

CRC Climate & Environment meeting minutes 3/17/21

Start time: 10:02am

End time: 12:16pm

Attending: Anne Marie, Sharon, Dick, Kyle, Liz, Tom, Bob, Kevin

Guests: Erika Shook and Barbara Rosenkotter

Erika Shook: Slide presentation on how greenhouse gases and climate change relate to SJC and the Comp Plan.

- We have to think about the things that impact our community – land use, etc.
- The previous Comp Plan predates the most current climate concerns, so it doesn't address climate change head on – new Comp Plan will include new vision statement including climate change.
- Important to wants to integrate climate change through all elements of the Comp Plan. Some of these relate to reducing greenhouse gases and some relate more to resiliency.
- UGAs are the most significant change we've made to date.
- Just adopted new building regulations – they're very energy efficient – we need to make sure all our buildings are energy efficiency – suggests retrofitting of older buildings throughout the county.
- Considering social, environmental and economic impacts of climate change - what we expect to see at the local level.
- Wetlands help to attenuate flooding and forests sequester carbon.
- Land use patterns and transportation systems – vulnerability to sea level rise and erosion.
- In order to address many aspects of climate change impacting SJC, we would need to fund a countywide coordinator position and fund the projects. Public Works is really great at doing projects, but it cannot make climate change its priority.
- Many changes would be code amendments, around solar power for example – allowing different land uses to have solar installations and having standards to protect the rural character of SJC – has to be a balance.
- Code enforcement is a problem. There are a few shoreline regulations, but not a lot of regulations elsewhere that protect trees as a carbon sink. How can we incentivize people to value these things? They have a **Public Benefit Rating System** that gives people a tax break for maintaining certain things like ag land. Would like to give people tax breaks for protecting trees.
- SJCC said to integrate climate change throughout the Comp Plan. Climate change should not be politicized – it's science-based. Funding it and having a position would be great – someone with the background, knowledge and credentials.

- There likely will be more funding opportunities with the new federal administration to do more – infrastructure projects through the federal government, Covid relief – might fund more bike paths/shoulder widenings.

NOTE: There's a Comp Plan meeting this Friday 3/19 – we can send comments.

New Business:

1. Sharon: We need to actively educate the SJCC and pushing them to act.
2. Kevin: How can the county lead by example, with transportation, plastic use, retrofitting existing buildings to be energy efficiency and use renewable energy? Deputies could bike or walk their communities instead of being in cars all the time. The implementation side of things is lacking until we have someone designated that says this is the priority.
3. Build-out analysis that came up in the town halls:
 - Dick: Hydrologist study was done which determined that most of us in the county are on fractured rock wells. A few locations like FH depend on surface water. The only true aquifer is on Lopez. With so much more rain, the soil gets saturated sooner, and as rainfall increases, rainwater is running into the Sound, not into the ground. A lot of things could be done that aren't being done, and we need someone that says this should be the priority. Otherwise it's not going to happen.
 - Liz Lovelett spoke to the prior SJCC about a **water meter study** – water people in county government have made presentations and were supportive of it. SJCC was supportive, but it hasn't happened, so **let's bring it back as soon as we can**. USGS would do the study. This is the only way we'll get a handle on the baseline right now.
 - Kevin to talk with Jay and Maia about how we can be more bold, legally, within the Charter.
 - **Please present specific questions for them by email to Kevin.**
4. Dick Grout article on costs of inaction on climate change from Bloomberg News.
5. Bob's thoughts on role of an environmental advocate – Looking at the full range of possibilities for a position, ranging from an advisor to a community organizer kind of person to someone with some power and authority. We need to decide where we are on that scale.
 - Anne Marie: We need to establish what would be included in the position, the office – firm that up. In the town halls there were 23 comments related to climate/environment, an 12 more related specifically to support for the Bill of Rights for Nature.
 - Kevin has several ideas on funding for the climate position – the county has to commit to it – it's not a political issue.

- Bob: If structured the right way, there could be money for another position. Possibility of bringing in more grant money.

Barbara Rosenkotter, formerly Lead Entity for coordination of salmon recovery in SJC:

Barbara presented on the work she did for SJC from 2005-2015 and the challenges she encountered, including lack funding and lack of support from county leadership.

- The need for a separate dept. that would be on a level playing field and could go more head-to-head with other dept. heads
- Different depts. are somewhat silo'd, but they get crossed. So figuring out the best mechanism to point out when natural resources are suffering in the work that diff depts. are doing is a really tricky but fundamental issue that needs to be resolved. King County is probably an example where the Natural Resources Dept. is large and supported enough where it can make a difference. Would love to have this conversation with counterparts around the state.
- She thinks now there is more support – the SJCC has matured enough and understands aspects of the role. But there's a question as to whether the new SJCC members understand this.
- The head of the organization need to be supportive of this effort. In our case, the SJCC, potentially the County Manager, along with public support and having the public participate in making sure those aspects across jurisdictions get supported.
- Kevin: Most important points here are:
 1. Head of the organization must be supportive.
 2. You have to have public support – headed by an elected or appointed person is a factor. How do we get the SJCC to prioritize climate action and the environment over other areas pulling at their attention?
 - Barbara was a program manager at Microsoft and had to work across silos. You didn't have direct authority, but once you got someone on your team, you could work with them. You have to set things up for success such that the person trying to get things done has some power, although not the ultimate power.
 - Kevin: Whatever dept. we end up creating, we need very clear parameters on a clear mission and vision guided by the core values of the office.
 - Barbara: This person and the mission will need to be protected.
 - Kevin: The SJCC adopts the budget – they will have the final say on the spending for that dept. There are a number of checks and balances on land use and road funding that are also statutorily funded. After this conversation with Barbara, we need to be very precise about what the functions and mandate of this department are and are not.

- Dick: The devil is in the details. We have to spell out those details for the voters: What is the authority of this person, and how do we define that? He doesn't want an adversary to the SJCC.
- Refer to the wish list that Kendra sent us.

Bob: What we've been discussing for the last 10 minutes should be our focus in our next meeting.

Anne Marie: We all should do a little HOMEWORK: Share something through email before our next meeting – some idea(s).

Anne Marie: Two weeks ago we made a decision that we're heading in a particular direction. We did a roll call and the vote was 7:1 in favor of an elected position for climate sustainability and resiliency. Now we need to focus on how to make the case for support. She wants to see us by the end of April know what we're doing.

Kevin: By the end of April, beginning of May, this needs to be a full CRC discussion.

Anne Marie: Honolulu manager – waiting to hear back about some times. They're in the process of moving their offices right now.

Kevin: A couple of people at the U.N. he can reach out to for more input. Asking for global examples we can point to.

Anne Marie: Some of those would apply to us and others wouldn't.

Sharon: Need to support the Washington STRONG Act this week – this will impact our ability in SJC to transform our economy. Will provide details by email.