



# Climate Change Commission

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

650 South King Street, 11<sup>th</sup> 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, July 13, 2021 9:00 AM Zoom Virtual Meeting Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Chair Victoria Keener, Vice Chair Rosie Alegado, Makena Coffman, Bettina Mehnert, and Charles Fletcher

**Members Absent:** None

**Public:** Matthew Gonser, Hayley Cook, Ben Sullivan, Coranne Park-Chun, Holly Kim, Lisa Barnett, Anna Mines (Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency), Courtney Sue-Ako (Corporation Counsel), Terry Chan, Walter Billingsley (Department of Design and Construction), Schichao Li (Hawai'i Coastal Zone Management Program), Wendy Miles (Fish and Wildlife Service), Hannah Thompson (Hawai'i Green Growth), Brian Lee (Hawai'i LECET), Pane Meatoga III (Hawai'i Operating Engineers Industry Stabilization Fund), Aida Arik, Amanda Ellis, Dave Martin, Henry Curtis, Jessie Souki, Katie Rooney, Julie Yunker, Leilikolehua Gill, Mark Want, Maya Walton, Rachael Han, Ryan Kobayashi, Sharlette Poe, Shingayi Masiya, Stefanie Sakamoto, Tenaya Jackman, Tracy Tonaki

- 1. Call to Order:** Chair Keener called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.
- 2. Roll Call:** All five Commissioners were present. Quorum was established.
- 3. Dr. Chip Fletcher's Acceptance of the Nomination of Chair of the Commission as Acted Upon at the June 15, 2021 Commission Meeting**
- 4. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of May 17, 2021 and June 15, 2021:** The meeting minutes of May 17, 2021 were adopted as amended (**AYE:** All; **NAY:** None; **ABSTAIN:** None).
  - Chair Fletcher discussed new state legislation that gives the counties the ability to enact a visitor tax and asked if it is an opportunity for a carbon fee. Commissioner Coffman stated that her understanding is that the authorization is directed toward the existing transient accommodations tax, which would not open the door to a county-level carbon tax. Chair Fletcher asked if this is the first recent authority the counties have been given to tax tourism. Commissioners were unsure but Commissioner Coffman noted it is something to be explored, because there are mechanisms, such as through rental cars.

The June 15, 2021 were adopted (**AYE:** All; **NAY:** None; **ABSTAIN:** None).

- 5. Communication and Correspondence from the Public:** None.
- 6. Report on the Activities of the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency (CCSR):**

Executive Director Matthew Gonser presented the following report:

- As of June 21, Ben Sullivan joined CCSR as the Energy Program Manager. As of June 30, there is a new office manager, Corrane Park-Chun will join CCSR as the new Office Manager and will take over the administrative functions for the Commission.
- Through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) program, two Hawai'i projects are moving forward as part of the state set-aside funding, but zero Hawai'i projects were selected for the competitive funding pool, which is disappointing, especially considering more of the future BRIC funding will be competitive. Hawai'i's state hazard mitigation officer is seeking out guidance and additional after-action evaluations based on the outcomes of this first round of funding. States' requests demonstrate the need, desire, and recognition in local communities that proactive measures are necessary, because the costs of not preparing community for potential life safety risks are much greater after the fact. For example, had Texas received funding for all of its requests, it would have exceeded the amount of federal funding available.
- There is another similar federal funding process going through Congress in building up to the new federal fiscal year in October, previously referred to "earmarks", now called Community Project Funds in the House and Congressionally Directed Funds in the Senate. CCSR submitted project requests through Senator Schatz, and on the House side, CCSR submitted a project in coordination with the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop a City street and park tree inventory, elevating the importance of trees as critical assets and infrastructure. CCSR has received notice that the project request has passed out of its House committee and hopes to share more updates towards the end of the year.
- The Climate Ready O'ahu project (<https://www.climatereadyoahu.org/>) recently went through a contract amendment to bring more resources to the project and specifically look at adaptation pathways with primary focus on sea level rise and increasing heat, which were identified as top hazards of concern through the project's risk assessment. CCSR is currently working on island-wide polling to share out more on direct hazard information and get more sentiment across community on awareness and appetite for potential strategies to address hazards. The project team has restarted in-person engagement efforts at a variety of community events. Scheduled activities and events can be found online at <https://www.climatereadyoahu.org/participate>.

#### Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Chair Fletcher shared a peer-reviewed paper that came out last month that said one-third of heat-related deaths have been tied to climate change. The article is available here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01475-0>. Chair Fletcher discussed the extreme heat events that have been ongoing in the Pacific Northwest, and how Miami now has a chief heat officer. The Commission is looking for opportunities to bring in experts on heat stress and heat waves and perhaps produce guidance with regards to the rise in both heat stress and heat events. Chair Fletcher shared that a couple summers ago, Hawai'i set many heat-records which were tied to a marine heat wave and discussed how we know far less about marine heat waves than atmospheric events. Marine heat waves, given the relevance to Hawai'i, could be a potential area of research for the future.
2. Vice Chair Alegado asked if there's a link to look at the projects that were funded by the BRIC program. Commissioner Keener provided the following link: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities/fy2020-subapplication-status#2020-chart>. Commissioner Keener also shared an article that outlines that Hawai'i is a state that is systematically under-funded by FEMA BRIC in 2020: <https://headwaterseconomics.org/natural-hazards/bric-funding/>.
3. Amanda Ellis asked if there is a plan to equip schools with solar and batteries to prepare them better, especially in the face of disaster. Director Gonser responded that a BRIC project proposal to supply the Kaimuki Middle School with a microgrid, is a project CCSR partnered with the Department of Education to get funding for, which can hopefully serve as a model moving forward. CCSR also received more FEMA funds this year with Kapiolani Community College and UH Mānoa for resilience hubs that can serve as safe spaces.

