

## Iowa City Climate Action Commission Agenda

Monday, October 5, 2020, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Electronic Meeting, Zoom Platform

### Electronic Meeting

*(Pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8)*

An electronic meeting is being held because a meeting in person is impossible or impractical due to concerns for the health and safety of Commission members, staff and the public presented by COVID-19.

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<https://zoom.us/j/95100093283?pwd=QzUvQXNCUWdIRTFYSys3ZURJUTRlZz09>

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Once approved, you will receive an email message with a link to join the meeting. If you are asked for a meeting or webinar ID, enter the ID number found in the email. A meeting password may also be included in the email. Enter the password when prompted.

If you have no computer or smartphone, or a computer without a microphone, you may call in by telephone by dialing (312) 626-6799. When prompted, enter the meeting or webinar ID. The ID number for this meeting is: **951 0009 3283**.

Once connected, you may dial \*9 to "raise your hand," letting the meeting host know you would like to speak. Providing comments in person is not an option.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of September 8, 2020 minutes
4. Public Comment of items not on the Agenda
  - Commentators shall address the Commission for no more than 3 minutes. Commissioners shall not engage in discussion with the public concerning said items.
5. Recognition of Brenda Nations, Iowa City Climate Action Coordinator
6. Staff Announcements
  - a. Introduction of new Commission member, Ben Grimm
  - b. Action items from last meeting
  - c. Progress updates on Climate Action and Outreach Office Updates (see attachment).
7. Old Business:
  - a. Johnson Clean Energy District – Cheryl Miller
  - b. Working group evaluation
8. New Business:
  - a. Discussion of making a formal statement around equity
    - i. “Racism, injustices and hurtful disparities have no place in our nation or in Iowa City. As Climate Action Commission members, we will ensure that equitable approaches and social justice are always part of our discussions, decision-making and actions. We recognize with climate change the stakes are highest for the most vulnerable members of our community, and that public engagement must include diversity. We will use the equity and co-benefit review checklist and related tools in our work and welcome guidance from the City’s Human Rights Commission and the City’s Office of Equity and Human Rights. “
  - b. Update on working groups
    - i. Buildings (Krieger, Karr, Soglin)
    - ii. Transportation (Leckband, Giannakouros)
    - iii. Outreach (Krieger, Fraser, Holbrook, Bradley)
    - iv. Equity/Adaptation (Tate, Hutchinson)
    - v. Waste (Bradley)
9. Recap of actionable items for commission, working groups, and staff
10. Adjourn

*If you will need disability-related accommodations in order to participate in this meeting, please contact Ashley Monroe, Assistant City Manager, at 319-356-5012 or at [ashley-monroe@iowa-city.org](mailto:ashley-monroe@iowa-city.org). Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.*

IOWA CITY CLIMATE ACTION COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 – 3:30 PM – FORMAL MEETING  
ELECTRONIC MEETING

**Electronic Meeting**

*(Pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8)*

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Madeleine Bradley, Stratis Giannakouros, Kasey Hutchinson, John Fraser, GT Karr, Matt Krieger, Jesse Leckband, Becky Soglin, Eric Tate

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Grace Holbrook

**STAFF PRESENT:** Sarah Gardner, Ashley Monroe, Brenda Nations

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Benjamin Grimm, John Barr, Cheryl Miller, Warren McKenna, Diane Platte

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL:**

None

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Krieger called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF AUGUST 3, 2020 MINUTES:**

Fraser moves to approve the minutes from August 3, 2020.

Soglin seconds the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion passes 9-0.

**PUBLIC COMMENT OF ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

Benjamin Grimm (Iowa City Schools) stated he didn't have much to report this month as everything's focused on COVID and trying to get the students back into school. The AmeriCorps

team is shifting gears with having a mix of students learning online versus in school so it's going to change the dynamics for things like recycling, so they are retooling and changing focus.

John Barr (Scott Park neighborhood) wanted to call to the Commission's attention a letter written by Chris Stephan. It was primarily initially directed to the Parks and Rec Commission but was cc: to the Climate Action Commission. Barr just wanted to encourage everyone's review and consideration of this letter.

Nations noted the letter isn't in this agenda packet but it will be in the next one as it came addressed to the Commission so she needed permission to open and then can scan it and send it out.

### **STAFF/COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Nations first announced that she is retiring October 5, which is the date of the next Commission meeting so the very last thing that she will do is the next Commission meeting, and then at five o'clock she'll be retired. Gardner and Monroe will continue to support the Commission.

**Action Items from last meeting:** Nations noted Soglin did send the edits to the last meeting's agenda, Giannakouros was going to work on the Climate Action at Work awards but that was the day after the derecho and he did not have the ability to do so, however Nations said they completed those and they will be announced later this month. The Commissioners were to contact Nations on any metrics input, she did provide the two years of metrics and an updated greenhouse gas inventory. Monroe was to review tree planting, and Fraser did meet with Gardner about the ambassador program. Gardner also sent the link or the Climate Fest kickoff. Nations put on the agenda to discuss the Human Rights Commission statement and if the Climate Action Commission wanted to make a formal statement.

**Position Vacancy Update:** Nations next gave an update on the vacant commission seat, it was announced at the August 4 meeting and needs to be open for 30 days, so the deadline to apply is today and they'll be announcing the new member on 9/15.

**Progress Updates on "Accelerating Iowa City's Climate Actions":** Nations stated some of the key items are that they have launched the TIF funded Climate Action Incentive Program, the transit study information should be out in early October, the Climate Ambassador Program is going to be rolled out at the Climate Fest in two weeks, the tree planting project is going forward, the Climate Action at Work program is complete and they have chosen the five winners in each of the five categories of the Climate Action Plan, those winners will be announced on September 25<sup>th</sup>, and each winner will get a \$500 prize. The Climate Festival will be starting on September 19. Gardner added as many are aware last week the Iowa City area had a big spike in the infection rate for COVID-19 and as a result of that, after some staff discussion, they decided that the most appropriate thing to do for the Climate Fest would be to make all of the events virtual as a matter of public safety. They don't want to be assembling crowds and also the City is discouraging other events from taking place so it would look bad if the City goes forward with their own event in the midst of that. The Climate Fest website has been updated to reflect this and she has spent a lot of last week retooling some of the events but thinks they've got a good plan B in action now. Nations encouraged everyone to check out the Climate Festival website.

