

MINUTES  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 4, 2021

A meeting of the Environmental Policy Advisory Committee (EPAC) was convened virtually on Thursday, February 4, 2021, at 5:15 p.m. Chair Lopez called the meeting to order at 5:22 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Those members present were:

Gail Conners  
Becky Cortese  
Nancy Keller

Sherie Shaffer  
Ted Lopez

Members absent: Ryan Tessman (unexcused), Jenna Seddon (excused).

Staff present: Carmen Howard, Director, Pueblo County Planning and Development Department and Monica Grosso, EPAC Recording Secretary.

Ms. Conners stated she was not sure if she was supposed to speak yet or not, but wanted to let Ms. Howard know she really liked the website that was done for the Comprehensive Plan. She thought it was very easy to navigate. Ms. Howard replied she thought the consultants, Clarion Associates, were doing a great job leading the charge. She thought they had been very impressive up to that point both with their timing of everything and moving things forward. Working with them had been a pleasure so far and she was very happy with it. Ms. Conners replied she thought the website was straightforward. She had looked at the maps but did not have a chance to go to the stakeholder meeting because of her own work, but thought what she had seen was easy to follow and well done. Ms. Howard replied they would be putting up some of the preliminary documents in the next couple of weeks related to the whole state of the County and other reports. She thought that should be interesting as well.

Mr. Lopez questioned if they should get the meeting started. Ms. Howard questioned if Ms. Grosso had heard from anyone about being absent. Ms. Grosso replied the only one who was not present was Mr. Tessman and that he had indicated he would be in the meeting and would do his best to provide something for the Health Promotion Specialist Report Item but she had not heard anything about his absence.

Ms. Keller announced she would have to leave the meeting at 6:00 p.m. as she had another meeting to attend.

APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 4, 2021 EPAC AGENDA

Chair Lopez stated they would not change the agenda and would follow it as it was.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 3, 2020 MEETING

Chair Lopez questioned if everyone had a chance to look the minutes over and if there were any changes needed. Ms. Keller replied there were changes that needed to be made under the Water Quality Subcommittee item. Chair Lopez replied that looking at her email her changes were extensive. Ms. Keller replied there were only five corrections that she thought she needed to clear the record on. She was not able to review the minutes ahead of time and she thought the recording secretary had

problems with the recording of the meeting. Most of the corrections were just to make it clear for people that weren't there to understand the presentation. She requested the following changes be made:

- Page 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, 1st sentence: the words “processing plant” be replaced with “water reclamation facility”.
- Page 2, same paragraph, 21<sup>st</sup> sentence: the words “commercial pump” be replaced with “submersible pump”.
- Page 4, 12<sup>th</sup> line down on page: the sentence: “The Water Environmental Federation honored the Pueblo Water Treatment Plant...” be replaced with “The Water Environmental Federation honored the Pueblo Water Reclamation Facility...”.
- Page 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, 8<sup>th</sup> sentence: the word “selenium” be replaced with “reversed osmosis”.
- Page 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, 7<sup>th</sup> sentence: the amount “15%” be replaced with “50%”.

Chair Lopez called for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2020 meeting as amended.

Ms. Keller moved to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2020 meeting as amended. Ms. Shaffer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT – TED LOPEZ, CHAIR