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

7. **Update on the City and County of Honolulu 2020-2025 Climate Action Plan from Matthew Gonser, Executive Director of the Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency (CCSR)**

- Director Gonser shared that at the June 2, 2021 City Council meeting, the City's first ever Climate Action Plan (CAP) was adopted. The Climate Action Plan is available here: <https://resilientoahu.org/climate-action-plan>.
- Director Gonser discussed the community engagement that occurred in the development of the plan and thanked the community for their contributions the past 2.5 years and the stakeholder technical working group, along with their partner research organizations, University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization and Institute for Sustainability and Resilience.
- The goal of the Climate Action Plan is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions between 2020 and 2025 in three key sectors: energy in buildings, transportation and land use, and waste.
- Director Gonser reviewed Ordinance 20-47, which requires a Climate Action Plan to be developed and updated every five years to transition O'ahu to 100% clean energy and net-negative carbon by 2045.
- Director Gonser showed O'ahu's emissions trajectory, which demonstrate a rising trend since 2017, and discussed the benefits of decarbonization. O'ahu's GHG inventory is available on a dashboard here: <https://resilientoahu.org/greenhouse-gas-inventory>.
- Director Gonser shared the plan's nine overarching strategies identified to reduce emissions and highlighted actions already underway to reduce GHG emissions like electrifying the City bus fleet.
- CCSR will continue to use the City's Annual Sustainability Report (<https://resilientoahu.org/sustainability-report>) to track the plan's progress and indicators and are currently focusing on implementation using guiding principles identified in the plan.

#### Questions and Comments that followed:

1. Commissioner Mehnert asked about City departments' appetite for change. Director Gonser responded that there has been a lot of excitement from departments about aligning with the CAP, and the mayor is driving action and implementation.
2. Chair Fletcher asked about how food management plays a role in the CAP. Director Gonser responded that this CAP focuses on the areas where the City has the most immediate and direct influence and leverage, which is land use and transportation, buildings and energy, and waste. Specific actions related to food are included in the waste sector, and Director Gonser stated that this is an area to look into in the future.
3. Chair Fletcher discussed deforestation and tropical biodiversity loss and their driver of beef production and consumption. He acknowledged how the City is limited in their jurisdiction to manage these aspects of climate change and stated that some sort of tax on beef produced as a result of deforestation and poor land-use practices is something to consider, similar to tobacco products.
4. Chair Fletcher asked Director Gonser how the City is contributing to carbon sequestration. Director Gonser responded that while sequestration is not at the forefront of the current CAP, the CAP includes discussion on sequestration being included in the future. CCSR also participates in the state's GHG sequestration task force, which is the most direct contribution to the statewide discussion on sequestration. Commissioner Mehnert noted that the construction industry can contribute to this effort through using carbon-sequestering concrete for all projects, which can be produced on island.
5. Commissioner Keener shared that her research group is working on metrics to track equity, access, and environmental justice for adaptation projects and invited CCSR to work with them.
6. Commissioner Keener asked if there is a priority the Commission could contribute to for CAP implementation efforts. Director Gonser responded that each action has a work plan, and through having these discussions and one-on-one workshops with lead agencies, they've pulled out priorities and questions, so CCSR may have opportunities in the future the Commission can contribute to.
7. Vice Chair Alegado asked about the potential for job creation in climate adaptation and brought up her concern to make entry-level jobs more competitive in terms of salaries, as she is worried about prioritizing those who have ability to get their training early on in career versus those who need money for financial independence. Director Gonser responded that while not explicitly discussed in the CAP, job creation has been a big focus through the CARES Act funding and American Rescue Plan efforts. He mentioned that even internally at the City, there are metaphorical walls from outdated minimum qualifications and descriptions, which can prevent CCSR from staffing people they want to keep investing in.

**Comments and Public Testimony that followed:**

1. Sharlette Poe asked if there are requirements for new construction to be LEED certified or include energy efficiency. Director Gonser shared that the CAP does not include specific requirements, and any future requirements would need to be approved through the public hearing process.
2. Sharlette Poe asked if there are discussions across City departments on plans and programs to assist with the transition to electric vehicle, particularly for West O'ahu communities that majority of labor force has gas vehicles and drive off the coast and are not in a position to replace vehicles with electric ones. Director Gonser responded that the CAP looks to address the need for more support networks distributed around the island and facilitating bringing retrofits to communities. He noted the industry is also moving towards electrification and CCSR is focused on supporting equity through implementation while ensuring emissions reductions are met to bring support through CAP actions to places that need it most. He noted the Solarize O'ahu CAP action, which aims to bring tools and resources to communities to lower costs for solar energy through bulk purchasing.
3. Sharlette Poe asked what the disposal and waste plans are for electric vehicles, batteries, and other renewable energy technologies. Director Gonser responded that the Department of Environmental Services is looking at the material management of solar photovoltaic panels at the end of their life and what the provider's responsibilities are. The City is continuing to look for recycling opportunities elements that can be repurposed.

**8. Public Input for Matters Not on the Agenda:** None.

**9. Tentative Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting date is scheduled for August 31st at 9:00 AM via Zoom.

**10. Announcements:**

1. Vice Chair Alegado reminded the public to report any storm water concerns to: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/ab4fd3af6c87499b94de929e9b308e7c>.
2. Vice Chair Alegado reminded the Commission that the Youth Food Sovereignty Conference is on July 24, 2021 at: <https://www.maoorganicfarms.org/yfsc>.

**11. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 AM.