



*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)

May 12, 2021

1. Welcome & Introduction

The Visalia Environmental Committee (V.E.C.) meeting was called to order at 5:47 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.

Members Not Present: None

Members of the Public: Diana Hurtado

City Staff: Shelley Albanese, Leslie Caviglia, Mayor Steve Nelsen, Council Member Brett Taylor

2. Public Comment

Diana Hurtado introduced herself as a disabled resident and expressed her concern for the future of accessibility in the City of Visalia with the separation of the Disability Advocacy Committee. Diana stated that she believes less representation creates more barriers and has noticed a lack of progress.

3. Approval of April 14, 2021, Meeting Minutes

After Committee review of the minutes, Member Wall made the motion to accept the meeting minutes; Member Johnson seconded, the motion carried 7-0 with the reinstatement of verbiage in item #4 that had been removed from the draft.

4. Committee Processing

Mayor Steve Nelsen and Council Member Brett Taylor provided background of the committees and commissions review process.

It was expressed stated that Council heard from the Environmental Committee that they were not heard by the Council members and there is a lack of funding. Chair Melkonian clarified that the VEC presentation to Council never mentioned funding as an issue.

It was also stated that Council will be asking for the newly restructured Citizens Advisory Committee to provide a mission's statement and a work program moving forward.

The recommendation from the committees and commissions review subcommittee was taken to the City Council meeting on May 3rd for a vote before the council members. A vote of 5-0 was in favor of the subcommittees recommendation to restructure the Environmental Committee into the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Mayor Nelsen also mentioned that the newly restructured Citizens Advisory Committee would have the opportunity to be on the Council meeting agenda each month. In addition, subcommittees could be present.

Council Member Taylor reemphasized the review process and feedback he has heard. He heard things were not working and it was the review committee's focus to empower the committees, not to get rid of any committee; create stronger voices that cross the same barriers.

General discussion and concerns were aired including the concern that environmental projects would be dropped due to the time commitment currently distributed over seven members. All members wondered how these projects would be distributed and carried on. Council Member Taylor and Mayor Nelsen assured VEC members that Council does not plan to stop any of VEC's projects.

Another VEC member concern was the shrinking of volunteer opportunities for City residents enthusiastic about engaging in their local government. Additionally, several members expressed disappointment that this consolidation comes at a time when climate change is accelerating, state and federal environmental laws are expected to increase, and an apparent de-emphasis of the environment by the City could send a negative message—all of which could be better served with a discrete Environmental Committee.

The Council Members mentioned that subcommittees may be formed within the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Applications to be considered for the restructured Citizens Advisory Committee are due May 21, 2021. If interested, please notify Staff Member Albanese.

5. Monthly Tips and Social Media Communications (Kathy Falconer)

June monthly tips were reviewed by the committee. It was determined that Member Deniston-Sheets and Member Johnson would create the July monthly tips.

6. Website Sub-Committee Update (Maile Melkonian, Kathy Falconer, David Shelburne)

General discussion incurred. It was discussed that there are organizations that are listed on the website that may not currently be affiliated with the City of Visalia or the Environmental Committee. It was also recommended that Staff Member Albanese and the subcommittee meet virtually to review additional updates.

7. Recommendations to Council on Electric Vehicle (David Shelburne and Holly Deniston-Sheets)

Member Mark Wall mentioned including a 220-volt circuit in new builds is currently part of the 2019 Green Gas Omissions Act and the City is enforcing this building code. Currently there is no further action by the committee.

8. Plug in America Event in September (Kathy Falconer)

Staff Member Albanese mentioned that Parks and Recreation staff are not taking event reservations. The Parks and Recreation staff will have a better idea of the future of events and schedule after June 15th, the proposed date of reopening per the Governor of California. Staff Member Albanese will follow up with staff on status and request information on the Live and Play Guide.

9. Public Relations Strategy on Recycling

Member Falconer mentioned she has contacted the Cal Recycle Representative to speak at the June committee meeting. Chair Melkonian advised that an invitation to the speaker should be postponed, pending final resolution of Committee status.

10. Member Requests and Announcements – Member announcements and request for future agenda items

Chair Melkonian – requested that committee transition, status of projects, Earth Day funding be

placed on the June meeting agenda. Chair Melkonian also requested updates to the brochure. Member Mark Wall – requested the committee formally request, in writing to Council, the Environmental Committee continue as a discrete entity. Discussion incurred. The request was withdrawn.

Member Falconer – also requested funding and refunds of Earth Day be discussed at the June meeting.

In addition, it was discussed members of the committee would begin to gather information on each of the project(s) that each member individually works on. This information will be provided to Member Deniston-Sheets to compile as one work plan, to facilitate transition in the event that VEC is folded into the Citizens Advisory Committee.

11. Adjourn

Chairperson Melkonian adjourned the meeting at 8:18 pm.