



Climate Change Commission

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

650 S. King Street, 11th Floor • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

COMMISSIONERS

Victoria Keener, Ph.D., Chair
Rosanna Alegado, Ph.D., Vice Chair
Bettina Mehnert, FAIA, LEED AP
Makena Coffman, Ph.D.
Charles Fletcher, Ph.D.

Climate Change Commission Monday, April 12, 2021, 11:00 AM Zoom Virtual Meeting Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chair Victoria Keener, Vice Chair Rosie Alegado, Makena Coffman, Charles Fletcher, and Bettina Mehnert (Commissioner Mehnert left the meeting at 12:16 PM).

Members Absent: None.

Public: Matthew Gonser, Christopher Cunningham, Hayley Cook, Ujay Siddharth (CCSR), Courtney Sue-Ako (Corporation Counsel), Rachael Han, Michael Formby (City and County of Honolulu), Ernie Lau (Board of Water Supply), Roger Babcock (Department of Facility Maintenance), Walter Billingsly (Department of Design and Construction), Laura Mo (Department of Planning and Permitting), Representative Nicole Lowen, Sharlette Poe (Wai'anae Neighborhood Board Chair), Ben Sullivan (County of Kaua'i Office Economic Development), Christin Reynolds (One World One Water), Henry Curtis (Life of the Land), Melissa May (SSFM), Nancy Convard (Stantec), David Jones, Denise Pierson, Dolan Eversole, Hannah Thompson, Jacob Taddy, Julie Yunker, Kathy Isobe, Leilikolehua Gill, Lyle Carden, Nami Ohtomo, Rafael Lee, Steve Chang, Tenaya Jackman

- 1. Call to Order:** Chair Keener called the meeting to order at 11:04 AM.
- 2. Roll Call:** Five Commissioners were present. Quorum was established.
- 3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of March 1, 2021:** The March 1, 2021 meeting minutes were adopted as amended (**AYE:** All; **NAY:** None; **ABSTAIN:** None).
- 4. Discussion on and Action to Reassign Authorship of Climate Change and Construction Industry Guidance Document**
 - Commissioners Coffman and Mehnert addressed the comments gathered from the past meeting, including restructuring the paper and adding in citations. No substantive content changes were made.

Vice Chair Alegado moved and Commissioner Coffman seconded the motion to approve the change in authorship of the Climate Change and Construction Industry Guidance Document from Commissioners Mehnert and Coffman to Commissioner Mehnert and Chair Keener (**AYE:** All; **NAY:** None; **ABSTAIN:** None).

Questions and Comments that followed: No questions and comments were received.

Comments and Public Testimony that followed: No public comments and testimony were received.

- 5. Discussion on the City Administration's Climate Priorities with Michael Formby, Managing Director – 15 minutes**
 - Managing Director Michael Formby expressed his excitement for the new leadership at CCSR and presented Mayor Blangiardi and the City Administration's climate priorities.

- The Administration's priorities include implementation of climate adaptation policies and projects; coordination between government agencies to leverage federal funding; increasing affordable housing in transit-oriented development (TOD) areas; multi-modal transportation; and increasing urban green space.
- The Administration is also interested in more youth engagement and is in the process of standing up a Youth Commission for individuals aged 14 to 28 to promote more active engagement of youth in planning for the future.
- Related to the City's Climate Action Plan, the Administration is committed to electrifying the City's fleet by 2035 and supports increasing electric vehicle charging infrastructure, improving energy efficiency in City and commercial buildings, and streamlining permitting processes.
- Managing Director Formby noted that recent indictments of employees within the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) are unfortunate, and Mayor Blangiardi condemns this behavior and is committed to restoring efficiency to DPP, particularly for energy projects.
- Managing Director Formby noted that Mayor Blangiardi, CCSR Director Gonser, and DPP Director Dean Uchida are all on the Powering Past Coal task force, and the Administration is working to expand renewable energy opportunities beyond the renewable gas facility in Honouliuli.

Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Commissioner Coffman commented that the shrinking of the Biki bike share program as a result of impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic is a rollback on low-carbon, active transportation services from a long-term climate perspective. She asked Managing Director Formby to comment on how the City is thinking about multi-mobility in the long-term and how to help it in the short-term. Managing Director Formby responded that a lot of planning and community participation went into the bike share system, and it was originally intended to be a privately-funded public service as part of our intermodal system. The City is committed to working with Biki and doing what it can to maintain the service. Commissioner Coffman and Managing Director Formby both noted their disappointment in the recent auditor's report of the bike share program in relation to lost parking revenue. Managing Director Formby commented that given the auditor's function, the audit was approached from a purely financial perspective rather than a public policy perspective without the context of the history of the program.
2. Vice Chair Alegado asked about the City's priorities related to wastewater. Managing Director Formby reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to wastewater management and noted he is currently meeting with CCSR and the Departments of Environmental Services (ENV) and Facility Maintenance (DFM) to discuss wastewater, stormwater, and infrastructure hardening.
3. Chair Keener commented that the One Water framework that was passed via Ordinance 20-47 in 2020 helps to address the mayor's intention of collaboration between agencies. Managing Director Formby stated that he and the mayor have received briefings about the framework.
4. Commissioner Fletcher asked about coastal setbacks and if the mayor has thought about changing them. Managing Director Formby responded that they have discussed the issue, but have yet not developed a policy, as they need more information about it before doing so. Managing Director Formby welcomed the Commissioners to provide additional information or to set up a meeting with him on coastal setbacks.
5. Chair Keener commented that the Commission published an equity white paper that discusses intergenerational equity in alignment with the Administration's priorities around the Youth Commission.
6. Chair Keener commented that she was in conversations with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9 representatives to present on federal priorities in the future when they are ready.
7. Chair Keener commented that the Climate Change Commission is available to provide support to the Administration for climate-related topics.

Comments and Public Testimony that followed:

1. Christin Reynolds thanked Managing Director Formby for his leadership and offered education services regarding One Water.
2. Sharlette Poe, Chair of the Wai'anae Coast Neighborhood Board, noted concerns surrounding renewable energy and its impact on the Wai'anae Coast moku. Poe noted that Wai'anae is not easily defined as a transit-oriented community and asked about the Administration's plans to

adapt the approach for communities like theirs, Waimānalo, and North Shore. Managing Director Formby responded that it is unfortunate when communities outside of urban Honolulu go underserved. He noted that the Administration was careful to include Wai'anae, Mā'ili, and Nānākuli in the City budget, including projects building fiber optic connectivity. He also noted that even without the rail, the City can focus on bus ridership for multi-modal transportation in those areas.

6. Report on the Activities of the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency (CCSR):

Executive Director Matthew Gonser presented the following:

- CCSR has a new staff member in the Coastal & Water Program Manager position, Alex Yee, who started on March 29. Previously, Alex was working at the California Coastal Commission as a planner.
- CCSR is now operating under a City-wide hiring freeze but is currently reviewing applications for four vacant positions. Additionally, CCSR plans on bringing on two new AmeriCorps VISTAS next month.
- Ordinance 20-47, which was adopted at the end of 2020, further codified CCSR's roles and responsibilities, including the requirement to produce and release an Annual Sustainability Report, which will be released on Thursday, April 22 (Earth Day).
- As also required by Ordinance 20-47, CCSR is finalizing the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) for adoption via City Council resolution. It is expected a resolution to adopt the CAP will first be heard on May 18th at the Transportation, Sustainability, and Health Committee meeting. Then the resolution would be heard at the full City Council meeting on June 2nd.
- CCSR convened the first meeting of the One Water Panel on March 31st, per the One Water Policy in Ordinance 20-47. CCSR has identified eight departments that will participate. Monthly meetings have been scheduled and will be facilitated by Christin Reynolds of One World One Water.

Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Commissioner Coffman asked about the timeline of the climate adaptation strategy. Director Gonser responded that CCSR is currently amending the contract for the Climate Ready O'ahu project to expand the scope and include more resources. Director Gonser noted the project period is likely to end before the end of the calendar year.

Comments and Public Testimony that followed: No public comments and testimony were received.

7. Communication and Correspondence from the Public

1. A Facebook Live participant commented that CCSR should provide updated information for the O'ahu General Plan. Director Gonser responded that the O'ahu General Plan 2017 update has not yet been adopted by City Council, but the resolution to adopt the plan has recently been reintroduced. CCSR will take another look at the plan to see if additional support can be provided based on new information that has come out in the interim.

Comments and Public Testimony that Followed: No public comments and testimony were received.

8. Presentation on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and funding from Chris Cunningham, Hazard Mitigation & Long-Term Disaster Recovery Program Manager, Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency – 15 minutes

- Chris Cunningham presented an overview of the BRIC program, which was previously called the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program. PDM was funded differently each year, but BRIC is now funded by a six percent set-aside from federal post-disaster grant funding, which ensures greater and more consistent funding. The program's state set-aside allocation (\$600k per state) is far lower than the national competition funding (\$50 million per project).
- BRIC is similar to PDM in the following ways: there are still limited funds for planning; there is still a three-year maximum period of performance; and all of the eligibility criteria are still the same.

The Hazard Mitigation Assistance Guidance still applies to help determine project eligibility, which entails that disaster risk reduction is greater than the project cost and the project aligns with state and local hazard mitigation plans.

- Cunningham listed elements of good mitigation projects and provided examples of ideal mitigation projects. FEMA has its own toolkit and methodologies for a benefit-cost analysis to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of each project, including some “pre-calculated benefits”.
- Cunningham presented a 2020 FEMA overview, and highlighted that the State of Hawai‘i was one of five states that submitted a proposal greater than \$200 million. Last year, Hawai‘i submitted 17 applications and maxed out the state set-aside request. The status of the four project applications submitted in partnership with the City and County of Honolulu will be known later this summer.
- FEMA estimates up to \$3.7 billion of funding will be available for BRIC due to COVID-19, but the notice of funding opportunity for 2021 will not be released until August.

Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Chair Keener asked when the City and State might find out about the 2020 funding application status. Cunningham responded around June or July of 2021.
2. Chair Keener asked how interested partner organizations should approach the City and County with mitigation and adaptation projects. Cunningham shared his contact information and offered his help to interested organizations.
3. Commissioner Fletcher asked how to apply FEMA funding to the issue of beach erosion. Cunningham responded that the most frequent projects nationwide are acquisition or buy-out projects, which can be challenging and have a pre-existing benefit-cost analysis. The challenge for Hawai‘i is that home values are much higher, so it may be tough to meet the benefit ratio. Commissioner Fletcher noted his concerns regarding direct buy-outs, as they set expectations to buy out every property going forward. There are innovative approaches, such as setting up a state- or county-level fund that could focus on contingent-based mortgages for homeowners, which can be more affordable than buy-outs. Commissioner Fletcher asked if FEMA will be responsive to a proposal to study more affordable options than buyouts. Cunningham said he thinks FEMA would be open to studying more cost-effective ways for acquisitions.

Comments and Public Testimony that followed:

1. Henry Curtis from Life of the Land asked for more details about the microgrid project application. Cunningham responded that the microgrid will be at Kaimukī Middle School, a designated emergency shelter, which has an existing photovoltaic (PV) system.
2. Sharlette Poe of the Wai‘anae Coast Neighborhood Board commented that schools are not retrofitted for high winds. She inquired if there are any community partnerships being developed to retrofit these emergency structures. Cunningham responded that there is a state program under the Department of Accounting and General Services to retrofit schools. At the City-level, there were assessments completed of schools through the Department of Emergency Management using CARES Act funds. There was also proposed state legislation to create a program to allow homeowners to apply for retrofitting.
3. Director Gonser asked for more details about timing and coordination of BRIC within the calendar year. Cunningham responded that BRIC is an annual program, open each year from October to January 31st. Cunningham noted that the state pulls all applications within the state together to submit to FEMA.
4. Melissa May asked if Cunningham expects the capped amount that can be awarded per state will increase commensurately based on the total funding available for 2021. Cunningham responded he is unsure if the total increase in BRIC funding will increase the allocation per state.

