

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 1

CONVENE: 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Debbie Sullivan and Councilmembers Peter Agabi, Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, Leatta Dahlhoff, Angela Jefferson, Charlie Schneider, and Eileen Swarthout.

Staff: City Administrator Lisa Parks, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Community Development Director Michael Matlock, Finance Director Troy Niemeyer, Fire Chief Brian Hurley, Police Chief Jon Weiks, Water Resources and Sustainability Director Dan Smith, Communications Manager Ann Cook, and Sustainability Coordinator Alyssa Jones Wood.

**ADDRESSING FOOD
INSECURITY AND
ACCESS:**

Director Matlock briefed the Council on food insecurity and access. He noted the briefing would not include any information on an active enforcement case but rather the larger issues and recommendations by staff to address food insecurity and access.

In 2021, approximately 10.2% of the U.S. population experienced food insecurity at some point during the year. In 2023, approximately 20% to 25% of adults have experienced food insecurity. The trend is improving in the state with approximately 8% of adults experiencing food insecurity in 2021. The numbers do not reflect food insecurity constantly but are reflective of food security at different times resulting in difficult choices of whether to pay for rent, medicine, or food.

The nation addresses food insecurity through state and federal food benefit programs, senior and school meal programs, community support for food delivery and services, food banks, mobile food pantries, community-based distribution, and community gardens. Additionally, a number of regulatory structures assist in providing food distribution and production.

The City supports a number of food access programs, such as Tumwater FRESH Farm at Isabella Bush Park in conjunction with TOGETHER and the Tumwater School District providing opportunities to students on how to farm and grow food, as well as distributing food in the community. Garden Raised Bounty focuses on providing community garden beds to enable people to have access to food. The City supports Senior Services for South Sound, which provides the meal program at Old Town Center for the City and Meals on Wheels for senior citizens. Other programs include the Summer Youth Employment Program, the Tumwater Community Garden Grant Program for grants to community members for establishing a community garden, the City and Tumwater School District's Summer Lunch Program, and meals for youth participating in the Tumwater Summer Youth Summer Camp. The City also works closely with the Thurston County Food Bank to sponsor a satellite food distribution operation at the Tumwater Fire Station. The City sponsors the employee fund drive for United of Thurston County each year.

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 2

City regulations enable urban agriculture, community gardens, farmers markets, food processing, food truck and trailers, provisions for food truck courts, restaurants, retail sale of food, food banks, and mobile food pantries.

Councilmember Jefferson provided a copy of an article published in 2011 about food sharing. The information prompted staff to consider other ways to address the issue. Research revealed some recent and innovative ways to provide access to food. Jurisdictions across the country and in the state have completed food system plans with a broad-based holistic approach to ensure an array of programs. Two examples include the preservation of farmland and recruiting new farmers to increase production and advocating for policies and enabling residents and businesses to make and process food locally. Other examples include providing access to high quality and disseminating better food through nutrition education to empower people to make healthier choices. Food waste is reduced through re-distribution and composting. Many of those examples help to reduce the impacts of climate change.

Staff reviewed the Spokane Regional Food Action Plan. Counties often address issues that smaller communities do not experience, especially in urban areas. The Spokane plan focuses on supporting the desire for healthy food for all and includes a number of actions, such as creating opportunities for people to grow and share food through the promotion of existing emerging educational programs for home and community gardening, cooking, and food preservation, increasing land availability, community gardens, and supporting sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education. Often the availability of food is not the issue. The issue is often distribution to ensure food is delivered to areas considered food deserts. The plan identifies and reduces barriers to access food, expands community-supported agriculture (CSAs), offers SNAP eligible populations the same options, promotes expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas, assesses service capacity needs for food pantries, identifies opportunities for sharing resources, and advances equity within the food system.

The second example is the Whatcom County Food System Plan containing a number of goals to include cultivating equity and justice within the food system, protecting and regenerating soil, water, and lands for sustainable operations, building a resilient and vibrant local food economy, and ensuring access to healthy food for all. Each of the objectives include a range of actions for specific policy and regulatory actions. Should the City pursue a similar approach, the Council could develop policies and follow-up with specific regulatory actions to address any deficiencies in City codes or operations.

Staff recommends the Council schedule the development of a food system plan within the 2024 Work Program that is specific to Tumwater and scaled appropriately to the City with a focus on ways to provide healthy food to the community, reduce food waste, support local food processing, eliminate

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 3

barriers, address gaps in the current system, identify solutions to implement, and maintain and update resource materials for jurisdictional and community partners.