Gardner gave an update on the Climate Ambassador Program noting it was scheduled to launch at the end of the Climate Fest. They have the application developed, and the resource page is under development. She stated there will be two web pages for the Climate Ambassador Program, the first one will talk about the program itself, and be the front facing one that talks about how to get involved and have a link to the application on it. Then the second page is the resource page, which is the page that the ambassadors themselves will access during the training program. Fraser asked about Commissioners participating in the training and Gardner is really excited to say that they are working on a simultaneous launch that any Commissioner can participate in. Gardner stated they also made the decision last week that the AmeriCorps team that's coming on board starting September 24 will be doing a lot of energy efficiency work but because of COVID-19 that program in the spring had to look a little different and they're anticipating it looking a little different in the fall too. One of the things they'd like to do is have them take the ambassador training as well so that'll be a nice opportunity to expand the reach of that program early on.

Monroe stated they would continue to plug away on these items throughout the fall and the Commissioners should reach out to staff with questions or ideas on working through the list.

Krieger noted the list appears to need some input from the working groups and may need to be updated. Nations agreed and said they are looking at ways to organize the list so working groups can see areas where their input is needed. Hopefully more updates at the next meeting.

**Greenhouse Gas Inventory:** Nations stated she finally got all of the data for 2019 inventory and the data show that emissions did go down a little bit in 2019, a lot of that had to do with the MidAmerican renewable electricity percentages going up. Right now, they're at 61% and were at 51% for renewable energy for electricity. Nations uses 2010 as the baseline and showed the percent change from then. Right now, as of 2019, they have reduced 33% emissions, which is 12% off from the goal to reduce 45% by 2030. So that's good but they still have to remember that they're going to net zero which is 67% more reduction needed and even with MidAmerican and the University making those reductions. They can really see how the power plant has reduced since 2010, which is great. There is an impact on the buildings with industrial, commercial, and residential and then the power plant itself, but actually transportation has gone up and waste has gone up so if it wasn't for MidAmerican and U of I they might have it risen all areas. So they still need to focus on transportation as it is increasing, and the waste even though it's a small portion but that's also increasing. Nations next showed per capita since 2000 and they've been decreasing since 2008, but it's the lowest that they've ever been per capita.

Giannakouros noted the UI power plant will be testing this year to get the last boiler off coal and stated if that happens it could bring down the numbers 2% or 3%, but the good thing is they are down 86% in terms of their coal consumption already.

Giannakouros asked if Nations had estimates on what happens if MidAmerican does actually go to zero or if the City goes to zero before 2030? Nations said they do have estimates for that and it is in the Climate Action Plan. Electricity is now about 40% it was 42% so now it's less than 42% and a little tiny bit of that is from Eastern Iowa Light and Power. Nations explained that is a huge impact however the thing is the City has gotten a lot of heat, so to speak about, about resting on their laurels on what MidAmerican is doing but that's not the only thing, the City still has to work on transportation, natural gas, and waste.

Fraser wanted to echo what was already said about not becoming complacent or resting on their laurels and being really proactive before they get to the point where anyone can say "I told you so" and the City was letting MidAmerican do it all and letting the UI power plant do it all. He would like to have further discussions or a better understanding as a Commission to understand where the next realistic, relatively large, low hanging fruit is, and really get aggressive about going after it. He feels like it would be awfully easy to wait and see what happens instead of being really proactive. Fraser acknowledged the Commission is all about being proactive, and the Plan is proactive, but he wants to make sure that they don't get complacent on this.

Nations noted if they didn't track this every year, they wouldn't even know what's going on and she doesn't think the City's taking credit for these differences that MidAmerican and the University has made, but since the City is tracking it, they can credit it to their goals. Stated the next thing that is a huge impact is electric vehicles and getting off natural gas is really huge. It is a huge hurdle to get it out there for people's knowledge and information because people really think it won't work and are afraid of new technology. Electric vehicles are going to make a big impact on the 17% that's transportation. It's not just electric vehicles, the City is also hoping to double bus ridership. She added a few years ago, Iowa City had just a handful electric vehicles and now Johnson County has over 500 electric vehicles. So, the change is happening without doing anything so if the City can get the infrastructure and the codes and the policies and the incentives in place, it can really increase. Nations added as long as the electricity is renewable and people charge their EVs at night when people are not using as much electricity and so it doesn't put as much of a load on the grid as if they were charging it during the day, it's a win, win.

Krieger stated one of the challenges they're going to see and adjust to is that the batteries are just right. The electrons flowing in are either green or not, so eventually there has to be a system for knowing what the customers are taking from the grid and what that energy mix is. This has been a problem in California, they're trying to figure out now how to credit batteries for being green or not, because the batteries in and of themselves are not actually green.

Fraser stated he really loves the idea of EVs because they can create their own destiny in Iowa City however, he is concerned they can't control their own destiny because they can't, as an example, increase more or demand more restrictive standards that exceeds State requirements. They need to form collaborations to get more leverage with the State Legislature and get to a point where they can match ever decreasing standards that are increasing depending on what the State is willing to do and that's not going to happen unless there are a lot of people demanding it. Iowa City will need other cities to join them in promoting Climate Action Plans and making noise at the legislative level otherwise it won't work. Nations is hoping to work with other communities in eastern Iowa on Iowa City's EV readiness plan to form relationships. Added there is a consultant that they've hired to look at climate action plans in other cities. Cedar Rapids is working on a climate action plan, Dubuque is updating their climate action plan, Davenport and Cedar Falls will hopefully follow the group effort and it will all hopefully transfer into other things as well.

Monroe noted she has been working on the legislative priorities for City Council and communicating with our legislators and as part of that effort, as well as interest in furthering these adoption of State Codes, she has started reaching out to some community groups that might have aligned interests in also communicating with State Legislators. She is happy to take

suggestions on how to approach it in a more coordinated way.

Fraser thanked Monroe for bringing that up and stated he is probably not as aware of the legislative efforts as he should be but is grateful that the City is going in that direction because it has to happen. It's going to have to be in a lot of communities, screaming at their legislators to make this be a meaningful change.

Krieger asked what is the timeline? Monroe noted typically they do the legislative priorities in October and November but this would be a separate effort in communicating or coordinating with other community organizations who would be in support of adoption of the codes for residents or tenants or developers who could benefit from it and having them communicating with a like message to the State House when the session starts.