9. Discussion and Action on Social Cost of Carbon Guidance Document

- Commissioner Coffman shared an update on the draft of the Social Cost of Carbon document, which was prompted by a letter from the prior City Administration last June wanting to better understand the social cost of carbon and requesting more insight on what carbon pricing means for the City and County of Honolulu.
- Chair Keener and Commissioner Fletcher recommended including a glossary section to define specific economic terms.

- Vice Chair Alegado asked if it would be possible to include the carbon impacts of tourism in the paper, or if it should be discussed in a separate paper. Commissioner Coffman stated that tourism emissions are related, but the paper was scoped down to thinking about implications for the City. Vice Chair Alegado recommended including a definition of scope in the purpose section to explain what is included and what is not included in the paper. Commissioner Coffman noted that the elements of tourism's impact are becoming increasingly publicly available through inventory and forecasting analyses.
- Commissioner Fletcher asked to clarify the carbon neutrality goal. Director Gonser clarified that the goal is the same for both the State and the City, which is to achieve net-negative carbon emissions no later than 2045.
- Commissioner Fletcher asked if the recommendations could include broad encouragement for state-level action, given carbon pricing bills did not pass during the 2021 state legislative session. Vice Chair Alegado commented that the Commission should take a stronger position on action at the State Legislature. Director Gonser recommended that the paper's recommendations focus on what best informs and advises the City Administration on what it can do, given the purpose of the initial request by the previous Administration. Chair Keener commented that the Commission could include language about carbon pricing at the state and national levels in the memo for the paper, which can be sent to Hawai'i's national delegation and posted on the Commission webpage.
- Commissioner Fletcher noted that the paper focuses on an internal carbon price, which is separate but related to the tax or fee proposals that were being considered at the State Legislature.

Comments and Public Testimony that followed:

1. Henry Curtis of Life of the Land asked for a definition of an internal cost of carbon. Commissioner Coffman responded that an internal cost of carbon is using an internal carbon price to inform City policies. She noted the recommendation is to use the Obama Administration's federal interagency working group on social cost of carbon and to update the price based on the Biden Administration's guidance.
2. Curtis asked if the Commission wants to adopt a low internal cost of carbon. Commissioner Coffman responded that she supports adopting a robust federal assessment. Chair Keener added that the paper is laid out as an initial framework and includes the recommendation that the price be updated as new research and federal priorities come out. Commissioner Coffman commented that there is no one right price, but the paper elucidates some of the logic behind choices and what the City might do.
3. Curtis asked if the price of carbon includes a life-cycle analysis (LCA) or local emissions. Commissioner Coffman responded that the paper currently doesn't include LCA, but additional language can be inserted into the paper.
4. Representative Nicole Lowen commented that a carbon price is most appropriate at the national level, to which Commissioner Coffman agreed both from an economic and greenhouse gas perspective.
5. Ben Sullivan of the Kaua'i County Office of Economic Development commented that support for state and federal efforts to price carbon is included in the County's General Plan. Commissioner Coffman noted additional language could be added to the recommendations to reference City support of a carbon price levied at the state or federal level.

Chair Keener recommended postponing adoption of the Social Cost of Carbon paper until the next Commission meeting to make the edits identified and provide the public with more time to review the document.

10. Public Input for Matters Not on the Agenda: No public comments were received.

11. Tentative Next Meeting Date: The next meeting date is May 17th at 9:00 AM via Zoom.

12. Announcements:

1. Chair Keener shared the University of Hawai'i Water Resources Research Center is having its Tropical Islands Water Conference this week, which is still open to registration.

13. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:04 PM.