Chair Lopez stated he did not have much to report. He wanted to touch on the “Your Plan Your Pueblo” survey. He questioned how many of the members had attended the workshops in December 2020 and how many had taken the time to complete the survey. Chair Lopez stated he had completed the survey and attended the workshops. He stated Ms. Shaffer had indicated she had as well. Ms. Keller stated she had completed the survey from the City side but not from the citizen side as she is not a resident of the City of Pueblo. Chair Lopez suggested that those members that had not completed the survey take the time to do it. It did not take that much time to go through. He liked the series of questions that were asked in the survey. Ms. Connors stated she thought it was well done. Chair Lopez replied he agreed. He questioned if Ms. Howard had received any comments on the survey so far on the progress of the plan. Ms. Howard replied they were getting a good response so far. The consultants were doing a great job moving the plan along and they were on schedule. They extended the time for the survey out about two weeks because they had a bit of a difficult time getting their marketing up. It was now on the City Facebook page, the County website, and the County Facebook page. Pueblo West was working on getting their marketing out as well. She thought they had received around 500 responses so far. It was going well, and the survey would be open until February 26, 2021. They hoped to get a good response. It was very helpful to get their consultants that information as it provided them with information and data from a wide variety of citizens and stakeholders that they could work with. They were currently working on the state of the County and were in data accumulation mode. They would also be providing them with meeting information for February 2021 related to upcoming meetings. They should have some draft documents to them either later on in the month or possibly the beginning of March and should have the state of the County documents. So far, the consultants had done a great job.

Chair Lopez questioned if after they compiled the responses and massaged the numbers, somewhere down the line in the latter part of the consulting period, if there would be another survey. Ms. Howard replied she did not think there would be another survey. She thought this would be the only survey. She did anticipate there being public meetings and opportunities for collaboration and commenting on documents. She thought the stakeholder meetings would be an important next step. They did have a few stakeholder and focus group meetings in December 2020 and January 2021 and they were very helpful. She questioned if Chair Lopez was a part of the focus group. Chair Lopez replied he participated in both the morning and afternoon sessions. Ms. Howard stated he would have several more opportunities to participate. There was a lot of work to do.

Ms. Conners questioned if they were going to come up with scenarios to work through. Ms. Howard replied they were looking at a big picture vision at what Pueblo sees for its future, not so much individual scenarios. They were looking at how to shape policies and development relating to all the different components such as recreation, housing, economic development, and sustainability. They would be focusing on what Pueblo sees for the next 20-year planning window. The consultants will then help them figure out how to get there.

Chair Lopez questioned if the input that the consultants take into account was strictly from participation and input at the workshops and through the surveys. He asked the question because there were several other ongoing projects in the City of Pueblo and the County. He had attended part of the Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG) meeting the week before and they talked about the plans for the train station. He wondered if those things would be considered or if they would only be taken into account if there was mention of it from the survey respondents. Ms. Howard replied the Southwest Chief and the Front Range Passenger Rail would absolutely be taken into account as well as the Long Range Transportation Plan and all of the other plans that were out there. There were a lot of different plans and many different agencies and entities that were involved with those plans and the other efforts that were currently ongoing in the City, County, and Pueblo West. There are a lot of moving pieces to consider. She has been very pleased and impressed with Clarion Associates' ability to try to bring all of these people together. They have been holding meetings with the 2030 Commission, Pueblo Means Business Task Force, and Chis Bolt at PuebloPlex. They were trying to capture everyone. She asked if anyone knew of someone who hadn't been included to please reach out to her. She thought so far, they were doing a pretty good job of getting everyone together to make it a cohesive plan. They did not want to have competing forces out there not working together. Collaboration was very important. A lot of places have done their plans separately. The City would do their own plan, the County would do their own plan, and Pueblo West would do their own plan. In this case, the whole region was working together. Doing a Regional Plan is very beneficial for everyone. Their efforts were to work with the Economic Development and were trying to bring the City, County, and Pueblo West together. There were a lot of efforts to unify and try and do things in conjunction with each other. It was helpful for all of them to speak the same language. They were looking at using the same software and things like that. Ms. Conners stated it was encouraging. She thought collaboration was the only way it could be done anymore.

Chair Lopez questioned what role EPAC could take as they went through the study period. He wondered if they needed to consider talking about certain portions of the study in detail or maybe just providing more comments. Ms. Howard replied that all the members of EPAC were welcome and encouraged them to participate in those stakeholder meetings. When it came time to start reviewing documents or providing comments that would be helpful for the members to participate in as well. She asked that any of the members who have not been contacted or want to play a bigger role to let her know and she would put their name out there. Chair Lopez thanked her.

