



City of Davis
Climate and Environmental Justice Commission Meeting Minutes
23 Russell Boulevard, Davis, CA 95616
March 31, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Jordan Blough, Jacob Byrne, Michelle Byars, Jim Cramer, Ann Trump Daniel, Alana Gamage, Keara Tuso

Commissioners Absent: John Reuter, Colin Walsh

Council Liaisons Present: Donna Neville

Staff Present: Stan Gryczko, Assistant City Manager
Dara Dungworth, Principal Planner

1. Call to Order & Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Byrne at 6:02 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

J Blough moved, seconded by M Byars to approve the agenda. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

3. Brief Announcements from Staff, Commissioners, and Council Liaisons

There were no brief announcements.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Calendar

K Tuso moved, seconded by J Cramer, to approve the consent calendar. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

6. Regular Items

A. Review and Discussion of Village Farms Biological Resource Preservation Alternative: Urban Forest, Natural Resources & Sustainability Plan

D Dungworth gave a presentation to the commission on the Village Farms Davis: Urban Forest, Natural Resources & Sustainability Plan, which included four main sections: Urban Forest, Natural Resources, Sustainability, and Implementation & Verification. The commission was asked to provide feedback to staff and recommendations for future Planning Commission and City Council consideration.

Discussion of the Commission Included:

- Highlighting a number of questions from the community, including the number of trees being removed by the project and concerns about the flood plain.
- The need to support needed housing in a sustainable way that protects climate and natural resources.
- Support for having a community where people can live where they work.
- Support retaining mature trees when and where as possible.
- Appreciation of the inclusion of the Climate Ready Tree List.
- Interested in metrics for environmental justice benefits, including how groups are impacted and how equity is ensured.
- Interested in developing a narrative or metrics to understand who benefits from or will be burdened from the project, does the project include objectives to reduce environmental injustice, and does it define the benefits to impacted groups.
- Appreciation for the need to balance goals of environmental protection with the need for critical housing.
- Concerns about how existing natural features will be protected in perpetuity, with what mechanism.
- The missed an opportunity to bring in the City's Climate Action and Adaption Plan (CAAP), by referencing the sections of where the project aligns with CAAP goals.
- The desire for more detail in the sustainability plan in regards to energy efficiency – “sustainable design” is a broad term, so might be good to be more specific in project features.
- Consider modification the placement of proposed buffer zones between busy arterial streets and housing.
- The importance of considering how the structure of housing and building can often conflict with existing natural resources, and the importance to develop with the intention to reduce conflicts (e.g. tree roots and paved roadways or roofs).
- When asked to provide clarification, representatives of the project informed the commission that:
 - Of the 1295 trees present on site, only 394 are impacted in the current proposal.
 - The goal of the project is to plant 4,000 trees, and have all onsite mitigation.
 - There was confusion with the use of “non-native” and “alkali playa” references, included as scientific terms.
 - Determination of the conditions of preservation for the vernal pool comes from the California Department of Wildlife and Army Corps of Engineers.
 - Channel A is part of a regional draining facility that starts from the West of Davis. The unimproved section of the channel runs through the project site, and is significantly overgrown with trees and plantings reducing the capacity to pass the necessary

stormwater flow. The north side would be preserved. The section that meets with the project's Central Detention Facility is the location where 99% of the 394 trees are recommended to be removed.

- In response to comments about the location of Heritage Oak Park, a brief summary of the discussion with the City's Recreation and Park Commission was provided, with the determination from that commission that the park was in the correct place.
- The importance of considering conservation in the Sustainability Plan along with electricity and energy, as conservation means less energy and electricity is needed; the design of the infrastructure and buildings should be focused on reducing heat island effect and energy conservation.
- Understanding that the amenities in the project (including parks and trails) would be available to everyone, even if they don't live in the project.

At the close of the discussion, the Commission worked with the Chair and staff to summarize comments into key categories:

Urban Forest

1. Vegetation planting should be planned to maximize alternative transportation infrastructure (shaded bus stops, bike lanes, and walking paths).
2. Tree palette should be informed by Climate Ready Tree Plans or lists of climate adapted trees provided by local organizations (e.g., Tree Davis)
3. A development wide minimum standard for canopy coverage should be considered based on the existing canopy coverage of established portions of the City. The Urban Forest Management Plan contains analysis of existing canopy coverage that could be used for this purpose.
4. Tree removal within the project site should be phased along with actual development activity, only removing trees the season preceding actual construction work beginning for each phase.

The comments in this section were moved for approval by J Cramer, and seconded by J Blough. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tusso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

Natural Resources

1. The mechanism for protecting biological resource areas must be clearly specified and should be included in the Sustainability Plan as well as Land Use Maps for the project site.

2. Landscaping should be designed to mitigate elevated pollution levels adjacent to nearby high-volume roadways (i.e., Cowell and Pole Line). Local air districts provide guidance on this topic.