Councilmember Dahlhoff asked about the possibility of incorporating some of the elements within the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan process. Director Matlock acknowledged the request pointing out that there are no required elements under the Growth Management Act (Growth Management Act); however, there could be an interface with the work program and the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Cathey commented on the need to consider programs while considering the context of any actions locally and within neighborhoods. She is concerned with delaying the work until next year. She spoke to the need for some balance in terms of what is required at the moment as the growing season transitions to fall. Director Matlock advised that the zoning code is not at a granular level dictating certain actions, like planting a garden which is considered accessory to the main use of a residence. The City does not regulate the growing of produce or fruit and the sharing of the food. The balance speaks to residential uses that might advance agriculture practices to a higher level that prompts discussions on what level is appropriate within a residential area. Answers to the questions are difficult as staff has not initiated the planning process for the plan.

Councilmember Cathey spoke to many of the existing programs requiring eligibility or an enrollment to receive food. Additionally, transportation issues also add another level of complexity. She has personally delivered food to an elderly couple who no longer drive as well as to another homebound individual. Many of the programs cited by staff are eligibility limited and some of the venues are only open during limited hours.

Councilmember Jefferson thanked staff for developing the presentation and researching the information as the issue of food is important to everyone. She is seeking a policy on food sharing and food stands in the City because accessing the food bank is not possible for some community members. Additionally, some people experience shame visiting the food bank. She cited an example of a young woman whose husband was addicted to drugs. She consequently receives food from a food sharing facility. She supports an option that enables a homeowner to place a vegetable stand in front of their home with some canned goods so neighbors can access the food they need. The City should be shielded from any potential liability. During a trip to the East Coast, she observed a food sharing pantry located on City property. Since food insecurity has doubled, more neighbors have begun hosting food sharing activities. It is important for the City to support and not discourage food sharing activities by ensuring some ease in the allowance of food sharing throughout Tumwater. She asked about the possibility of placing a food pantry near the Tumwater Fire Station. She also serves on the committee for

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 4

Little Food Pantry that has formed as a non-profit to work with other groups to distribute food to community members.

Councilmember Swarhout commented on the importance of publicizing the availability of the Food Bank operation at the Tumwater Fire Station affording the opportunity for the community to obtain food.

Councilmember Althausser pointed out how community members receiving SNAP or food stamp assistance can use the programs to take advantage of grocery store home delivery service. Additionally, other authorized users of someone's EBT card can use the card at point of sale locations.

Councilmember Cathey mentioned that many community members do not have access to the internet or use the internet and are not familiar with many local programs.

Councilmember Dahlhoff commented on the possibility of utilizing the City volunteer program and the Volunteer Coordinator to provide support of City efforts to ensure community members have access to food.

Councilmember Jefferson stressed the importance of moving forward to develop the plan understanding that staffing resources are limited and overworked. There are many moving pieces. She urged the Mayor and the City Administrator to authorize overtime to move forward on developing the plan.

City Administrator Parks described the opportunities available within the City's existing structure and regulatory environment. It is important to ensure clarity for both staff members and the community when communicating opportunities. Opportunities are available to increase the public's awareness of food resources and ways to access those resources. Access to various services within the community can be confusing for many in the community because of the variety of different providers of non-profits, governmental agencies, and private resources dedicated to providing services people need. Opportunities are available within the City's existing communications structure to move forward with addressing the issues and publicizing existing opportunities available to a wider audience. With respect to code amendments, specific processes require public participation. Those processes are structured, rigid, and take time to complete. Addressing a zone code amendment today would be outside the process of zoning code amendments. Staff is committed to informing the community of available resources in existence today.

Director Matlock added that regulatory changes within a public environment require a public hearing and environmental review for any changes. The process takes time.

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 5

Mayor Sullivan remarked on prior actions by the City to enable urban gardens and raising chickens and other animals based on the size of the property. Within her neighborhood of a four-block area, five gardens have been established with one garden covering an entire lot. The neighborhood also has two chicken operations. Many of the gardens likely produce more than the homeowner can consume providing an opportunity promote homeowners with gardens to share produce with neighbors or donate food to the food bank or other non-profit organizations.

