

Draft Minutes of the March 23, 2021, ECOS Board Meeting

President Ralph Propper called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: ECOS board members: Gabriel Balensiefer, Chris Brown, Rob Burness, John Deeter, Jon Ellison, Sandra Hall, Susan Herre, Chelsea Kelly-Reif, Janet Koster, Margaret Loehr, Ron Maertz, Michael O’Sullivan, Marko Pavlović, Ralph Propper, Alex Reagan, Quincy Stivers, Betsy Weiland, Sean Wirth, Earl Withycombe

Guests: Oscar Balaguer, 350 Sacramento, May Lin Chang, Architect, HGA Architects and Engineers, Heather Fargo, former Mayor of Sacramento, Michael Garabedian, Cheryle Hodge, City of Sacramento, Planner for New Growth, Barbara Leary, Sierra Club Sacramento Group, Steve Letterly, Stacey McKinley, Kevin McRae, Jeffrey Norton, Owen Routt, Megan Shumway, Muriel Strand, Molly Wright, SMAQMD, Developer for Grand Park development

ECOS Staff: Alexandra Reagan.

Agenda and Minutes: The minutes of the January 26, 2021 ECOS board meeting and the agenda for the March 23, 2021 ECOS board meeting were approved.

Natomas Basin Conservancy: Sacramento's original Habitat Conservation Plan

John Roberts, Executive Director of the Natomas Basin Conservancy, discussed the accomplishments and challenges faced by the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (NBHCP).

The purpose of the NBHCP is to promote biological conservation along with economic development and the continuation of agriculture within the Natomas Basin. The NBHCP establishes a multi-species conservation program to mitigate the expected loss of habitat values and incidental take of protected species that would result from urban development, operation of irrigation and drainage systems, and rice farming.

John displayed maps showing the NBHCP area, including the Urban Services Boundary (USB), the pending annexation by the City of Sacramento of the “handle” with the “pan” remaining for now in Sacramento County, and developments both existing and proposed. In Sacramento County the Grand Park development is fully outside of the USB and the Upper Westside development proposes to move the USB. The Sutter Pointe development includes approximately 7,528 acres of land in south Sutter County. Metro Air Park is being developed, with mitigation. Greenbriar being developed in the City (and outside the NBHCP.)

The Natomas Basin Conservancy serves as the plan operator, a public benefit corporation with ten members and a small staff. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife and many others are partners. The Natomas Basin Conservancy acquires land, commits it to functional mitigation, assigns it a land use designation, and commits to

manage it in perpetuity. To acquire land, approvals are needed from state and federal agencies, and certain criteria must be met. For every acre of development, .5 acres are to be conserved.

Two primary protected species are the Giant Garter Snake and Swainson's Hawk. Funding comes from mitigation fees, rent for agricultural properties, and investment income.

A serious concern is that there may not be enough available mitigation land to implement the NBHCP, and the price of land is going up. Other concerns are increase in invasive weeds and crime on mitigation lands, among others. Avoidance of fragmentation of mitigation lands is an important concern.

Sacramento County Climate Action Plan

Susan Herre reported that the County released a draft of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) on March 8, 2021 for a 30-day comment period. Environmental stakeholders have met to share ideas and comments. The CAP aims for a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from a 1990 baseline by 2030. At the same time, the County's climate emergency declaration calls for carbon neutrality by 2030. The CAP depends on energy-related reductions from SMUD, which is beyond the County's control. The CAP does not address land use and transportation development, which may be a significant oversight. The CAP will have little impact on on-road GHG emissions. ECOS desires the City and County to synchronize their General Plan horizon years to promote compatibility between their respective CAPs. The County CAP allows for offsite (out-of-county) mitigation with specific requirements, which also calls into question the vulnerability of the CAP to emission reduction gaming.

Organizational Development Committee

Nancy Hughett stated that the committee has drafted a membership solicitation letter that will be mailed out in the next two weeks to drive new and renewal memberships in ECOS. The Sacramento Big Day of Giving (Big DOG) donation drive will be held on May 6 and the committee is gearing up for promoting donations to ECOS.

Land Use Committee

Jon Ellison stated that a spokesman for the Urban Displacement Project spoke at the recent committee meeting. In April, the Committee will hear presentations on infill and its impacts on backyard habitat.

Transportation, Air Quality, and Climate Change Committee

John Deeter summarized the goals of the Capital City Freeway American River Bridge project to widen the bridge from 100 feet to 150 feet. At its upcoming meeting on April 1, the Committee is trying to secure a presentation by City staff on the proposed Stockton Boulevard Plan.

Habitat 2020

Sean Wirth summarized committee work in the Water Forum, South Sacramento County groundwater management, the denial of the hospital application by the Elk Grove Planning Commission. In the Water Forum, the committee wants the environmental community to weigh in on water bank program planning. The Water Forum is looking at drought cutback planning.

Treasurer's Report

Earl stated that ECOS has received the third and final \$50,000 grant payment from The California Endowment to continue supporting the Community Development Action Team (CDAT) and the Sacramento Investment Without Displacement (SIWD) nonprofit. Earl also reported that income and expenditure trends remain within budget projections.

Director of Operations Report

Alex Reagan reported that SIWD has filed a CEQA suit against the University of California Davis for approving an inadequate EIR on the Aggie Square Project.

President's Report

In Ralph Propper's absence, Susan Herre stated that the Sacramento Area Council of Government's (SACOG) Green Means Go program has solicited proposals for infill development in the SACOG region. SACOG is hopeful that the California Legislature will provide GHG Reduction Funds to the program to fund infrastructure in support of infill development.

Environmentalist of The Year Event

Michael O'Sullivan reported that the videos of Environmentalist of the Year (EOY) awardees have been completed. A sponsorship solicitation letter has been drafted and will be sent out soon.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7: 40 pm.