Nations added what they have been trying to work on projects that have the most impact, but communication and awareness are both very important. It is a big part of what's in the 100-day report, education and communication. She feels that with the climate festival and the ambassador program they're going to start seeing more education and communication. Nations also thinks energy efficiency is a very important thing to work on, especially with the industrial users, they're big users, and so the City can focus on that too.

Gardner stated regarding the EV discussion, one point of real interest to this Commission, especially given the ongoing discussions of equity, is that they made a recent change to the scope of the EV readiness project. In the original scope there was a component where they were going to do sighting analysis for early EV adopters but of course that is a way of saying people with a lot of disposable income. Staff asked that instead of doing that, they do a study about how they could move the needle for renters and folks living in multifamily housing units because of course it's a fairly straightforward matter if you want to buy an EV yourself and put a charger in your garage but if you are renting from someone or living in a multi-unit dwelling, you may not have those resources and EVs are not just great for the environment, they also represent huge savings for households that are able to adopt them. Therefore, the Commission needs to make sure that those savings are being made available as broadly as possible to all members of the community. She added that is something that's not contained in very many other EV readiness studies so is a real way the City has an opportunity to lead on this particular issue. Also, to bring it back to the Climate Fest that if someone is interested in EV's there is a link to sign up to the EV101 presentation which will include a discussion about how EVs compliment clean energy development specifically because of the time that they charge.

Krieger also thinks they need to work through as part of their efforts the barriers. It was seen when the derecho came through everybody lost power, so what does that mean for systems that are based on power, and people then revert back to natural gas or even with tree canopy and they don't want to plant trees near their house now. There are going to be some potential challenges there that they're going to have to address and overcome those perceptions and better to find other solutions, maybe solar generators.

Giannakouros agreed with Fraser and stated that low hanging fruit is probably the most impactful thing outside of the areas they've been progressing which is embodied energy and buildings and also the efficiency of those buildings. That is the next step and it feeds into those questions, if the grid is going to go renewable through MidAmerican, they want to beneficially electrify everything that they can electrify. So how will they be asking people to adopt specific

technologies, and how will they know they're going to make climate progress, etc.

Krieger said it's a bit of both, there has to be regulations and incentives and they keep advocating for more improvements with the policies, the regulation side. But he thinks until they can get there, they need to offer up the incentives to help push people there, whether it's a pilot program for offering education on air source heat pumps for example, or project pilot projects showing those the uses of those technologies. He feels they have to show people the way in they can make positive changes.

Tate asked about starting a study to look at renters and the bigger picture question about considering equity for different projects.

Gardner said she has been very active in the EV realm for the last several years, she did work with a utility looking at their EV readiness plan and how multifamily units fit in. She is really excited to see the City actually pick it up and run with it because it is a big gap in how EV readiness is addressed. In this particular case, part of the reason it's of interest is because they know that the proportion of renters is growing, and homeownership is declining. They also know that they have a high number of renters in Iowa City in particular and they also know, with intersectionality, folks usually don't have one barrier to contend with, there are multiple barriers. So if they look at income demographics, for example, in Iowa City, and they look at who's renting and thinking particularly about long term rentals, although of course student rentals are important as well, but thinking about long term rentals, the income household income, they're on average compared to the household income for homeowners, they see that renters have not always, but mostly have lower disposable income. So that's one way they're thinking about inequity is just reaching folks who can benefit more from the technology in terms of their own personal household budgets. But also, if they start tearing it apart and looking at the demographic data, they start seeing that there are, of course, implications for race and ethnicity. For the family structure, there is unfortunately more single parent head of household folks living in some of the rental units than otherwise. Gardner added of course with every demographic one can always find exception, but that was one of the reasons in particular they want the study to be fair. Tate appreciated that and said perhaps they could not just capture groups by choosing one demographic category but using some correlation tables with demographic data.

**Metrics – 2-year data:** Nations stated the goal here was to start to look at some more granular data since they completed the Climate Action Plan in 2018. They used that data to have a baseline and will now start to look at some annual data to see in the different five areas what's really happening and where do they need to focus on, what's getting better and what may not be. This first went through the Commission with the working groups and staff and it was kind of amazing how long this actually took to get all this information. For buildings, the renewable MidAmerican they've already talked about was easy, that's improving. Originally, they thought about trying to do the University of Iowa power plant renewables but that's much more difficult and she emailed them, and they have their renewables by weight and MMBtu. So, they decided that it would just be easier to do it in metric tons when looking at their emissions and tracking which have improved over just two years and from 2018-2019 the residential, commercial and industrial all of those have been improved too because of the MidAmerican wind energy. The last thing they also looked at were the municipal emissions from the City facilities which is tracked, all of their 300 some utility accounts, and those have improved too. So, the buildings are looking pretty good, for the most part because the two providers of energy are doing a good job. Next looking at transportation, the vehicle miles traveled has increased a little bit and bus

ridership went down a little bit. She added a column to show green for improvement and red for not improving over baseline was because sometimes if indicator data goes up its an improvement and sometimes if the indicator goes down it's an improvement. It turns out that the census has changed the way that they've done Transportation Mode Split data and they can't get those numbers every year, it might be three years or five years, so the last time that they did that was 2018. She added one would think it would be really easy to find out the number of registered EVs in Johnson County, but she probably spent more time on that than anything else because it's much more difficult. She called the County, she called the State and she called the Clean Cities Coalition, and nobody claims to have that number. She did find out eventually that currently Johnson County, as of 2019, has 587 electric vehicles. They are expecting that to increase over time and will continue to track those vehicles. Next, the miles per gallon of City vehicles. That was really interesting, they got the data for the annual fuel usage for City vehicles, like buses, garbage trucks and dump trucks, the mpg average was pretty low. This is something they must track internally and it's good for them to know but the majority of their vehicles use quite a bit of fuel and they're not passenger vehicles. They also decided to track the electric and hybrid City vehicles. Next Nations stated the landfill tonnage has gone up which is not a good sign, but curbside recycling and organics has also gone up, which is good. She noted tree canopy is another very difficult data point to get and they are still working on that one. The grants for stormwater best management practices were tracked, that's a voluntary program, the number of new trees planted by the City that's by the City for the City on City property. The Climate Action at Work Awards and ambassadors weren't set up yet but hopefully it will give them a start. Nations also added that many of these things they are tracking can be totally derailed by all sorts of other things that have nothing to do with climate like COVID or derechos. It may have something to do with climate, like extreme weather, but also the economy can have an impact. If the economy goes up or down, people's waste goes up and down. So many things can really have an impact on these numbers. This is a good start though to really look into the details of people's actions and the impact of some of these details can have on our emissions.