Discussion followed on some of the uses currently allowed by the City. Councilmember Althaus suggested documenting uses that are currently allowed to serve as a basis for the analysis to be completed by staff. Many of the uses are not disallowed by the City's code.

Councilmember Dahlhoff offered that the process should not be complicated because it is the Council's responsibility to establish policy. Changes to the zoning code are likely unnecessary. The job of the Council is to set policy.

Several Councilmembers offered suggestions on next steps ranging from adoption of a motion establishing specific actions moving forward to preparation of an administrative memorandum outlining currently allowed activities by the City's zoning code. City Administrator Parks advised the Council to provide clarity as to the specific direction as some parameters cannot be exceeded in different zoning districts. Each zoning district, to a certain degree, would have a different regulatory environment for food-related activities. It is possible to prepare an administrative memorandum outlining allowed accessory uses by zoning district. However, for activities beyond those basics, the use may require site specific and zone specific actions. It is important that the Council does not have an expectation that some of the current issues in play would be resolved through the issuance of a memorandum that provides some clarifications. In many instances, staff issues an interpretation of the code that clarifies some type of use that was or was not permitted. It is important not to create an expectation by the Council that staff can pursue options that are not possible outside the typical regulatory process.

Discussion ensued on what is currently allowed by the code, the importance of clearly defining terms and definitions, and the urgency to move forward to address food insecurity, City Administrator Parks described the proposed next steps staff plans to pursue. The first step by staff is clarifying for both City staff and the public what is allowed under current zoning regulations. Concurrently, staff will pursue a holistic approach that includes much more than reviewing the zoning code but reviewing a wide variety of options and opportunities to address the issues of food insecurities Citywide comprehensively through the proposed Food Systems Plan. The first step is identifying the barriers, problems, gaps, and creating the different policies based on the analysis.

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 6

Director Matlock provided additional clarification on the process for amending codes. Code amendments are not based on a timeline except for Comprehensive Plan amendments, which are processed on an annual basis.

**2022 GREEN TEAM
SUSTAINABILITY
REPORT:**

Coordinator Jones Wood reviewed the results of the 2022 Green Team Sustainability Report.

The Green Team is an interdepartmental City employee committee focusing on the sustainability of City operations. City operations produced an estimated 3,736 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2022 representing a 3% reduction from the 2015 baseline. The goal community-wide is to reduce net emissions by 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. Most of the greenhouse gas emissions in operations are from water infrastructure, City vehicle fleet, buildings and facilities, sewer and streetlights, solid waste, and traffic signals. Net emissions have reduced 71% in 2022. Net emissions represent the total emissions minus the City's participation in Puget Sound Energy's Green Direct Program. The City purchases renewable energy certificates for 100% of the City's electricity use for all operations.

In 2022, fleet vehicles used ~64,000 gallons of gasoline and ~18,000 gallons of diesel representing a 9% decrease from the fuel consumption baseline in 2019. In 2022, the Green Team developed and passed an anti-idling policy for fleet vehicles. In 2022, staff identified a reliable source of renewable diesel and initiated testing using the City's street sweeper. No issues have resulted from the use of the fuel. A full transition to renewable diesel R99 is in progress at the City's diesel fueling station. Renewable diesel is produced using fats and oils and is processed as a one-to-one replacement for petroleum diesel. Studies have documented that renewable diesel produces less carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions when compared to petroleum diesel. Switching to renewable diesel is delaying or supplanting the City's ongoing efforts to electrify vehicles. At the end of 2022, the City had one battery electric vehicle, 14 hybrid and plug-in hybrids, 121 gas-powered vehicles, and 32 diesel powered diesel. The City has ordered 10 electric Ford trucks and conducted meetings with Ford on the expectations of the vehicles and chargers. The fleet includes eight level-two charging ports. In October 2022, at the urging of the Green Team, the City's one battery electric vehicle was reclassified from a single dedicated vehicle to a pool vehicle.

In 2022, City operations used ~33,000 therms of natural gas. The City adopted a strategic priority for future buildings to be electric. At this time, there is no time-based target to reduce City operations natural gas consumption in existing buildings.

The City consumes a substantial amount of electricity in City facilities using 5.3% more electricity in City facilities than the 2019 baseline. Most of the usage is water infrastructure to produce and distribute the City's drinking

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 7

water to residents and businesses. Buildings and facilities used 25% followed by sewer infrastructure, streetlights and traffic signals, and EV chargers.

