



*Visalia Environmental Committee informs and advises the Visalia City Council and Citizens
on preserving and improving environmental quality for the benefit of the community.*

MEETING MINUTES (Draft)

January 13, 2021

1. Welcome & Introduction

The Visalia Environmental Committee (V.E.C.) meeting was called to order at 5:53 p.m. by Chair Melkonian.

Members Present: Maile Melkonian, Steve Sanders, Kathy Falconer, David Shelburne, Mark Wall, Holly Deniston-Sheets and Dustin Johnson were present by Zoom teleconference; Steve Sanders present in person.

Members Not Present: None

Members of the Public: City Council Member Greg Collins

City Staff: Andrew Munn, Nathan Garza

2. Public Comment

None

3. Approval of December 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chair Melkonian asked that all members review the draft meeting minutes from the November 18, 2020 monthly meeting. After review of the minutes, Member Falconer made the motion to accept the meeting minutes; Member Johnson seconded, the motion carried 7-0.

4. City of Visalia Climate Action Plan Discussion with City Councilmember Greg Collins

Councilmember Collins provided a summary of City accomplishments in reducing energy use, increasing energy efficiency, reducing its carbon footprint by converting the bus fleet to CNG and electrical vehicles.

5. Cameron Creek Bike Trail Feasibility Study – Discussion and Action by Committee

Mark Wall provided background on the upcoming City Council consideration to authorize a feasibility study for the development of the Cameron Creek Bike Trail, which if developed, link the existing bike trail along Santa Fe Street to Mooney Grove County Park.

Committee Member Wall provided information on the proposed alignment, financing available for the study, and concerns that some members of the City Council have with the project.

Additionally he highlighted the benefits the project would provide to the community of having a safe bike route for individuals and family to use the Park, allowing more people to get out of their cars and reduce their use of fossil fuels.

The Committee, with Member Sanders made a motion, and Member Johnson seconding, that the Committee make a Recommendation to the City Council Supporting the development of the Cameron Creek Bike Trail, and that Council authorize the feasibility study of its development.

The motion passed on a vote of 7-0.

6. Commercial Environmental Recognition Award Discussion with Nathan Garza, Conservation Technician, City of Visalia Solid Waste Division – Discussion and Action by Committee

Nathan Garza updated the Committee on the recent changes to State law that require the recapture of organic food waste and green waste for smaller commercial accounts (down to those utilizing 2 yard containers).

Garza also noted that now that recycling and recapture and now mandatory for most businesses,

and indicated that the award under these circumstances might best be given to a party from the newest entrants, the smaller commercial accounts. He noted there were a number of property management companies, dealing with apartment complexes who were doing a very good job managing their waste flows. Among these, Garza identified the Housing Authority of Tulare County for their exceptional efforts.

Committee Member Johnson made the motion, which Member Deniston-Smith seconded, that the V.E.C. Commercial Environmental Recognition Award be presented to the Housing Authority of Tulare County. The motion passed on a vote of 7-0.

7. Low Water Land Use Landscape Award Judging Criteria Subcommittee: Draft Low Water Use Landscape Awards Program

Member Johnson made the motion, which Member Deniston-Smith seconded, and the motion passing on a 7-0 vote, the Low Water Use Landscape Awards will be revised with the following changes to the program:

- Two categories of recognition would be available to participants; the Low Water Land Use Certificate and the Low Water Use Landscape Design Award
- The number of awards presented will be at the discretion of the Committee; to facilitate public awareness of the program, with the awards issued quarterly.
- The Committee would review and evaluate the applications. Applications for the Design Awards category may also be subject to field inspection.
- Applicants would submit a utilizing a form developed by the subcommittee (attached) that awards points for meeting criteria listed on a V.E.C. created scoresheet similar to the MWELo prescriptive guidelines.
- To receive either the Certificate or the Award, applicants would need to meet the minimum requirements listed on the form. To receive the Award, additional criteria will required to be met.
- The Committee requested that City Staff consult with the Committee on the development of an application brochure that would also be available on the website (as a downloadable brochure or on-line form with QR code compatibility), with input on the graphics and placement on the V.E.C. webpage, and promotion on other City media platforms.

8. 2020-21 Committee Goal Planning Subcommittee

Member Johnson made the motion, with Member Sheldon seconding, and the Committee voting 7-0 to approve the 2020-21 Goals as summarized below:

Goal 1, Earth Day “Plus 1”: Present the “50th Anniversary Plus 1” Earth Day celebration, featuring Plug-in America’s Electric Vehicle Rides.

Goal 2, Battery Recycling: Continue to provide support for the Battery Recycling Program. Consolidate drop off site to a single location. (Note: the Committee learned that based on their request for consolidation of drop off to one location, battery drop-off shall now occur at the Administration Building.)

Goal 3, V.E.C. Environmental Awards:

- Low Water Landscape Awards to potentially be issued quarterly, depending on the number of applicants to the program.
- Commercial Environmental Recognition Awards to issue three awards (Note: working with City of Visalia Natural Resources Technician Nathan Garza one award candidate has been identified.)

Goal 4, Environmental Communications:

- Establish “Environmental Suggestions for Civic Engagement” content for the GoGreenVisalia and City webpages.
- Consider strategies and activities to highlight and address climate change
- Continue to evaluate and support beneficial projects
- Look into feasibility of developing an Environmental Calendar on the City’s website. Content may include environmental topics done by community partners, showcase City environmental accomplishments, highlight how climate change impacts the community.
- Member Deniston Smith is added to the Environmental Communications Subcommittee
- Inventory what the City has already accomplished environmentally and showcase this on the webpage.

Goal 5, Stage 3 Water Ordinance Support: Encourage the City Council to consider innovative ways to assist residents and businesses comply with the stricter water regulations:

- Find state and/or city funds for a program to provide grants to allow encourage landscape conversion from turf to low-water use.
- Encourage the City to develop Public Relations program utilizing Public Service Announcements and other means of communication.

- Help promote the California Water Service “Smart Landscape Tune-Up program and similar endeavors.
- Promote the California Water Service water conservation programs that are available to residents and businesses.

Goal 6, Air Quality: Develop ideas to promote Clean Air policies; encourage City Council to promote policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon dioxide, with a view to meeting or exceeding State goals.

9. Member Requests and Announcements:

Chair Melkonian requested that the Visalia Assistant City Clerk be present at the next meeting to provide an overview of the City Committee Guidelines.

Member Deniston-Smith requested that Staff in future remote access information be posted on the agenda.

Member Deniston-Smith requested that Staff look into establishing an online folder for Committee members to access in order to more easily disseminate the V.E.C. meeting agendas, minutes and exhibits.

Member Johnson has offered to help distribute the V.E.C. Low Water Land Use Award brochures when available.

10. Adjourn

Chair Melkonian adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.