Krieger asked what are the stormwater grants, are they just awarded within the City? Nations replied it is a grant available just within Iowa City limits for residents. She added that's another thing that goes up and down with the economy, if the economy's bad, it's a matching grant award and so people don't have the money they aren't going to do it. It's a matching grant for things like permeable pavers, rain gardens, soil amendments, all those type of projects.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Johnson Clean Energy District – Cheryl Miller:** Miller stated she is also joined by Warren McKenna who is the formerly of the Farmers Electric Coop in Frytown and the developer of the solar farms there. They are here today to talk about a proposed solar energy planning system study for Iowa City and Johnson County. The context for this is that last April, the waterworks solar project proposal came before the City Council and a number of council members emphasize the importance of a big picture and to look at solar energy to help educate and inform the council members about what the demand was, what the loads were, what all the issues, feasibility issues, costs, benefits, roadblocks, etc., of bringing more solar energy into Iowa City and a number of folks watching that discussion really thought that made absolute sense, that some kind of larger picture was needed in order to advance solar energy here. So over the summer, Craig Mosier, also with the Johnson Clean Energy District and Miller recruited McKenna and David Osterberg from The Policy Project to get the ball rolling and start thinking about what a study such as the council members were envisioning might look like. They put

some concepts together and then started going around and talking to city and county officials and staff, university folks and other people knowledgeable about solar energy in the area. They then came up with what they think of as a pre-feasibility study, it's not an engineering study, it's not a deep economic analysis of solar energy, it's the big picture. They looked at what are the different options, what's the demand, what are the opportunities and feasibilities, sites, where could they be located and what could be the benefits for users. Miller explained there's basically two categories of solar energy. There's on-site, PV panels on roofs of buildings that provide energy to that building primarily and then there's the centralized, 1 megawatt - 200 megawatt solar farms or community solar. It was that centralized on the grid solar project that was proposed at waterworks. That was a three-megawatt project on about 18 or 19 acres of land. So that's where their focus started and as they talked to people, they decided that it was important to include both in the study of this kind, both on-site solar and decentralized projects. So this study would then look at the feasibility in terms of connectivity to the existing transmission and distribution network and the compatibility with all the requirements of a solar energy infrastructure and agreements that would need to be made with MidAmerican or with power companies, it would look at the different sites, either on private land or public land that could be used and where there was willing landowners to bring an installation or put a solar project together and it would look at users. They initially were thinking primarily of larger users, industrial commercial sites where a big solar array could generate a lot of power, but as the conversations evolved they started really thinking also about how a solar energy program, a well-designed one, could meet some of the social equity goals of the community as well such as a rebate program that would target particular neighborhoods, low income neighborhoods or multifamily affordable housing. Miller was recently given a copy of the equity impact review tool to look through and see how that framework could be useful in thinking about also incorporating social equity aspects into a solar energy program here and kind of information, combined with a really good public process that would reach out to businesses and governments, landowners and consumers and get information to them and get input from them about what kinds of projects would be most successful here, they think is very important.

Miller stated in the agenda packet they put together a concept paper and a scope of work. She noted the one in the packet is a little outdated and McKenna will update them on the scope of work and what something like this might cost. When they started out this project, they thought it would be county wide and include any community, University Heights, Coralville, Iowa City, and other communities that would be interested in solar energy of any kind. They have come to the belief, however, that maybe the first time out limiting to Iowa City would be a better, more efficient, expeditious way to move forward. Then they could focus on one set of decision makers, one set of goals and speed this up.

McKenna he was called upon for the technical background on this stuff since he has a utility background. He noted they are now on version four of this draft of the scope of work and it's broken down identifying Lows Site Solar Systems utility scale. McKenna will highlight the economics, legal, regulatory, and public information process. As Miller noted they did narrow the study down to just Iowa City and they estimate the study's going to cost about \$30,000. This model is based on more of an inside out model where they produce and buy local versus an outside in to satisfy your credits or your energy credits. He is not sure what the City's goals are but down in the Kalona area, most of it's about being local so one of the focuses of this is community solar and how to build possibly large community solar projects.

Miller and McKenna can take any questions, but just wanted to end by saying that they're trying

to figure out now that they have this scope figured out as well as handing it off to two partners and pull together to do a study like this is their next step. They're hoping that this is a short study at six months and hope to get started later this year and have it completed and reported to the City by late spring of next year. Miller did add Johnson County has expressed an interest in this kind of a project as well as the Iowa City School District, University of Iowa, and MidAmerican Energy would also need to be part of this study. They'd like to go to the City Council as soon as possible with this proposal to get it started and understand this Commission would be reviewing this to be able to advise the Council so they're interested in how they can work with the Commission.

Fraser stated assuming they found funding for the study, what do they expect the results of the study to be and what's the next step after that. Miller stated what they tried to figure out was if they could start a community conversation among all the possible participants in something like this and be able to collect some of the real baseline information, like where are some sites where solar energy solar farms could be built, where are the big loads, what was the transmission infrastructure, all of that information would then open up the possibilities of this. She suggested to start looking at the fringe areas, they could start thinking about a solar project there. That would really be a way to bring a lot of partnerships together to have the basic information needed to then say, okay that spot looks like real possible areas for development and then hopefully over the next few years start developing them.

McKenna mentioned it's more of being prepared for the other pressures that are going to come from local, not necessarily from the outside, to do more community solar primarily, or put more solar in Iowa City, for instance, or more solar in Johnson County. He anticipates probably as much solar is going to go in Iowa as there is currently wind and most of that will be sited sporadically not one location. There's about 100 megawatts going in down in Wapello, that's probably the largest spot in Iowa. Iowa City could easily have 1-2-3-4 megawatts of solar sited within the Iowa City area, Johnson County area. He doesn't know what's currently there, it's probably insignificant really of what could be done. The growth in solar will come from local.

