

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
MONTEREY PARK PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING
September 27, 2023**

The Planning Commission and Environmental Commission of the City of Monterey Park held a joint special meeting of the Boards in the Council Chambers, located at 320 West Newmark Avenue in the City of Monterey Park, Wednesday, September 27, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Chiang called the Joint Special Planning and Environmental Commission to order at 6:37pm.

FLAG SALUTE:

Community Development Director Jessica Serrano led the Flag Salute.

ROLL CALL:

Community Development Director Jessica Serrano called the roll:

Planning Commission Members Present: Bethelwel Wilson, Jasmine Pesantes, Tammy Sam, Jack Chiang

Planning Commission Members Absent: Peter Fung

Environmental Commission Members Present: Laura Gallegos, Kathy Ko, Thuy Hua

Environmental Commission Members Absent: Danielle Sprague

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Jessica Serrano, Deputy City Attorney Justin Tamayo, Interim Planning Manager Beth Chow, Administrative Manager Xochitl Tipan, CivicSpark Fellow Olivia Williams, Rincon Consultants Climate Action Program Manager Ryan Gardner, and Rincon Consultants Sustainability Planner & Climate Analyst Nico Kent, Shawn Igoe, Public Works Director

AGENDA ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, CHANGES AND ADOPTIONS:

None.

PRESENTATION:

[1.] DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Director Serrano introduced the draft sustainability plan presentation. She indicated that no actions or decisions would be made during the meeting, but the meeting would focus on non-regulatory policies for sustainability.

CivicSpark Fellow Williams presented the timeline of the sustainability plan, outlining the steps taken over the past year and a half. This included the creation of the Green Team, community outreach and engagement efforts, and collaboration with Rincon Consultants to develop the plan.

CivicSpark Fellow Williams discussed the program's extensive community engagement efforts, including a sustainability survey, community workshops, outreach events, and meetings with city department staff. The community expressed a strong desire for sustainable and renewable energy options, increased engagement opportunities, and improved public transit convenience.

Rincon Consultants, Program Manager Gardner, provided technical background related to Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and explained the importance of establishing a greenhouse gas emissions inventory. He highlighted the standardized calculation and reporting frameworks and thanked the city staff for their data collection efforts.

Program Manager Gardner presented an overview of the community emissions inventory, emphasizing that Monterey Park's emissions were average compared to similar cities. The primary contributors were on-road transportation and building energy, followed by solid waste emissions, off-road equipment emissions, and water and wastewater emissions. Program Manager Gardner discussed the municipal emissions inventory, which focused on the city's operational control. The major contributors were water supply infrastructure, transportation, infrastructure, and wastewater.

Program Manager Gardner and Analyst Kent discussed the importance of forecasting emissions to understand Monterey Park's emissions trajectory, inform reduction measures, and establish an emissions gap. They emphasized the need to meet the emission reduction goals outlined in Senate Bill 32 and Assembly Bill 1229, which aim to reduce emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.

Following the presentation, the commissioners asked questions and sought further clarification on topics such as electric vehicle (EV) adoption, infrastructure development for EVs, and community engagement efforts. They also discussed how the plan would address climate vulnerabilities, promote equity, and engage the community in sustainability initiatives.

Commissioner Hua expressed interest in learning more about the specific strategies, measures, and actions related to electric vehicle (EV) conversion, given that it is a major emitting sector. Commissioner Hua inquired about whether the plan focuses on encouraging consumers to transition from gas vehicles to EVs. Director Serrano confirmed that there are goals related to EV deployment and increasing EV infrastructure throughout the city as part of the sustainability plan. Program Manager Gardner elaborated on the importance of converting from internal combustion engines to EVs, aligning with state directives that include executive orders to cease internal

combustion passenger vehicle sales after 2035. The plan focuses on providing the necessary infrastructure, connecting people to incentives, and educating the community about making environmentally conscious choices. It was emphasized that while the city cannot directly mandate EV adoption, it plays a crucial role in facilitating and supporting the transition through infrastructure development and resource connections.

Commissioner Hua inquired about whether there would be follow-up regulatory measures to encourage or direct the decarbonization of new construction. Staff responded.

Discussion also touched upon decarbonization efforts for existing buildings. It was acknowledged that while new buildings are a starting point and more cost-effective for decarbonization, existing buildings represent a significant portion of the city. Efforts are being made to incentivize decarbonization and connect residents with available incentives and programs.

Commissioner Gallegos had questions about how greenhouse gas emissions would be measured in Monterey Park. Staff's response explained that emissions are measured based on different sectors and activities within the city, using emission factors associated with fuel types and electricity sources. The primary greenhouse gases measured include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane.

