

## MINUTES FOR THE CLIMATE POLICY COMMISSION

Thursday, November 12, 2020; Held Electronically

### 1. Call to Order (item starts at 00:05 on the recording)

Chair Rick Barth called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Commissioners Julian Bell, Bob Kaplan, Ray Mallette, Gary Shaff, and Jeff Wyatt were present. Council liaison Tonya Graham and staff liaison Stu Green were also present. Commissioner Chris Brown arrived later in the meeting.

### 2. Consent Agenda (00:07)

#### 2.1. October 8, 2020 Minutes

Mallette/Wyatt moved and seconded to accept the minutes from October 8. Further discussion: none. All ayes. Motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Announcements

#### 3.1. Next Meeting: December 10, 2020

#### 3.2. Staff Update (01:13)

Green updated the Commission on the following:

- New electric vehicle (EV) car chargers installed in October;
- Upcoming incentive programs for electric bikes and electric vehicles;
- Progress on on-bill financing for energy efficiency upgrades;
- Progress on the Rogue to Go reusable to go container program;
- An Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) grant for a materials flow study in collaboration with Southern Oregon University (SOU);
- Discussions with Electrify America to put in fast charging units in the area; and
- Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) intern Bridgette Bottinelli's developments on the new Climate website content.

#### 3.3. Other Announcements from Commissioners (06:10)

Wyatt alerted the Commission about Oregon Department of Energy releasing a 600-page biennial energy report, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) holding a virtual EV charging infrastructure meeting on November 17, Oregon Global Warming Commission releasing a biennial report within the next week. Wyatt will send links to these items to the Commissioners.

#### 3.4. Reports from Representatives of Other Commissions (08:18)

Transportation Commission Chair Linda Peterson-Adams spoke about the 20's Plenty project proposed by Shaff which would assign a representative of the Transportation, Conservation and Climate Outreach, and Climate Policy Commission to the group.

### 4. Public Forum

There was no public forum submitted for this meeting.

### 5. Presentation (10:10)

#### 5.1. Avista Representative Presentation

Avista Representative, Steve Vincent, gave a presentation covering the history of Avista and heating in Ashland, the transition to using renewable energy for producing natural gas locally as now allowed by Senate Bill 98, and the future of Avista in reducing fossil fuel based natural gas.

Discussion included:

- Fuel switching efforts in areas where Avista provides electricity and natural gas.

Incentives to switch from electricity to natural gas are provided in service areas with both. This is a result of natural gas being more cost effective for the company and the efficiency of gas equipment in homes is greater than gas fired power plants that would need to provide a minimum base load for electricity all the time. Barth stated that running natural gas power plants to provide electricity to buildings with electric heat pumps is still more efficient. Vincent will follow up with representatives from the electric side regarding this process.

- Supply of natural gas in Ashland and if biogas can be expanded to be used for all customers in the future.

Of the natural gas in the region around 25 percent comes from British Columbia, 50 percent from Alberta, and 25 percent from the Rocky Mountains. Dry Creek Landfill's biogas volume accounts for around 10 to 25 percent of the regional demand. Development of more biogas facilities will need to be economical as the Utility Commission approves rate increases.

- Potential Industry Consolidation

As Avista is a relatively small company in an area with low market growth, most large investors are not interested in the company. Barth asked why the merger with the Canadian company Hydro One failed. Vincent stated that the utility regulators in Washington and Idaho were concerned about the risk associated with Hydro One still being controlled by the Canadian government and Canadian policy could affect rates in Avista's operating region.

- Decarbonization Plan for Avista

While the electric division of Avista has a 100 percent renewable by 2045 goal the natural gas division still needs to develop a goal based on supply.

*Chris Brown arrived at 4:41 p.m.*

- Natural gas to electric fuel switching efforts by the City

Avista tries to increase energy conservation above switching to electric to help reduce the carbon footprints of homes. Businesses like local breweries and the YMCA could be affected by efforts to switch completely from natural gas to electricity.