Fraser said getting the money is a point of resistance, but beyond money, or if they had the money, where's the resistance to this going to come from, what are the other challenges to doing this. McKenna responded mostly regulatory, probably some of the community projects are going to have to be interconnected with MidAmerican so that's going to take a cooperation between the existing utilities. Everyone is going to have to be at the table as well as the City and University and public pressure.

Krieger asked if they are advocating for community owned solar, are they trying to find a way to build out some centralized solar in Johnson County. He asks because if it's owned by MidAmerican it is his understanding that they went through a process with the City recently where they worked really hard to identify a site and it fell through because the Iowa City community didn't want that land use to be changed. So, the City has been through a process where they've had the analysis of a MidAmerican cooperation with Iowa City. McKenna agreed and said that is exactly what he is referring to, and it fell through. That part is most troubling for him right now.

Leckband agreed, he stated the biggest roadblock was the aesthetic concern, that was primarily what seemed to be the driving factor and the reaction. He was not project manager on that, he was tangentially involved, but he doesn't think really anybody thought about the huge aesthetic

question, especially on a sound project. He feels that really underlines the need for public input and public engagement. The adjacent landowners and the community need to be onboard, whether it is a public space or not, if somebody doesn't like a field turning into something like that or perhaps their view shed is affected. One of the takeaways is just engagement and buy in from the community and the neighbors.

Krieger agreed and said that's one of the big highlights they've seen is that a study like this potentially could outline or show what some of the options are. In the previous case it seemed like for everyone that there was only one option being presented and a study like this potentially could showcase what are the different opportunities and allow for a public input or feedback process. The study can then take into account all the comments and make improvements, potentially, to the design, so that it was more accepting.

Krieger also noted the other part of his question was if the City is only looking at solar PV. Some of the comments they've had were around community-wide power turning more electricity into renewable. He noted there's a difference between peak and non-peak demand there but have they also considered incorporating solar thermal as part of the study or battery storage or just different elements that might be more unique, and could be more piloted in this community that would fill a gap that they don't currently have.

Miller stated they did not, they kind of took off from where the waterworks project was and started thinking what some other places are where something like this could be built, private land, public land, or whatever. As they have gone through the summer discussions a number of things have come up and are now thinking this is probably phase one and phase two of this project would be to figure out what is the most basic information in order to be able to move forward in the in the near future with a project like a waterworks, only something that's going to be more socially acceptable. McKenna stated he is primarily solar, so that'd be that's why they brought him into it.

Krieger noted he was just thinking more about trying to supplant natural gas usage and to decrease that is going to be one of their major areas, as they just noticed from the emissions reporting.

Krieger noted the last process for the waterworks park project didn't have didn't come in front of this Commission and it didn't have a lot of public engagement opportunity. He asked if they are looking for the Commission to provide a recommended support as a Commission to Council on whatever it is that's going to be presented to Council.

Miller stated when they visited with several Iowa City Council members and staff they recommended coming to the Commission and presenting this idea to get an endorsement before going to the Council.

Krieger noted the Commission didn't have the most current version, Nations just emailed out the newest version, so they can continue to look at that and perhaps look at making a recommendation at the next meeting.

Giannakouros agreed they need to be sure to remember how important public input is, or they will run back into a similar situation with MidAmerican water plant project, where they've done all this work, and haven't had on or understood the community input piece, and so any kind of a

study must express a very clear effort to figure out what areas are actually going to be from a community sense politically palatable. They need to know why the public didn't want that site at waterworks to happen, was it view shed or dog walking or whatever, but not knowing was a blind spot and that's why the project failed. A few people in the community said they weren't consulted about it and they weren't happy with it.

Krieger suggested taking into consideration that they are running at close to out of time today so perhaps they take this up again at their next meeting and at that point everyone will have reviewed the revised version.

Soglin agreed and said everyone could just review it on their own and if they still have questions that need to be discussed to maybe send them ahead of time and perhaps have Miller come back to the meeting so she could potentially answer them.

### **Discussion of making a formal statement similar to Human Rights Commission:**

Nations stated this was a carryover from the previous few meetings where there was some discussion that that the group wanted to make a formal statement. She is wondering if the Commission wanted to go forward with putting together something and who would do it.

Krieger said they were maybe looking for a champion to draft something, similar to what the Human Rights Commission had put out, but more specific things related to the actual Climate Action Plan or something like that. They probably just need someone to look at it, champion it and draft something for review.

Tate asked what the need for this is, he is just generally more along the lines of tangible actions as opposed to another statement. He is not meaning to poopoo this idea but is genuinely asking about the benefit of making a statement.

Nations acknowledged that's a really good question and thinks the benefit of making the statement would be to show Council and the members of the public that this Commission is behind choosing to use equity to make decisions and has that as an intent.

Soglin stated they discussed a brief statement that encapsulates what maybe the Commission wanted to say that some members had raised early June, shortly after the murder of George Floyd and certainly many other deaths and what was happening in the community. She does personally would agree she doesn't want to be spending a lot of time drafting something being labeled as performative and not making real change. However, making a short statement, maybe two sentences, essentially, however, might be worth doing if that's what the group would like.

Tate suggested maybe it's not to be written to another audience, maybe it's written to themselves as a reminder to themselves, like being reminded of the golden rule every now and then, that this is how they operate.

Soglin volunteered to work with Gardner then to draft a sentence or two to present at the next meeting if that's agreeable to everybody.

### **Equity considerations:**

Nations stated with the equity focus on the Accelerating Iowa City's Climate Action, the update had a whole column for the equity focus and the equity considerations were going to be looked at by the equity working group.

### **Working group evaluation:**

Krieger had sent a note out to all the Commission members to have a discussion around what is the work of the working groups, how will they operate and what does that look like. Will it be different for each of the working groups, each one has a different level of engagement just because of the different things they're working on. So, moving forward it'd be good to have a conversation around what is working right now, and should they make any changes. He would also encourage when they are looking at the accelerated actions report it'd be good for each of the working groups to take a look at where things are that they should be focusing on and are there ways to either advise on those things or provide necessary recommendations. Also are there things beyond that report that the working groups should also be working on. So he challenges the working groups or this Commission to think about what are some of the tasks that are related to those accelerated actions, specific implementation initiatives, that the working groups could also be working on that maybe haven't focused on yet.

Fraser stated he feels they may need a separate special meeting of this group to talk about a couple of these topics because they're never going to spend the reasonable allocated time during a regular meeting.