The comments in this section were moved for approval by A Daniel, and seconded by J Cramer. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

3. Additional meaningful engagement around the placement of Heritage Oaks Park should be conducted to consider potential hazards from existing roadways and potential pros and cons of alternative placements that may buffer homes from the race track and landfill. Recommendations from this engagement should be used as final justification for the park location

The comment was moved for approval by J Cramer, and seconded by M Byars. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

Sustainability

1. The sustainability plan should identify specific sustainable design measures for neighborhoods to employ (e.g., neighborhood orientation), as opposed to the current commitment for a non-specific 'sustainable design'.
2. A commitment to construct a grade separated crossing at Pole Line should be made a condition of initiating work for the appropriate phase of construction.
3. Operable EV charges should be included in the multi-family housing and park areas with establishment of a base target number of EV charges for each area. The timing of construction of these charges may be determined by the applicant but the operability of the charges should be a requirement for operation of the multi-family and park areas.

The comments in this section were moved for approval by J Blough, and seconded by K Tuso. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

General

4. The Sustainability Plan should be updated to include specific citations to, and measures from, both the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan as well as the Urban Forest Management Plan.

The comment in this section was moved for approval by J Byrne, and seconded by A Gamage. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

Lastly, J Blough moved that the Climate Environmental Justice Commission appreciates the Project's balancing a commitment to the community's housing needs with sustainability and resource preservation, and is generally supportive of the project in in line with our proposed recommendations. Seconded by J Byrne, the motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tuso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

When opened for public comment, four comments were received:

- Liz Reay: Spoke to her concerns about the removal of trees based on being "non-native." Stated most of the trees have been living well without irrigation and provide habitat for many species, including Swainson's hawks (an endangered species), kites and kestrels. Outlined how the City is working with other experts to develop "climate ready tree species," looking at species that can rapidly adapt to changing climate conditions including extreme heat, extreme rain, etc., and includes 50% non-native species.
- Jim Flanigan: Hopes the trees on the site are preserved and many more are planted. Stated the City should have considered a reduced footprint alternative with the proposed project sitting completely south of Channel A.
- Eileen Samitz: Stated issues with the project including flooding risks; the destruction of Channel A habitat and trees; no solutions for safe crossings across Pole Line or F Street; and toxic issues from adjacent unlined landfill and sewage treatment plant. Concerned about hazards from the additional traffic. Most concerned about the removal of trees. Concerned about no conservation easement for the vernal pool and endangered shrimp. Concerned modifications to Channel A will disrupt the hydrology that keeps the pool going.
- Reena Meyer: agreed with previous commentators. Voiced concerns over the removal of trees. Stated mature trees hold more carbon than new plantings. Stated enough trees needed to remain to allow for Swainson's Hawk habitat. Concerned about vernal pools as well, and did not see the pools mentioned in the DEIR. Emphasized the need to protect the channel to protect existing hydrology and the trees.

The Commission recessed from 8:30 p.m. to 8:37 p.m.

As the meeting extended beyond 8:00pm, a vote was taken of the Commission and there was unanimous support to hear the next item on the agenda.

Prior to the discussion of the remaining items, it was requested by the Commission that the Long Range Item (#7) was heard first. This was agreed by consensus.

7. Long Range Calendar

S Gryczko introduced the new format of the Long Range Calendar, consistent with other Commissions and provided an overview of the calendar contents, including the approximate dates for annual reports to the Commission, and topics for specific meetings.

Discussion of the Commission Included:

- Add an item to revisit the Environmental Justice framework discussion in May.
- Move the Integrated Pest Management report presentation to June.
- In response to a question about the Environmental Recognition Awards, staff indicated that staffing challenges prevented the annual awards from moving forward, however they are intended to return in January.

As the meeting extended beyond 8:00pm, a vote was taken of the Commission and there was unanimous support to hear the next item on the agenda.

B. Commission Business: Nomination and Selection of Vice Chair

After a brief discussion about the turnover of the commission with the terms ending in June, it was agreed by consensus that a Vice-Chair position should be appointed in case of the absence of the Chair at a future meeting.

J Byrne moved to appoint A Gamage as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by M Byars. Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Blough, Byrne, Byars, Cramer, Gamage, Tusso
NOES: None
ABSENT: Reuter, Walsh

Prior to the discussion of the remaining items, it was requested by the Commission that both remaining items (C&D on the agenda) would be heard together. This was agreed by consensus.

C. Commission Business: April Meeting Cancellation

D. Commission Business: May Meeting Date and Time

S Gryczko informed the Commission of the need to cancel the April meeting date, due to a conflict of space, as the Social Services Commission required the Commission's normal date and meeting location to hear their portion of the Village Farms development proposal. As the Commission had no pressing

business, the meeting could be cancelled. He indicated that he would determine dates that could work for the May meeting of the Commission and poll the Commissioners on the best date for that month.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 9:06 p.m.