Solar panels on the City Hall roof produced 0.38% of City Hall's electricity consumption. The City purchased energy certificates for 100% of City operations electricity consumption.

The City's employee Commute Trip Reduction policy was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic as most of the focus of the policy was on telecommuting and incentivizing telecommuting. During the pandemic, most employees were telecommuting. The Green Team revised and relaunched the Commute Trip Reduction policy. The policy added walking, biking, and using transit and created an incentive for employees to purchase or lease new or used battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid vehicles. In 2022, the City installed three charging stations at City Hall for both public use and workplace charging.

Since installing the stations in April, 116 charge sessions have been recorded with an average cost per charge of less than \$1.50. Total cost for charging is \$172 to date.

In 2022, the City used 21.8 million gallons of potable water representing a 12% decrease from the baseline year. Parks and right-of-way were the largest consumers of water followed by indoor water usage representing an increase of 11%, a 10% increase from the previous year. Over the past three years, the consumption for rights-of way and buildings has reduced while consumption for parks continues to increase. The City used more reclaimed water totaling 39.6 million gallons for irrigating the golf course.

Solid waste usage is an estimate based on container size and frequency of pickup from LeMay. The City has not completed a solid waste audit. In 2022, the estimate was 428,169 pounds of solid waste produced except for solid waste produced at parks or by street sweeping. The City is composting and recycling 33% of City operations waste by weight. The goal is to reduce waste more.

Green Team activities in 2022 included producing the 2021 Green Team Sustainability Report, drafting and passing an internal anti-idling policy, drafting and passing an update to the internal Commute Trip Reduction Policy, and preparing a proposal to provide free EV charging for five years. The team assisted in the development of the compost procurement ordinance, drafted updates to the Tumwater Purchasing Manual to add sustainability requirements, and drafted a carbon offsets policy for work-related travel.

The team has achieved and is working to maintain progress on reducing net emissions, increasing the percentage of renewable energy for City activities with 100% of electricity from renewable energy, and achieving and

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 8

continuing to work on progress to reduce water usage. Pending items requiring additional efforts include reducing total City operations emissions from activities, and reducing solid waste garbage. One issue to revisit next year is increasing the employee alternative transportation for commuting.

Next steps include funding and implementing electrification and efficiency improvements recommended by the Investment Grade Audit to be completed this year, passage of a resolution establishing a commitment to electrify existing City buildings by a certain date or as natural gas equipment reach end of life, conduct a formal waste audit of City operations, and continue implementing the Thurston County Climate Mitigation Plan.

Coordinator Jones Wood identified the members of the Green Team. She acknowledged the service provided by Dave Bradley to the City of a free greenhouse gas inventory for City Operations.

TUMWATER
CLIMATE WORK
PROGRAM
DISCUSSION:

The Council accepted the Thurston County Climate Mitigation Plan with strategies and a regional path for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions across the region by 45% by 2030 and 85% by 2050 compared to a 2015 baseline. Implementation of the plan can be accomplished by jurisdictions individually, all together, or jointly by one or more jurisdictions. This year, a new term was assigned to clarify the Thurston County Mitigation Collaborative serving as the structure of the Executive Committee, Community Advisory Workgroup, and the staff team working to implement the plan both individually and regionally. At the annual retreat, at least one regional action would be identified to work on each year. All three bodies would be convened to identify one regional action. Jurisdictions also have the ability to independently implement the plan with the expectation of all jurisdictions working on one implementation action each year.

To communicate that direction to the public, a template jurisdiction work program was developed for each jurisdiction to complete and release concurrently in one location to improve communications with the public in terms of projects each jurisdiction is responsible to complete over the next two years.

The City's work on solutions and mitigations span multiple departments. For the 2023-2024 work program, work is underway by the Water Resources and Sustainability Department, Transportation and Engineering, Parks and Recreation, and the Community Development Department. The City's communications team provides support to ensure all information is communicated well to the public. The work plan includes actions that will be implemented from January 2023 through the end of 2024.

Coordinator Jones Wood reported that the City is investing \$26 million between 2023 and 2024 on projects and programs that advance the strategies of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan. Approximately \$9.6 million of the

**TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 9**

\$26 million is from grants with more funds pending and reflected in the work program as grant funding dependent. Of the \$26 million, most of the funds are being advanced and spent for transportation and land use sectors to address strategies in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan to increase the efficiency of the transportation system.