Soglin thinks they could spend about 30 minutes to discuss this at the next meeting and wondered if the conversation is about the format of the group versus the actual topics. Fraser stated the answer is both. Soglin needs to understand why he is saying it's both because in terms of the building working group they are meeting every other week for an hour and a half and that's actually part of the issue for some of them, how much time they're spending, and yet to have another meeting about meetings concerns her so she would rather try to do it in an efficient way at the next meeting, and people come prepared, think about it beforehand, and come very prepared about what their concerns are and do kind of the analysis that Krieger asked in the email. They could have a very fruitful discussion next time in like 30 minutes and then not have to schedule another meeting about meetings.

Nations said she asked Krieger to put this on the agenda because just from talking to different people from different meetings, there are lots of differences and questions on what they are supposed to be doing. She added from all the different working groups meetings she has attended there at different levels. Also, the work can't just come from staff time, especially now that they're back down to just one staff (Gardner) after next month, she's just not going to be able to attend all the all the working group meetings. Nations added this is the only Commission that has working groups and she thinks it's a great idea, but it's been a year now since the Commission was formed and the working groups some are more successful and have a little more focus because the topic. Perhaps they can get more members so that personally

Commission members don't have to be in charge of these meetings and could put somebody from the community in charge of some of these, some of these tasks.

Overall Nations just wanted to use the best use of their time and is really thinking about it in a deeper way, what the working groups should be doing and what they want to do, and maybe some of them could take a break, and some of them could beef up. Perhaps they just to think about it in a deeper way and redirect to make it more meaningful.

Gardner stated another way of thinking about working groups is that for other boards and commissions, they're often project focused and that might be a useful frame in this discussion. If in the next month, each working group talked about what is the project that they're focused on, what is it that they want to accomplish, and what's the timeframe for that. If they don't have that, do they want to continue meeting or do they want to form as the projects arise or are needed. She feels each working group should take stock and then report back to this meeting next month.

#### **UPDATE ON WORKING GROUPS:**

Tabled due to time constraints.

#### **RECAP OF ACTIONABLE ITEMS FOR COMMISSION, WORKING GROUPS, AND STAFF:**

To recap, Nations stated they will have a new member hopefully next time and she will make sure they're oriented with all the appropriate information that they need.

She will look into how they can pull out the items for the working group for the update and add working group discussion to the next meeting

She will put solar on the next agenda.

Nations, Gardner and Soglin will work on a short equity statement.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Krieger made a motion to adjourn.

Giannakouros seconded the motion.

A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

CLIMATE ACTION COMMISSION  
 ATTENDANCE RECORD  
 2020

NAME	TERM EXP.	1/6/2020	2/10/2020	3/9/2020	5/4/2020	6/1/2020	7/6/2020	8/3/2020	9/8/2020
Madeleine Bradley	12/31/2022	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X
John Fraser	12/31/2020	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stratis Giannakouros	UI Rep	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Grace Holbrook	12/31/2021	O/E	O/E	O/E	X	X	X	X	O/E
Kasey Hutchinson	12/31/2022	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GT Karr	12/31/2020	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Matt Krieger	12/31/2020	X	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X
Jesse Leckband	MidAmerican Rep	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X
Katie Sarsfield	12/31/2020	X	X	O/E	X	X	O/E	X	--
Becky Soglin	12/31/2022	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eric Tate	12/31/2021	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X

KEY: X = Present  
 O = Absent  
 O/E = Absent/Excused  
 NM = No Meeting  
 -- -- = Not a Member

IOWA CITY CLIMATE ACTION COMMISSION  
JULY 6, 2020 – 3:30 PM – FORMAL MEETING  
ELECTRONIC MEETING

**Electronic Meeting**

*(Pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8)*

An electronic meeting is being held because a meeting in person is impossible or impractical due to concerns for the health and safety of Commission members, staff and the public presented by COVID-19.

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Madeleine Bradley, Stratis Giannakouros, Grace Holbrook, John Fraser, GT Karr, Matt Krieger, Katie Sarsfield, Becky Soglin,
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Kasey Hutchinson, Jesse Leckband, Eric Tate
- STAFF PRESENT:** Juli Seydell-Johnson, Sarah Gardner, Ashley Monroe, Brenda Nations
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Benjamin Graham, Cheryl Miller, Lisa Stark, Meg Smolka

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL:**

None

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Krieger called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF JUNE 1, 2020 MINUTES:**

Fraser moves to approve the minutes from June 1, 2020.

Holbrook seconds the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion passes 7-0 (Giannakouros not present for the vote).

**PUBLIC COMMENT OF ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

Benjamin Graham gave quick update on the school district progress and climate actions. He stated it has been relatively slow because of the COVID response stuff and most of their admin teams are focused on that. They did get a little climate action stuff in front of the Board in early June and facilities management is going to start the process of looking for a consultant that might be able to

guide them on solar as well as wind energy and things of that nature. They are currently putting together a list of qualifications.

Lisa Stark stated she is a Green Iowa AmeriCorps member serving with the Iowa City Community School District and unfortunately because of school closures, they're not able to do a whole lot with the School District's Climate Action Plan, although they are supporting school gardens right now and that's their big push for this summer.

Meg Smolka is also an AmeriCorps member working in the School District here in Iowa City. She didn't have anything specific to share with the group but is just really excited that this even exists at all.

### **UPDATE FROM JULI SEYDELL-JOHNSON, PARKS AND REC DIRECTOR ON TREE REMOVAL AND INCREASING PRAIRIE PLANTINGS:**

Seydell-Johnson gave an update on tree removals and prairie grass plantings or native grass planting areas beginning with some basic information and then will answer questions. First Seydell-Johnson acknowledged some of the Commission members have received questions from the public about the removals of trees in various locations, and while she is not sure about specific locations, she will go through their process and in what happens when they have to remove a tree. First, she noted they do not like to remove trees if they don't absolutely have to. They are planting roughly two trees for every one tree that they must take out. Seydell-Johnson stated there are sometimes when they do have to remove a tree in one of the parks or the street ways because it's a safety hazard and must be removed immediately if there's an there's a danger of it falling, or if it has fallen, hopefully not a person, car, other property. They take those trees down and noted in those street trees there is a large number of the ash borer trees right now that are showing high levels of decline and are becoming a safety hazard. Seydell-Johnson noted in the ash tree case, they are beautiful large trees and some of them look healthier than others but every single one of them that they've taken down has been rotten in the middle and pose a hazard with the next windstorm or storms. Another way that a tree becomes a safety hazard is it impedes stormwater management and a lot of people don't realize that many of the City's parks actually function as a large part of the City's stormwater management areas. Scott Park Willow Creek, Villa Park on the westside and several others are park land when they're dry, but during rain events are there to collect stormwater and get it off the private properties and down the road. Therefore, in a lot of cases they have to remove trees in waterways that have become overgrown in order to facilitate the stormwater management and that would be the case along the trail in Scott Park and along Willow Creek. When a tree is being removed for safety hazards or because of a maintenance activity for stormwater management, the City typically will notify homeowners that are directly adjacent to the property line of where it's happening. They don't do a large public input process because it's not really an option that these trees come out, they're coming out because of other conditions around them.

