



Sustainability Commission Online Meeting

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 6:30 P.M.

Minutes

1. Call to Order at 6:30 pm

2. Roll Call by Staff Liaison

Members Present: Chair Dan Schuh; Vice Chair Shaun Grimm (6:32 PM); Commissioners Litzy Hernandez Cota, Paul Lemmon, Thomas Albrigo, Bernadette Barba (6:37 PM).

Members Absent: Commissioners Billy Vaughan (excused) and Alejandro Arreguin.

Municipal Staff Present: Danae Presler, Sustainability Officer; Nancy Wallace, Administrative Assistant; Simon Lara, Solid Waste Manager; Katrece Swenson, Senior Management Analyst

3. Unscheduled Public Appearances

None.

4. Approval of January 25, 2023 Minutes (For Action)

Motion was made by Commissioner Lemmon, seconded by Commissioner Litzy Hernandez Cota to approve the January 25, 2023 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Presentation on Municipal Compost Programs

Chair Schuh noted the Commission's interest in the topic of composting and the Sustainability and Solid Waste Divisions' aim to launch a pilot program for composting food scraps next fiscal year if funding is approved by Council.

Ms. Presler introduced the guest speakers, Stacy Hettmansperger, Solid Waste Administrator for the City of Phoenix Public Works Department, and Kaeli Wells, Sustainability Specialist for the City of Flagstaff.

Ms. Hettmansperger provided a PowerPoint presentation and gave an overview of the City of Phoenix waste diversion goals and composting program. The City currently diverts 36% of waste from the landfill and is pursuing 50% diversion goal by 2030 and

90% diversion by 2050. Currently Phoenix uses a landfill that is located in Buckeye over 50 miles one way and takes 150 loads per day. To help keep waste out of the landfill, Phoenix implemented an award-winning industrial-scale Compost Facility located at 27th Avenue and Lower Buckeye Road. The facility processes up to 55,000 tons of organics per year and is operated by a third-party contractor, We Care Denali. The majority of organics they process are 'green waste' such as yard trimmings from residents and landscapers. However, they also collect food scraps from events like the Super Bowl, elementary schools, Arizona State University, Phoenix Convention Center and other customers. The recently purchased a food depackaging machine to help with zero-waste events.

Ms. Hettmansperger stressed the importance of planning, coordination, communication, education and enforcement and available resources when considering starting a new compost program.

Chair Schuh asked how the compost is used once it is created. Ms. Hettmansperger stated that the contractor We Care Denali sells a majority of the compost, some is used by the City, and some is used to make wattles for construction sites.

Commissioner Lemmon asked what Avondale does with its green waste since the partnership with Duncan Farms ended. Ms. Presler shared that it is going to the landfill. She explained that the City of Avondale explored other options, such as taking it to the Phoenix Compost Facility, however it was cost prohibitive and would require changing logistical operations.

Commissioner Albrigo asked what size tree branches the Phoenix Compost Facility can handle? Ms. Hettmansperger replied that the largest grinder can handle branches of four to six inches in diameter.

Chair Schuh shared that in his experience one of the big challenges with composting is that people often don't know what is compostable and what is not. He inquired if Phoenix has found effective ways to prevent compost from being contaminated? Ms. Hettmansperger agreed that there is a lot of confusion on where food scraps belong and it's an ongoing challenge. Phoenix does not offer a curbside food scrap program for just that reason. For the zero-waste events, they put concerted effort into the backend of the process and have to sort and depackage materials. They have found it more effective to work with schools for cleaner material, but it still requires a lot of education.

Ms. Presler inquired if City of Phoenix would be open to partnering with Avondale on zero-waste events, such as the Tres Rios Nature Festival. Ms. Hettmansperger said it

could be explored, but there would need to be mechanisms in place to ensure the organics material was not contaminated with non-compostables.

Next, Ms. Wells provided a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the City of Flagstaff's compost programs. Flagstaff has food programming systems that consists of Community Gardening, Food Recovery Pilot Program and Backyard Livestock. Flagstaff's waste and food programming work together for outreach, composting and food recovery. They recently got an United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant to complete a comprehensive food system assessment to find out where their food comes from and where it goes and how the City can promote more circular economies. The main focus of the presentation, however, was on Flagstaff's Residential Food Scraps Drop-off Program.

The City of Flagstaff has four drop-off locations for residents to bring their food scraps to. Each location has bins that are locked with a combination lock and signage. Residents scan a QR code to complete a survey, or pick up a paper copy, asking basic information about them and questions on proper composting and then receive the code to unlock the bin. The bins are serviced weekly by contractors, Compost Crowd and Corbin Compost, and taken to small-scale farms in northern Arizona. The pilot program started in June 2021 with \$25,000 one-time funding from Council and in June of 2022 the Sustainability Office received \$30,000 one-time funding to support this program.