Buildings and energy are the largest emitting sectors in Thurston County. The strategies in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan focus on reducing emissions by reducing energy use in all building types, reducing energy use in new buildings, increasing the production of local renewal energy, and moving away from natural gas. Two solar installations were completed this year at water system sites in the City. Some pending and ongoing work in 2023 and 2024 include submitting for SolSmart Designation, adopting the new State Building Code requiring heat pumps in new construction, and continuing LED lighting upgrades at City facilities.

Transportation and land use strategies include increasing urban density, increasing the efficiency of the transportation system, increasing the option of electrical vehicles, and increasing mode share for lower carbon forms of transportation. Work in 2023 and 2024 includes multiple transportation projects and energy code adoption requiring EV-charging, EV-ready, and EV-capable stations in new developments.

Coordinator Jones Wood reviewed strategies for water and wastewater infrastructure. Some of the work in 2023 and 2024 for the sector is the Investment Grade Audit of City facilities to include a water audit, composting at City events whenever feasible, composting at City facilities, and continued implementation of the compost procurement ordinance.

The agriculture, forests, and prairie sector strategies include agriculture practices that sequester carbon, preserving tree canopy, and managing forests and prairies to sequester carbon. This year and next year, work is ongoing to update the urban forestry codes. An inventory of all trees on City properties will be completed along with a maintenance plan and budget as recommended in the Urban Forest Management Plan. A grant was secured to complete the inventory. Work also continues on the Habitat Conservation Plan and Program.

The last sector in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan is cross-cutting of issues that are independent of other sectors focused on advocacy with the public and the Legislature. Work in 2023 and 2024 includes the City's Sustainability web page, guest lectures, and the legislative agenda.

Mayor Sullivan said the Intercity Transit Authority participated in a seven-hour workshop on infrastructure for electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. The workshop included much technical information. However, the

**TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
September 12, 2023 Page 10**

proposal was very expensive with an estimated cost of \$400 million for infrastructure only over a ten-year period.

Several Councilmembers complimented the efforts of Coordinator Jones Wood.

Councilmember Cathey questioned the strategies applicable to land use. Coordinator Jones Wood explained that some of the strategies include promoting dense development, 20-minute neighborhoods, and accessory dwelling units.

Councilmember Cathey questioned why the emphasis appears to focus on emissions. Coordinator Jones Wood responded that there are many ways of addressing climate change. The most common one for cities include emissions; however, the strategies can be more holistic and incorporate co-benefits as well. The measurement in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan is focused on carbon emissions recognizing that other factors are important as well.

Councilmember Cathey asked about the status of the urban forestry updates that were placed on hold because of the Wildland Urban Interface Code. Director Matlock reported staff continues to determine how the code will be implemented with several meetings planned to address the code. At this time there is no date scheduled for reinstating the urban forestry amendments. He recommended delaying the amendments until the code is thoroughly reviewed and understood in terms of how it might affect the City. The proposed amendments have been drafted and continue to remain on the work program. There are also many concerns about the new energy code. The Wildland Urban Interface Code was not noticed by many jurisdictions. Many of the jurisdictions more affected by the code know less about the code than staff. Staff continues to remain focused on reviewing the code and meeting with other jurisdictions and organizations to help understand the new requirements. Staff is also concerned with the mapping included in the code.

Councilmember Dahlhoff asked about any opportunities to include additional dashboards to reflect the different sectors. Coordinator Jones Wood advised that some data is easily accessible and can be made into a dashboard, however the frequency of obtaining some data is limited, such as electricity data as it takes some time to secure. Translating the data to greenhouse gas emissions would also be difficult for some data for different sectors. Data that are complicated or requires a third party to provide the data would entail data with fewer changes. In some cases, including data in a dashboard format would be difficult due to the frequency at which we can attain new data. A dashboard reflecting only numbers would not clearly convey the story of the more qualitative benefits of the work.

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING

September 12, 2023 Page 11

**MAYOR/CITY
ADMINISTRATOR'S
REPORT:**

City Administrator Parks reported on an employment agreement for the Council's review and ratification at the September 19, 2023 meeting for the Administrative Services Director position. Staff conducted three interview panels of three candidates. An offer was extended and the applicant accepted the position. The candidate is extremely qualified.

City Administrator Parks reported on her recent Fire Department ride along and appreciated Fire Chief Hurley and staff for participating.

ADJOURNMENT:

With there being no further business, Mayor Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President
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