon pollution associated with flying. Should you buy them? Yes, but selectively. Low-quality carbon offsets were once common, so you first have to do some legwork to ensure authenticity.

To illustrate the difference between a quality carbon offset and a scam, consider a hypothetical example: The offset seller will give your money to a landowner in the Amazon who promises to leave his trees standing to maximize carbon sequestration.

The offset seller should make several guarantees in this transaction. First, that the offsets are *real*—that there's an actual landowner who owns actual land with actual trees. This guarantee shouldn't be necessary, but unfortunately there have been cases of groups collecting money for offset projects that don't yet exist. Relatedly, the offset should be *verified* and *enforceable*—a third party should have laid eyes on the trees, and there must be a mechanism for penalizing the landowner if he doesn't follow through. The offset should also be *permanent*. If the guy who gets your money can burn his trees to the ground six months later, your money will have been wasted.

Finally, the offset must be **additional**. This is the trickiest issue with carbon offsets. What if the Amazonian landowner never had any intention of clear-cutting his land in the first place? Then your purchase would be a gift rather than an offset. The landowner would be taking advantage of the offset system to collect a windfall for doing exactly what he would have done anyway. Your transaction would have no effect on the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. A corollary to “additionality”—yes, carbon offset works use that word—is **leakage**. Let’s say your money prevented the Amazonian landowner from selling his plot to a logging company. That’s great, but what if the logging company simply bought the plot next door? That’s leakage. Your offset dollars shifted deforestation rather than preventing it.

Both individuals and corporations buy carbon offsets. Big companies have the resources to research the legitimacy of an offset themselves. Google, for example, employs people to investigate the quality of the company’s carbon offset outlays. You probably don’t have the time or money to fly to Ecuador and poke around a forested plot, to inspect a methane capture system, or to visit an urban forestry project. Fortunately, a quality assurance system has developed to verify the quality of your offsets. At the top level are standard-setting groups, such as the Climate Action Reserve, which establish rules and protocols for offset projects. Below them are retail certification programs, like Green-e Climate, which help individuals identify reliable carbon offset sellers.

The best carbon offset programs are transparent. If you have concerns, you should contact the seller to find out exactly what you’re buying. Many will allow you to direct your money to specific projects or away from others. You may, for example, prefer not to invest in a factory farm, even if the money is earmarked for methane capture. Or you may wish to look for programs that offer benefits beyond carbon reduction, such as employment in low-income areas or improvements in public health.

In addition to these practical issues, you should be aware of a larger philosophical argument about carbon offsets. While proponents view high-quality offsets as a way to support carbon-fighting projects, critics say they are merely a license to pollute. When you buy an offset, you are paying someone to cut her emissions so *you don’t have to*.

That’s why your first move should always be to reduce your own emissions. Drive fewer miles, fly less, don’t overheat or over-cool your home. But before you resign yourself to moving to a cave, know that high-quality carbon offsets are available to eliminate the last traces of your carbon footprint.