Flagstaff has been able to divert 30,000 pounds of organic material during the past 18 months. They have had 376 households participate in their drop-off locations and nearly 100% of household expressed interests in curbside compost services. Some of the challenges in Flagstaff is maintaining the drop-off locations because of the heavy snow it's hard to maintain the bins, locks and signage. Also, Flagstaff doesn't have large trucks to pick up the bins. Bins have to be small enough for staff to be able to lift the bins. They have also encountered seasonal issues such as pumpkins taking up all the room around Halloween. They implemented a pumpkin drop-off initiative to alleviate that issue. Putting locks on the bins, checking the drop-off areas regularly and having regular communication with partners and having the Google forms help track the metrics for both the residents and the vendors that are servicing the bins are all things they do to keep the program running smoothly.

Ms. Wells shared that Flagstaff recently submitted a proposal for \$3.1 million grant for an industrial-scale composting facility.

Commissioner Albrigo asked what customers think of the survey and how long it takes to complete it. Ms. Wells responded that it takes approximately 5 minutes to complete and only needs to be taken once.

Ms. Presler asked if the vendors who service the bins bring the food scraps directly to farms or if they compost the material before it is provided to the farms? Ms. Wells responded that food scraps are taken directly to local farms for them to create the finished compost and use it on their farms.

Commissioner Hernandez Cota inquired how the City of Flagstaff and City of Phoenix decided what kind of compost program they wanted to implement? Ms. Wells replied that the City of Flagstaff had a community compost hub at local community gardens and realized that they were always full. There was too much material and they were only able to process it during the warmer months because the winter was too cold to use the three-bin system they had in place. The City saw a need to implement a year-round collection process. Ms. Hettmansperger shared that there was a lot of support from Mayor and Council as well as residents for composting in the City of Phoenix. The City of Phoenix held community meetings about composting and recycling costs and received positive feedback that residents want these programs to continue.

6. Updates from Sustainability Officer

Chair Schuh invited Danae Presler, Avondale Sustainability Officer, to provide an update to the Commission.

Ms. Presler updated the Commission that Commissioner Lemmon received a Community Impact Award at the Mayor's State of the City Address earlier this month for presiding as Chair while the Commission guided the development of the Community Sustainability Plan and assisted with community outreach and education.

Also at the State of the City Address, the Green Business of the Year Award was awarded to the vertical farming operation, OnePointOne. The Sustainability Commission has been invited on a private tour of the OnePointOne facility on Wednesday, April 5th from noon – 1pm.

The Tres Rios Nature Festival saw a good turnout this year and both Chair Schuh and Commissioner Hernandez Cota volunteered at the event supporting the Sustainability and Water Conservation booth.

The next event is Earth Day on April 22nd from 9am-1pm at the Base and Meridian Wildlife Area. Staff requested representation from the Commission at the event. The City is partnering with Arizona Department of Game and Fish and the Arizona Sustainability Alliance to lead restoration activities, and expects 150 volunteers.

City of Avondale Public Works currently has vacancies in the Water Resources Manager and Water Conservation Coordinator positions and hopes to fill these soon.

The Citizens Water Academy is starting on April 5, 2023 and will include five three-hour interactive and informative sessions on all things water and wastewater as well as water resources and conservation. Staff shared instructions for registering.

Staff is getting a quote for a solar project at the Civic Center Campus, to see how much it would cost to offset most of the power use with clean renewable energy. The project will explore a variety of ground mount, solar carports, and rooftop options.

Wesco Distribution was recently certified through the Green Business Program.

Ms. Presler introduced Katrece Swenson, Public Works Senior Management Analyst. Ms. Swenson will primarily be helping the Sustainability, Transit, and Solid Waste divisions and pursuing grant opportunities.

Ms. Presler also introduced Simon Lara, Solid Waste Manager for Public Works. Mr. Lara is helping to research and design a compost pilot program for the City.

7. Adjournment

The next Regular Meeting of the Sustainability Commission is scheduled for May 24, 2023, at 6:30 PM.

Motion by Paul Lemmon to adjourn the meeting. There being no further business, meeting adjourned at 7:37 PM.


Daniel R Schuh (Jun 27, 2023 20:24 PDT)

Daniel Schuh, Chair


Katrece Swenson (Jun 27, 2023 18:50 PDT)

Katrece Swenson
Interim Sustainability Officer as Staff Liaison

Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2023
Page 6 of 6

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting held on the 21st day of June 2023. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.


Katrece Swenson (Jun 27, 2023 18:50 PDT)

Katrece Swenson
Interim Sustainability Officer as Staff Liaison