- Ban on new natural gas connections as seen in California

There are not local jurisdictions that are currently trying to prohibit natural gas connections on new constructions. Avista would advocate against this, but Vincent hopes that local jurisdictions and Avista could work together on decarbonization efforts. Causing more users to switch to all electric could also cause Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to use their tier two generated electricity which comes from natural gas and coal power plants instead of hydroelectric dams. Most of what Avista is seeing is that new residential constructions are becoming Earth Advantage homes that have mini-splits and allow for natural gas use with offsets like solar to create a net zero home.

- State of Ashland's natural gas infrastructure

Ashland and most of the region has infrastructure that is relatively new (around 40 to 50 years old) that has not caused an issue with efficiency of delivery and use. As Hersey Street was repaved by the City, Avista had to remove existing infrastructure since it was in the right-of-way

that was being repaved as a result, they put in new infrastructure there. The outage caused last year was not due to an infrastructure issue, but a slow leak from a valve not properly closed.

## 6. Old Business

### 6.1. Action Items (55:31)

Mallette volunteered to record the action items for this meeting.

### 6.2. Commissioner Recruitment (58:35)

Graham has been in contact with SOU and AHS and Wyatt has also had contact with SOU. Some issues included if an applicant could live in Ashland part time and if the student representatives would be voting members. Barth will follow-up on if the student representatives would be voting members.

### 6.3. Council Recommendations Staff Input (1:04:00)

Green stated that most of the items on the listed could be done with direction of the Climate and Energy Action Plan and internal management, but having these items go to the new Council could also be beneficial to keep moving things forward. Shaff wanted to see the Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP) incorporated into the Comprehensive plan and wondered if that could be added to the list. Barth mentioned that this would be discussed later, and the outcome of the discussion could be to add it to the list. Barth wanted to continue to work with staff to see if any items could be handled administratively and when and take the rest of the list to the new Council in January.

Shaff/Mallett moved/seconded the listing in the memo be brought and added to the December agenda for final action and presumably a recommendation for Council submittal. Further discussion: Mallette questioned if the whole listed needed to be brought to Council and if the Commission would get recommendations with staff first or go to Council for endorsement. Shaff stated the list would come back at the Commission's December meeting for finalization with staff input and then go to Council preferably in January. Kaplan wanted to know what would happen to the list if the Council did not approve it since many of the items could be done internally with staff or under CEAP. Graham stated that since the Council will be going into the budget process without any strategic planning done it is important for the Council to hear from different groups. Graham also reminded the Commission that presenting to Council quarterly should be discussed again along with a request for Council to direct staff to look at potential solar sites on City property. Shaff asked if what should be presented to Council should be a budget prioritization of CEAP for the next fiscal year. Mallette stated that at least the Electric Utility Master Plan could be put forward to Council. Bell suggested presenting the list as informational rather than asking for Council's approval.

*Bell left at 5:23 p.m.*

Kaplan wanted a list of different items if it were to go to Council. All present voted against the motion and the motion failed. Barth stated that he would bring back the list to the December meeting to include new items discussed at this meeting for a final decision.

### 6.4. Policies and Methods

#### 6.4.1. Staff Allocation and Workload (1:27:30)

Green cannot to speak to what Adam Hanks wanted to give feedback on. There is a codified limit of staff time allotted to Commission, but if the Commission could align with the policies, he is

currently working on that would be the best course of action. Barth stated that they would review the list below with any questions and determine the next steps for each item.

#### 6.4.2. Master Plan Document Update (1:31:33)

Mallette announced that the list outlines the different master plans for the City, when they will be revised, and if CEAP input has been given. Barth asked to have the electric related plans assigned to the Utility focus area. Barth also suggested that the Capital Improvements Plan be added to the list. Mallette mentioned the Comprehensive Plan and how CEAP should be integrated into it. Suggestions included having CEAP incorporated into each element, an additional chapter created for CEAP, or having CEAP attached as a reference document in the appendices. Graham will ask Bill Molnar, Community Development Director, about their schedule for updating the Comprehensive Plan so a decision can be made.

#### 6.4.3. Electric Utility Strategic Plan RFP (1:52:29)

Wyatt presented that following questions regarding the electric master plan: if it should only include electric or also natural gas, if Ashland should be the main focus or if it should also include regional municipal utilities, does community input need to be done before releasing the request for proposal (RFP), and how the consultant will be selected. Wyatt is hoping that the timeline for the RFP will be by the end of 2021 and it will need to be determined how it will be funded. Wyatt, Barth, Mallette and Graham will meet with Green and Tom McBartlett, Electric Utility Director, for the next steps.

