

# City of Capitola

## Commission on the Environment Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 16, 2023– 6:00 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room  
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

**Chair:** Michelle Beritzhoff-Law  
**Vice Chair:** Jason Shepardson  
**Council Member:** Mayor Margaux Keiser  
**Commissioners:** Anthony Lacenere, Peter Wilk

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### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Anthony Lacenere, Jason Shepardson, Peter Wilk  
Mayor Keiser was absent from the meeting.  
City Staff Present: Erika Senyk, Jessica Kahn

Chair Beritzhoff-Law called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

### 2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

No additions or deletions to the agenda.

### 3. Oral and Written Communications

No oral or written communications.

### 4. Consider the minutes from the July 19, 2023, Commission on the Environment Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes: Vice Chair Shepardson  
Seconded: Chair Beritzhoff-Law  
Motion passed 4-0-1 (Mayor Keiser Absent)

### 5. General Business

#### A. Climate Action Plan goals for VMT and Transportation

Recommended Action: Discuss potential actions and develop recommendations that support Climate Action Plan goals for the VMT and Transportation sector and associated measures.

Environmental Projects Manager, Erika Senyk, presented the staff report.

The Commission provided general takeaway thoughts concerning the VMT and Transportation sector of the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP), which included the following:

- Calculations for how VMT is calculated within City limits could be more clearly defined in the CAP (Commissioner Wilk);

- A rail on 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue may help to alleviate traffic congestion within City limits (Commissioner Wilk);
- The CAP, as written, is outdated and should be updated. The Commission will provide a summary of recommendations to City Council for items that should be included in the new CAP (Commissioner Lacenere);
- Alleviating traffic congestion within the City could help to alleviate emissions (Commissioner Lacenere);
- Bike infrastructure and painted bike lanes should be prioritized for accommodating an increasing number of electric bicycles (Vice Chair Shepardson);
- There is a need for a method to measure how well the BCycle program is working, in order to monitor its effectiveness and enforcement (Commissioner Lacenere);
- VMT and Transportation may be the most important sector of the CAP considering that this sector contributes the highest percentage of the City's total emissions (Chair Beritzhoff-Law);
- Bicycle and electric vehicle infrastructure should be prioritized and the City should pursue funding opportunities to support these infrastructure purchases and installations (Chair Beritzhoff-Law);
- A public map of EV charging stations within the City would be a helpful tool and resource (Commissioner Wilk).

The Commission discussed each measure of the VMT and Transportation sector:

**VMT-1 Ridesharing and Car Sharing:** Commission recommends that the City promote ride-sharing options and increase signage to promote the idea of carpooling.

**VMT-2 Increase Bus Ridership:** Commission discussed the idea of including bus accessibility as an item in the plan review process for larger multi-family residential projects and providing discounted bus passes for youth and seniors to encourage bus ridership.

**VMT-3 Increase Bicycle Ridership:** Commission recommends that the City continue to designate resources towards improving bicycle infrastructure and painted bike lanes on City roads. The Commission also recommends updating the Bicycle Transportation Plan (Adopted February 10, 2011), completing the projects outlined in the Plan, and having clearly defined short- and long-term goals for funding and implementing bike infrastructure improvements.

**VMT-4 Educate and Engage the Public About Alternative Modes:** Commission recommends that the City continue to maintain resources to continue to educate the public on ways to reduce our carbon footprints, such as supporting the Resilient Capitola Campaign.

**VMT-5 Support Local Uptake of Electric Vehicles:** Commission recommends that the City invest in infrastructure that would give residents more equitable EV charging opportunities.

**VMT-6 Support Rail as a Commute Option:** Commission recommends that the City continue to support the rail as a commuter option, while considering branch lines of existing commuter lanes. The Commission also recommends that the City prioritize facilitating opportunities for rail trail accessibility.

**VMT-7 Support implementation of Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS):** Commission recommends that the City continue to support regional transportation efforts by working with regional partners and collaborating with local and regional transit agencies.

The Commission plans to bring additional comments regarding the VMT and Transportation sector to the November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 regular COE meeting. Commissioners will also review Climate Action and Adaptation Plans of smaller cities (e.g., Los Altos) to compare climate project ideas with jurisdictions of a similar scale.

**B. Arbor Day Foundation Tree Giveaway Event**

Recommended Action: Discuss using Community Tree funds to support an Arbor Day Foundation Tree Giveaway event in fall 2023.

The Commission discussed the option of using Community Tree funds to support another Arbor Day Tree Giveaway event this fall 2023. The Commission discussed their concerns regarding the minimum number of trees required for the annual package (i.e., 200 trees) and the risks of trees wasted if they are not claimed by residents.

**Motion for the Commission to provide the following recommendations to be considered by City Council prior to moving forward with the 2023 Arbor Day Tree Giveaway Event:**

- 1. The Commission recommends that there be a clear plan for potential tree waste that could result from unclaimed trees on the giveaway day (e.g., have approved designated areas where leftover trees could be planted within City limits).**
- 2. Taking into consideration that the Arbor Day Foundation annual minimum package has changed to 200 trees, the Commission recommends two separate giveaway events during two back-to-back seasons (e.g., Fall, Spring), where 100 trees are distributed at each event.**
- 3. The Commission recommends that City Council consider other uses of Community Tree funds, other than the approximated \$7,000+ cost of the Arbor Day Tree Giveaway event, that would potentially generate less waste and require less involvement from City staff.**

**Motion: Chair Beritzhoff-Law**  
**Seconded: Commissioner Wilk**  
**Motion passed 4-0-1 (Mayor Keiser Absent)**

## **6. Items for Future Agenda**

The Commission requested that the following items be agendized for a future meeting:

- **Green Building Funds:** Discuss Green Building funds and potential recommended uses of the funds in support of the City's Climate Action Plan goals.
- **September 20, 2023 Regular Meeting:** Discuss potential projects that support Climate Action Plan goals for the Residential and Non-Residential Energy sector and associated measures. Receive a 15-minute presentation from a Green Business Network representative.
- **October 18, 2023 Regular Meeting:** Discuss potential projects that support Climate Action Plan goals for the Water and Wastewater, Solid Waste, Parks, Open Space, and Agriculture, and Action and Implementation sectors and the associated measures.
- **November 15, 2023 Regular Meeting:** Review Climate Action Plan potential projects and recommendations to bring to City Council.
- **December 20, 2023 Regular Meeting:** Approve projects and recommendations to bring to City Council at the Mid-Year Budget Report meeting in January 2024.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 pm to the next Regular Meeting of the Commission on the Environment on September 20, 2023.