Commissioner Ko inquired about the drafted policies to be recommended in the plan. Staff's response indicated that there are various measures covering different sustainability pathways, such as low emissions development, nature-based development, circular development, resilient development, and equitable development. These measures include actions related to reducing emissions, such as increasing EV charging stations.

Commissioner Ko asked whether the sustainability plan includes recommendations for improving public transit, such as bus transportation and bicycle lanes. Staff's response confirmed that measures include evaluating and improving the city's Spirit Bus service, optimizing routes, and collecting data to enhance public transit.

Commissioner Ko asked questions regarding the CAP Dashboard's data updates. Staff's response indicated that annual updates are generally recommended, as more frequent updates can be challenging to manage. The goal is to keep track of progress and avoid confusion.

Commissioner Ko inquired whether the current baseline greenhouse gas emissions would be compared to the emissions from the previous Climate Action Plan in 2014. Staff explained that due to differences in methodologies and data sources, it's challenging to make direct comparisons. However, some comparisons may be possible for specific sectors, like natural gas usage.

Commissioner Pesantes raised a concern about whether the projections for business-as-usual took into consideration the increased electricity demand due to more extreme heat events. Rincon consultants clarified that the business-as-usual forecast is based on per capita usage and population growth assumptions, not specific climate change factors.

Commissioner Pesantes inquired about the City's plans to invest in planting trees to mitigate the effects of extreme heat. Staff indicated that the Public Works Department is working on a tree master plan, and the sustainability plan includes measures related to urban greening and reducing urban heat.

Commissioner Pesantes expressed curiosity about changes in attitudes toward electricity use over the years. Commissioner Pesantes noted that as a child, there were campaigns to reduce electricity use, but now there's a focus on promoting electric energy. Staff responded that this change may be due to the shift towards cleaner energy sources like solar power and away from traditional, polluting methods like coal.

Commissioner Wilson asked about whether greenhouse gas measurements accounted for emissions from neighboring communities that might affect Monterey Park. Rincon responded that most measurements are specific to Monterey Park and are based on utility billing data, but transportation data includes trips that start or end in Monterey Park.

Discussion ensued about factors contributing to disproportionate emissions impacts on certain communities. The presentation highlighted low-income census tracts and areas more than a half-mile from grocery stores. Commissioner Wilson asked if other variables, such as proximity to freeways or industrial facilities, were considered, and it was explained that these factors were more related to air quality impacts.

Commissioner Sam expressed concerns about parking reduction due to the 0.5-mile radius rule and the potential for paid parking becoming more prevalent, citing examples from other areas. Staff assured that these concerns would be considered during parking structure planning.

The topic of multimodal transportation and the city's involvement in transit meetings came up. Director of Public Works Shawn Igoe mentioned that they have regular communications with transit providers and are evaluating options like bike lanes, integrated bike infrastructure, and transit hubs.

Commissioner Pesantes raised concerns about the potential safety issues related to electric vehicle (EV) charging cables extending from residents' garages across public sidewalks. They pointed out the need to establish rules and consider liability if pedestrians were to trip over these charging cables. Commissioner Sam proposed the idea of code enforcement to address such violations. Director Serrano suggested utilizing the "Go MPK" mobile app, which residents could use to report such violations

by uploading photos. This app could help address various sidewalk encroachments beyond just EV charging cables.

Commissioner Sam initiated discussion involving the Planning Commission's role in project reviews, requesting that the commission be given back the power to review projects as it had before the COVID pandemic. They proposed that projects come to the commission for review and conditions of approval before going to the City Council. This change would streamline the process for developers and allow the commission to play a more active role. Director Serrano mentioned that future discussions would address the role of the Planning Commission in making recommendations to the City Council.

Commissioner Ko brought up the community's desire for more workshops and educational opportunities related to reducing carbon footprints. It was acknowledged that the community showed interest in localized decision-making. While the city currently hosts some workshops, it was suggested that the city might consider increasing capacity to hold more workshops in the future.

The meeting concluded with thanks to the staff and consultants for the presentation of the sustainability plan, and anticipation for the draft plans.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Chiang.

[2.] CITY OF MONTEREY PARK - CONSENT CALENDAR:

None.

[3.] Public Hearing:

None.

[4.] OLD BUSINESS:

None.

[5.] NEW BUSINESS:

None.

[6.] COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS AND MATTERS:

None.

[7.] FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairperson Chiang adjourned the special joint Environmental and Planning Commission Meeting at 8:20 p.m.