#### 6.4.4. Energy Retrofit Loan Program (1:59:20)

Kaplan stated that the next steps included to review the programs, identify program options, and financing (either through the City or privatized).

#### 6.4.5. SOU, ASD, OSF, AACH Natural Gas Phaseout

Bell left the meeting and this item was skipped.

#### 6.4.6. Municipal Facilities Plan (2:02:00)

Kaplan also asked if there has been an audit done already. Green stated that there is an older plan, but the needs for facilities are changing a lot with the COVID-19 pandemic. Brown asked if task one could be amended to focus on the facilities that use the most and where that information could be found. Green stated that the April 20 Council presentation includes this information in addition to the website dashboards. Kaplan asked for this item to be added to the recommendation list to Council and he will continue to track the item as needed.

#### 6.4.7. Home Energy Score Program (2:06:17)

Kaplan received input from Green about different examples in Portland and other areas. Mallette asked if this would be extending the current program. Green stated that there is not a mandated current program so this would create a requirement to get a home energy score when someone lists their house for sale.

#### 6.4.8. EV Ready (2:09:00)

Brown stated that there is some debate as to if this will be required by the land use ordinance or the building code. The State has directed the building code division to implement solar ready for new buildings, but progress is pending on a new director. Brown will continue to track this item.

#### 6.4.9. PV Reservation (2:10:33)

Brown stated there is a potential to work with the Planning Division on this. With Planning's recommendation this item could go to the Council in early 2021 to revise the language from 2015 and should be added to the recommendation list.

6.4.10. Transportation Plan (2:12:02)

Shaff stated that the plan update has been postponed. He will participate when rescheduled.

6.4.11. Light Weight Vehicles C (2:12:26)

Shaff asked to be the Climate Policy Commission (CPC) representative for the 20's Plenty group that will include one representative from the Climate Policy, Transportation, and Conservation and Climate Outreach Commissions. The group would create a report for approval by the three Commissions in either January or February. Kaplan/Brown moved to appoint Shaff to be CPC's representative on that work group. Further discussion: Kaplan stated that with Shaff's previous work he would be the logical person to represent the Commission. Mallette asked if this is where the clean fuels credits could be used. Shaff stated that was a possibility and could be brought up by the Commission when discussing a recommendation for the credits in January. Barth stated his concern about the impact the report might have on citizens and how the public engagement could conflict with other tasks CPC has taken on. Barth suggested that he, Shaff, and Graham discuss this later. All ayes. Motion passed unanimously.

6.4.12. Light Weight Vehicles D (2:19:00)

Shaff emphasized the need for a bike share or loan program to replace the previously bankrupt one. Barth wondered how much the previous program was utilized. Green answered that the use increased each year but was not built for success. The new program could have a larger service area with higher density and possibly be regional. There is also discussion on having a statewide bike share program. Shaff will continue to work with Green on this program.

6.4.13. Engage Planning Department (2:22:27)

Brown stated that there are two issues coming up that CPC could work with the Planning Division on: wildfire mitigation efforts and conservation density bonus. The State has updated their code to increase wildfire mitigation but has left the enforcement up to local governments. Council has also been aware of this and could have an opportunity for CPC to give input. The conservation density bonus could be modernized to align with CEAP as the current bonus is based on Earth Advantage. Barth requested that the next report reference CEAP elements for each item.

6.4.14. Phase out gas-powered lawn and garden equipment (2:25:00)

Shaff wanted to share the draft ordinance and strategy implementation plan with the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) for feedback. Once feedback is received, the ordinance would be to Council for adoption. Green suggested to have a representative of APRC come to a future meeting to discuss. Barth proposed that Shaff meet with an APRC representative outside the meeting. Kaplan stated that the implementation plan be sent to APRC instead of the ordinance.

Due to a lack of time, discussion ended, and Chair Barth adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m. The following items were not discussed due to lack of time: 6.4.15 Plan for 1MW Project and 6.5 Policy and Method Prioritization.

Respectfully submitted, Elizabeth Taylor