

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Regina Phillips (D3), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Anna Bullett (D4)

Minutes May 8, 2024

Members Present: Councilor Phillips, Councilor Bullett, Councilor Pelletier

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Erin Ferrell, Dena Libner, Mike Murray, Jeremiah Bartlett

Meeting was called to order.

April 10 Minutes

The April 10, 2024 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon

The Sustainability Office is continuing to implement the DIY Electrify! Campaign awarding \$250 rebates to income eligible Portland residents for home electrification and weatherization materials. More information can be found at portlandmaine.gov/electrify-everything

Energy and Water Use Benchmarking reports were due May 1 and the Office continues to receive reports and report corrections. The Office is pleased with the data quality of reports received so far.

The Office is continuing to be present in the community with engagement efforts.

Presentation regarding the coal pile at Cassidy Point

Presented by Sarah Southard

DEP response to the coal pile presentation

Eric Kennedy, Rick Perkins, Hillary Whitcomb, David Lemery, Liza Woodward, and Casey Wood
The DEP responded to citizen complaints last year by installing air monitoring last June. After some time, the monitors were removed after not seeing levels higher than deemed acceptable. DEP is working with Sprague on a best practices plan to manage the pile on a daily basis and will continue to monitor the pile.

Shipments will be restricted to April and October because water suppression is more effective when temperatures are above freezing. Planning on only unloading the coal when wind speeds are below 25 mph. They will also be installing new air monitors. They will continue meeting with Sprague to work on best practices. These are proposed control measures and the DEP plans to continue to request meetings.

The DEP team laid out a timeline of events. In June 2023, the DEP set up an air monitoring station near the coal pile. Over the next 6 months the data was reviewed and assessed with no conclusive data. The monitor was removed as it was needed elsewhere in the state. The DEP requested more monitors from the EPA and were able to reinstall the monitor in early 2024. After outside recommendations, a different type of monitor was ordered to install to gather better data.

Councilor Comment on Presentation regarding the coal pile at Cassidy Point

Councilor Bullett asked how long the coal pile has been present in Portland. The coal pile has been in Portland for quite some time.

Councilor Pelletier asks that this topic be on the next agenda to continue receiving updates. The DEP will be invited back on the July 10th meeting for another update. Councilor Pelletier recommends inviting state representatives to be present at that meeting as well.

State and High St Feasibility Study

Presented by Mike Murray and Jeremiah Bartlett

Mike Murray explained that this topic first came forward in 2006 peninsula study. In 2015, there was an expression of citizen interest on the topic.

Jeremiah Bartlett presented on the topic. He shared the history of State and High St, stating that the roads were previously two way streets until 1972. The 2015 study indicated that the project was feasible, however 32 public parking spaces would be lost. The city has been awarded federal grant money to reconnect neighborhoods. PACTS has funded a study to redesign Forest Ave Marginal to Park, and considerations to the multimodal environment on the peninsula and York St. The state will additionally be funding upgrades to traffic signals on State and High St. Peak traffic volumes are down 20% since the 2015 study, likely due to more people working from home. This is a common pattern in Portland. Due to the traffic density shift, it is likely that previous recommendations in the 2015 study may be subject to change. State St could potentially have one or two way bike traffic. However, there would be impacts to the width of vehicle lanes, and/or trees. There is insufficient space for bike lanes on High St. There is 1.75M to 2.5M in additional costs for the city.

Councilor Comment on State and High St Feasibility Study

Councilor Phillips shared her appreciation to the presenters.

Councilor Pellitier shared that she thinks bike lanes across the peninsula are a priority. She also shared that this project is a priority for residents.

Councilor Bullett shared that she is not surprised by the change in traffic density. She also shared that she is not surprised by the high crash reports in the area. Bullett also agreed with Councilor Pellitier on the importance of safe bike lanes across the peninsula. Bullett asked - Are

there any neighborhoods in other cities that have transformed one-way streets into two-way streets? Jeremiah Bartlet shared that Water St in Augusta has completed a similar project.

Councillor Bullett shared that she would like there to be consideration to buses and rapid transit opportunities during this study.

Creation of Climate Action Fund

Presented by Troy Moon, Sustainability Director

Troy Moon shared the fund would include penalties from breaking city ordinances, grants, private donations, and renewable energy credits. It is noted that if the city sells their credits, the city cannot claim they are using renewable energy. The income from these credits could potentially help fund other climate related projects that otherwise would not be funded. The ordinance would take effect next year, so that it will not impact the work that has already gone into this year's budget.

Councillor Phillips opened the discussion up for public comment.

Public Comment on Creation of Climate Action Fund

Bill Webber commented that the city must sell the renewable energy credits in a responsible way that generates more renewable energy for the city. The city manager should not be in charge of the Climate Action Fund, instead the city council should be in charge of the Climate Action fund.

Councilor Comment on Creation of Climate Action Fund

Councillor Bullett expressed how she understands Webber's concerns, and she would like to get more information from the Director of Finance.

Moon noted this is not anticipated to be a large amount of money annually.

Councilor Bullett is concerned that these funds could be trapped in the standard operational budget of the Sustainability Office in the future, and she would like to prevent that from happening.

Councillor Phillips suggested bringing the Finance Director to the next meeting.

Councilor Pellitier expressed her excitement for the creation of the climate action fund.

Vote for the Creation of Climate Action Fund

The vote unanimously passed and will move on to the finance committee.

Motion to Adjournment

The motion was moved by Councilor Pellitier, and seconded by Councilor Bullett.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned