

## Climate & Environment Committee Meeting Notes 3/24/21

Start time: 10:04am

End time: 11:57am ?

In attendance: Anne Marie, Kevin, Tom, Sharon, Liz, Kyle, Dick, Bob

Guests from the Public: Henning Sehmsdorf and Alexandra Gayek

1. Recording/ Roll Call

2. Minutes/Notes

3. Committee discussion about the role of the Climate Commissioner and the dept:

- What should be included in this area of work?
- How can the position/office be designed for successful interface with SJ County leaders?
- How should the position/office interact with advisory committees?

Role of the Climate Commissioner – Discussion:

- What's the relationship between this new office and the SJCC?
- Must be an independently-elected position, independent of the SJCC, to be effective.
- Bob read his statement on the specifics of this office – will email it as well.
- Discussion on what the Climate Commissioner should do, can do and cannot do.
- The position must be a help to the SJCC while also being in a somewhat adversarial role – it has to push the SJCC, as does the public, which is essential to giving both positive and negative feedback to the SJCC.
- Groups supporting “Fossil Free By 33” would be consulting with this office.
- Can we create statutory authority through the Charter to review and have a voice in the budget actions.
- Have these recommendations yet been put in a spreadsheet? Bob says yes.
- SJCC follows staff recommendations for the most part.
- Timeline? Kevin is waiting for others doing pro bono advising, so we don't have a time frame yet.
- Start working together on a document now, contributing our ideas.
- Is there any way we can give legislative authority to this position? Dick doesn't believe so.

4. Public Comment:

Henning:

He's a longtime farmer and resident of Lopez, and a member of Transition Lopez.

Particularly interested on the impacts of agriculture on climate change and food – eating is an ecological act, not just a nutritional act. Wants to make sure agriculture and local food system and changes we might make on the local level that's more sustainable in terms of

climate change is front and center in our conversations. Northern Europe in general has made a lot of progress – we should look at Denmark – very active and successful advocacy at all levels of government. Denmark is a net exporter of clean energy (non-fossil fuel) and has a much higher standard of public health because food is produced locally. Cabinet level positions in national governments – environmental ministers on par with secretary of economics – position has to be taken seriously on all decisions at all levels of government.

Anne Marie would put soil in there as well. She has agriculture and forestry in there.

Alexandra:

1. Hard to participate fully if they don't have access to the communications – is that public record to look at?
2. Idea: The cover needs to come from the Charter itself for this position – create the mandate that managing the environment in the Charter – all of county government is responsible to make this happen. Then a position can be created to assist the SJCC in carrying out those responsibilities. Take it out of the political process so the SJCC doesn't have to be responsive to the sway of whoever speaks loudest at a public meeting. That's why it hasn't happened. The emergency of the moment doesn't allow for enough time and attention to the issue.
3. Agrees with Henning – Erika's presentation on climate change left an incomplete picture of what climate change is and how it happens. Only attempting to reduce greenhouse gases is misunderstanding the whole picture. It's the result of human disruption anywhere in the cycle, in plants, in soil – hold the carbon in the ground, thus managing the water cycle, ... When we kill the microorganisms anywhere in the cycle, we disrupt the whole cycle.

Bob: Need to make these rights mandatory. In Bill of Rights for U.S. Constitution, many instances of the language that says Congress shall make no law that abridges this freedom. He advocates for language that says the legislative body of this county shall make no ordinance that abridges this right or that right after it's been established. We command what we want our public servants to do.

A resource shared with Sharon post-meeting by her partner Michael Hurwicz:  
<https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/basics-regulatory-process>

**Homework:** Read over the documents and put some of our thoughts on paper.

**We will receive 3 emails:**

1. Bob will send out his proposals
2. Kyle will send out his spreadsheet
3. Anne Marie will send the 2008 and 2020 county resolutions on climate as well as a link to the Honolulu Climate program.

5. **New Business:**

- Sharon re state legislation being considered now that could help us in SJC – she will send an email to the committee
- Anne Marie will consult with Kevin regarding upcoming speakers

6. Adjourn