Chair Lopez questioned if the members had received the data that he had forwarded to them from the City's Recycle Works a week or so after the last meeting. The members responded they had. He would be sending other information for informational purposes that evening. It would be an article about Pueblo relating to electrical use and the use of coal in terms of generating electricity. It talked about Pueblo wanting to be 100% renewable by 2035.

Chair Lopez asked Ms. Keller about the presentation she had at the last meeting. He wondered what the impacts that the chemicals that were used to clean toilets, bathrooms, sinks, and so on, that were rather caustic, had on wastewater treatment. Ms. Keller replied they did not see most of those cleaners in their system. Where they got into issues with chemicals was more with volume. An example would be a pesticide applicator. If someone were to rinse concentrated pesticides out of their containers and dumped those into the wastewater, they might have an issue. Very low quantities of pesticides and herbicides could cause problems at the wastewater treatment plant and cause them to fail their wet test. They did not see impacts from most of the common household cleaners that were used. The water reclamation facilities were built to include those in their treating capacity. There was no getting away from these. They are in every city, so it had not been an issue.

Ms. Keller stated the biggest issue they were having was with wipes. Wipes are not flushable. They can say they are flushable all over the packaging, but they do not dissolve. They ball up with grease and create grease balls that end up plugging the lines. Sometimes, they end up in the service lines, sometimes in the sanitary sewer, and sometimes they end up in the pumps and can cause the pumps to burn out. They have a lot of problems with wipes. Most of them say they are flushable on the front of the packaging but on the back they will usually have a picture of a toilet with a line through it or some kind of disclosure or disclaimer saying you should check with your local facility to see if it is ok to flush them. People don't read that far. That is currently the number one thing they are fighting. The grease is always an ongoing issue. Most chemicals are well diluted and aren't an issue unless they were really toxic.

Chair Lopez questioned Ms. Keller about the rate increases related to the project the City was involved with for lining the pipes. He wondered how many more years the City was faced with those rate increases. Ms. Keller stated that was a good question. It depended on what other regulations came down the line. They currently had a ten-year variance for the selenium and sulfate treatment plan. The variance is for improving and lining the infrastructure and trying to get the groundwater from entering the wastewater because it is so high in selenium and sulfate. That was the first phase of the ten years. They had a \$10 million commitment and the first portion of that was to go to the infrastructure the first five years. In the next five years, they would be looking at pilots for treatment in the reclamation plant. They were never going to be able to keep it all out. People were not going to line their private service lines even though they would like them to. They were always going to get some groundwater entering. The main thing they could do was try and stop the higher concentrations of groundwater from coming in the areas where they have really high selenium and sulfate. They know the area along Wild Horse and that side of town is very high in selenium. There are areas up towards the University that are also very high in selenium. They were really focusing on those sites and trying to get the most money in those areas. If they can get the selenium and sulfate in those areas cut back, that will reduce the overall numbers. They must meet the stream standard. The next phase will be to perform pilots to determine what kind of treatments will work. The cost of those treatments are going to be in the next phase to install. If they have to utilize reverse osmosis, the cost has been estimated at \$250 million. They were doing everything possible to avoid that and were trying to get down to stream standards. The other issue was in 2027. At that time, they are going to adopt the next level of nutrient reductions. That will require additional treatment to be put in place. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) are really important right now for the State to try and get a handle

on. Everyone's permits are going to require monitoring for these chemicals. If they happen to be in an area where they have high levels, they could have treatment requirements for those as well. She was sorry to report that she thought that things were just going to get more expensive as they kept adding regulations. The lower they can detect chemicals, the more chemicals they were going to have to remove and more treatments were going to be necessary to do that. It was a never-ending battle to keep up with all of the regulations.

Chair Lopez stated they were working on getting a letter out from the Salt Creek Sanitation District to their customers explaining the rate increases so this was good information to have. The Sanitation District decided not to pass on the latest increase but told the board they had to take into account they had to have these reserves for future major projects that might come about. This information will help in developing that letter to the customers.

#### HEALTH PROMOTION SPECIALIST REPORT – RYAN TESSMAN

Mr. Tessman was not present to give a report.

#### WATER QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT - NANCY KELLER

Ms. Keller stated she did not have anything else to report. She did not prepare a lot since she was not able to stay for the whole meeting. She had another meeting to attend.

#### SOLID WASTE SUBCOMMITTEE - TED LOPEZ

Chair Lopez questioned if Ms. Cortese had anything to report. Ms. Cortese replied she did not have a whole lot, but she did have a little information from the State level. They were currently working on some policy to create a Statewide organics plan. That had been in the works for a while. They were also working on a Soil Health Program Policy which was going to work with the agricultural industry of the State to create end user markets for composted organics. There was a different policy that was being looked at and voted on to see if it should move forward or not. They were basically starting at the end user to create that market before they jump into collection. She thought it was a fabulous model. Around eight years ago, she got into a program where they collected tree waste at a very reduced rate for a couple of years and ended up with a mountain of it. They hired a big grinder to come in and grind it all and it cost around \$25,000 to have that done. They then had a mountain of mulch that no one wanted. They still have a large pile of it. If any members needed mulch in the spring, they could come get it from her. Ms. Connors questioned if the landscape companies would be interested. Ms. Cortese replied no one was interested in it. It was not the pretty dyed red stuff you buy at Home Depot. It was really great bark, noting it was heavy enough that it didn't blow in the wind. She used it at her house. Because it was not the pretty stuff you find at the stores, people were not interested. They had people come and get pickup loads full for years and it had gone down quite a bit, but they still had some. It would be super exciting to have farmers on board to take some of that stuff. Chair Lopez asked Ms. Cortese to repeat where the mulch was located as there was an issue with her sound. Ms. Cortese replied it was at her company's transfer station. Chair Lopez stated he was surprised people had not taken it. Ms. Cortese replied they had taken some; they just had so much volume and the response was not as great as they had hoped for to get rid of all they had collected in those two years. Chair Lopez stated when he was living in New Jersey and developers cleared an area of all trees, they piled the mulch next to the road and it did not take too long before it was gone. Also, when they had the Christmas tree recycling at the Health Department, the first day the mulch was available it was gone within hours. Ms. Cortese stated she wasn't sure why it was not taken. They advertised it with their customers and a few other places. The Health Department advertised it for them back then as well but

they still did not get a very good turnout. She hoped that would change in the future. Ms. Shaffer stated she may be able to help with that collection. She was constantly getting asked where people could find free mulch. She was not aware that Ms. Cortese had it to get rid of. Ms. Cortese replied it was eight years ago and has been dwindling down slowly and she was not sure how much they had left. She knew there was some left, but it was nothing like it was. Chair Lopez stated it should be in good shape and well-aged. Ms. Cortese replied absolutely, it was nice and dry.

Chair Lopez questioned Ms. Cortese as to what extent the Sustainability Plan Action Team, as far as material management, was going. Ms. Cortese replied that it hadn't been going at all. Ron Go-Aco, Pueblo county Economic Development & GIS, was working on the LEED Certification all of 2020 and that was where his focus went. She has not had any direction about it since that time. She will have to reach out to Mr. Go-Aco and see what was happening with that. She also had not heard about the LEED Certification. She was not sure if anyone else had heard about it either. It had been pretty quiet on that end.

#### AGENDA FOR APRIL 1, 2021 MEETING

The next regularly scheduled EPAC meeting is Thursday, April 1, 2021. It will be held virtually via Zoom with the link being provided the day before the meeting. It is set for the regular time from 5:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lopez called for a motion to adjourn the February 4, 2021 meeting.

Ms. Shaffer motioned to adjourn the February 4, 2021 meeting. Ms. Connors seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business before EPAC, the meeting was adjourned at 5:54 p.m.



Monica M. Grosso  
EPAC Recording Secretary

MMG