Seydell-Johnson noted another reason they have to take trees out is occasionally for a public improvement, whether that be for a street change or sidewalk change. Occasionally some of the trees have come out in parks as well to make way for other improvements but they typically try to move the improvement like a new shelter or restroom to such a location where it doesn't affect the tree, or they don't have to remove a tree. Seydell-Johnson stated they always avoid removing a tree if they can and if they have to make a choice on trees to remove, they choose first trees that are showing other issues or levels of decline. Occasionally they can replant trees and move them to another location. They've done that with a number of the park projects, taking out the smaller trees

and either move them to a temporary location and bring them back or move them to a different park and replant them in those parks. So sometimes one may see a tree leave an area in one park, but it's not actually being taken away completely, it's just being relocated to a different area.

Seydell-Johnson reiterated that they do replace trees and typically in most years they plant about twice as many trees as are removed. They've been very fortunate to have a lot of funding and actually have more funding right now and are continuing to look for ways to either contract out more tree planting, working with volunteers or find other ways to get more trees planted. They know that there is a real need for planting trees in areas that have a large number of rental housing units, or in lower income neighborhoods. Seydell-Johnson noted this has been a very difficult outreach area for them as they have tried in the past and oftentimes if a property owner is not in the area, they don't necessarily have any incentive to let the City plant a tree that they know that their tenants may or may not take care of. So that's one of the areas that they're still looking for advice and working on different approaches to find more ways to get more trees planted in some of those areas. They also really aim for a diversity of planting and that has been one of the difficulties this year, in particular this spring, because they want to get a variety of species of trees to plant but they rely on tree nurseries around the entire region and with COVID issues they've had a real shortage of trees.

Nations noted last month when the Commission met folks were talking about the tree removal along Ralston Creek and there were some specific questions about how that ties in with the creeks and the stormwater management and there was a question about removing trees along streams holding back bank erosion. Seydell-Johnson stated that conversation was about an area near Scott Park and was a joint project with the public works department. Last winter, they had crews out there and they did clear out a number of trees along the creek to open up the creek. It's been replanted with prairie grasses at this point, which they think will be a better solution for a couple things. First of all, it will stabilize the banks and secondly, it'll allow them to actually get down and monitor the creek and keep it free and clear for water to flow through it. One of the problems in that area continues to be snags and things that block the water flow along Ralston Creek. Therefore, being able to get down there for maintenance and being able to see the creek is something that's very helpful. The City also took some trees out along Court Street at that same time, they were old trees left over from a fence row and there was still barbed wire running through a number of them. They just felt cleaning those out was the best option there as well.

Krieger mentioned a priority for replanting in certain neighborhoods, are there other locations that will be prioritized for future plantings. Seydell-Johnson replied that one of their bigger priorities right now are some of the older neighborhoods just north of downtown. Those areas have been devastated by the emerald ash borer and they've had a lot of large trees taken out there.

Soglin noted Seydell-Johnson mentioned that right now they have a fair amount of funds to get the trees, but there's this limitation of access and staff, understandably, to plant them. Also mentioned was for some rental homes oftentimes it's a difficult placement because the owner may not live here and the tenant may not take care of the tree. Soglin wondered if there are any way that funds could be used sort of as an incentive. Seydell-Johnson acknowledged that is some of the conversations they've been having of what will it take beyond just having the funds to plant the trees. They've talked about maybe an urban outreach for teens or young people that could maybe do that. They've worked some with the AmeriCorps teams that have done energy audits, to talk to homeowners about tree planting when they go out and do energy audits. It's something that they're going to have to come up with several creative solutions and work towards it. Seydell-Johnson also noted that the lack of staffing due to COVID is at tree nurseries, not a lack of City staff. The tree nurseries rely on

immigrant populations oftentimes to come in and work during the summers and they've had issues with getting enough people to work at the tree nurseries around the Midwest. Hopefully it is just a temporary issue for this year.

Soglin stated they also need to talk about prairies and wondered if the City could do maybe a webinar or zoom meeting with folks who are asking these questions, and share information, and then have time for questions and answers. Seydell-Johnson suggested any persons that are asking questions can come to Seydell-Johnson or to Tyler Baird, the new park superintendent. They have had public discussions through the Parks Commission, and she thinks that would actually be the venue where they would do a presentation and allow for question and answers. In addition, on the City website, under Parks and Recreation, there's a page called master plans and it has updates on park plans. Some of the resources that they have available through that page is tree inventory, where one can see what kind of trees and where they are, also what the condition rating was at last inventory, two years ago. They also have a natural areas plan, which she'll talk about a little bit in the prairie planting areas discussion but they had a natural areas inventory of all of the open space land a few years ago and prioritized the activities that they are doing now to improve the natural areas, whether that be prairies, wetlands, or forested areas. This is any area that's not a real active recreation use. Of course, the park master plan is also on that webpage and that looks at active use park areas. Finally, there was quite a bit of FAQ main information on the prairie establishment and that's all online there including maps of what parks have areas that will be designated for new prairies, this fall and next spring, so the website actually does have quite a bit information. However, Seydell-Johnson is always available via email or phone call to answer further questions.

Fraser thanked Seydell-Johnson for pointing out the website. He noted it strikes him the probably the people complaining that the City's cutting down trees are not aware there is obviously a very good reason. He wondered if maybe that's something else that the ambassadors can do is aim people to the website. He feels a big ambassadorial responsibility will be to inform the public and the public won't always remember the answer, and perhaps they'll want to refer that answer to a neighbor or to a friend. One of the biggest things ambassadors can do in his opinion is to be really, really knowledgeable about the website and what's on the website related to climate action, etc. and to get people accustomed to coming to the City website. He thinks we assume that everyone knows they can come to the City website, but even he has trouble finding stuff on the City website, much less expecting someone who's never been there just to pop on and see what's going on with trees.

Seydell-Johnson agreed and wanted to re-emphasize they don't like to take out trees if they don't absolutely have to. Sometimes they have trees that have been planted in unfortunate locations that they take away from another purpose for that location like the stormwater management and they have to remove them in order to provide for the overall utility of the area. Again, the number one reason though that they take out trees is because they have become a safety hazard. Trees have a lifespan and as they reach the end of that lifespan, they succumb off into diseases or structural damage. In the parks kids are playing on the trees all the time so they definitely want the kids to be climbing the trees and enjoying themselves and at the same time be safe. The overall message should be that they have a forestry staff that cares very deeply for the trees and they're just as heartbroken as the neighbors and residents when they have to take down one of these big trees in anywhere in the City.

Krieger stated something else that might be good for communication would be to include in the sustainability newsletter from the City a short snippet and directs people to the website.

Seydell-Johnson next talked a little bit about the prairie planting areas. As mentioned earlier they have a natural areas plan that was developed, along with Applied Ecological Services consultants a couple years ago, that included public input, work by the Park Commission and the City Council at that time, and it prioritized restoring natural areas throughout the community. Sometimes these are parks but sometimes there are other areas that Parks and Rec manages for the City such as a well site or some other public land that has been acquired and maybe isn't being used. The natural area plan looked at all those and prioritized areas that had fairly high ecological scores or already had a good head start on having good native populations in them and prioritized the work in those areas. They have done a lot of work at Hickory Hill Park, at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area, Ryerson's Woods and in the Sand Prairie area, because they determined that those were high priority areas where the resources will make the most impact. Sycamore Greenway would be another one that they look at and Waterworks Prairie Park as well. Seydell-Johnson stated from that they also looked at other areas within the parks that could be converted into prairie grass, and they did this for a variety of different reasons. First of all, it will help with less mowing and it is just not the amount of work the mowers are doing, but also to trailer equipment all over the City causes more carbon emissions and more use of gas powered engines. And yes, while it's more efficient for staff they feel that the less mowing is also a better option overall. So, they looked at some areas where they could provide natural buffers. They had some areas where there were safety considerations in parks, they felt like providing a buffer area between say, a busy street and a play area with some native prairie grasses would be one way instead of a fence to provide a natural barrier. That helps stabilize the soil along a lot of the creek sides. Also, as they clean out those creek sides of some of the larger trees that have been snarling them up, they're able to replace that with prairie grasses and allow them once again access to the creek but also help stabilize the ground. Prairie grasses help with storm water infiltration on site and they provide a lot wildlife habitat. Seydell-Johnson noted they often hear when a tree comes down that they're hurting the wildlife, and the birds won't have a place but what they found is a mature prairie provides more habitat than a single tree or even a few trees for number of wildlife. Now that can be good or bad depending on what one thinks of the wildlife because some of them are snakes and moles and small creatures, but also Iowa's bird, the Goldfinch, relies on prairie grass for their habitat. So, they feel like it is a really good wildlife habitats and will be soon starting with killing off some more of the turfgrass areas and replacing those 18 different sites around the City with prairie grasses. Seydell-Johnson did not have a specific list of grasses they're using because the mix is really specific to the conditions in each park, some of them are more of a wetland area, so they're getting a more wetland mix. Some are on hillsides, which have been difficult to mow and aren't used for active recreation other than sledding in the winter, and they can still be used for sledding. So, there's several different mixes that will be planted throughout the City. Seydell-Johnson said they been really fortunate to have additional funding to hire contractors to come in and do some of that work and they're also getting some new specialized equipment for the natural areas staff to be able to do more efficient management of the forested areas and the prairie areas in the years to come. Seydell-Johnson acknowledged the City hasn't had the best track record of taking care of some of the prairie areas in the past, but she has been here about five years and believes it has improved every year since she's been here. They have more staff excited about prairie plantings and are certified to do prairie burns and have used the help of AmeriCorps to plant and remove species along the way.

Krieger had a question related to the public input process, it was mentioned that along with the tree removal the City notifies the adjacent homeowners for specific projects but is there is there a public input process established for review or input feedback on any specific project or just the overall plan. Seydell-Johnson replied that there was public input during the natural areas plan, as well as presentations made to the Park Commission and Council and public input that way. In general, when

they do a park renovation for active use areas or aesthetic changes to a park where there are options for the public to consider they have neighborhood meetings where they send out letters to a half mile radius around each park. They also announce through social media, and tend to do them with Party in the Parks or other events so they can get a fairly good group of neighbors and have a lot of good neighborhood input for things like playgrounds, shelters, pathways, etc. When the change is simply an area of the park, a landscaping change or maintenance change, removing a tree or in this case changing some of the underused areas to prairie they don't necessarily do a public input process for that. The reason they don't do a public input for each individual change is because it's following the natural areas plan and they have several criteria for choosing where the prairie areas are. Seydell-Johnson acknowledged that tripped them up, obviously a little bit with the prairie areas, some of the neighborhoods were more not wanting the prairies than others, so they made changes after the fact, but they did have a good process and a good amount of criteria for choosing those locations in the first place.

Seydell-Johnson doesn't see larger projects coming up in the next few years, but they'll definitely be looking at ways of having better communication in the future.

Seydell-Johnson acknowledged there was also a question about some of the private lots, like the residential lots, that they maintain, along Taft Speedway and Normandy wondering if they could plant more prairie in those areas and the answer to that is that they maintain those as a neighborhood and although we have some smaller prairie establishments in the Normandy area they have not extended that to larger areas and those vacant lots. They just mow those because they're part of the neighborhood. This is the same with some of the lots along the river on Taft Speedway, the City had actually said that they would like to make those prairies but the neighbors there were not in favor of that so they will be mowed to blend into the neighborhood.

Soglin asked if there is any kind of comparison to keep track of what is the cost both in terms of dollars of the upkeep versus if it had been in prairie, and also the greenhouse gas differences. Soglin noted that if they can show over time that the cost is high, then maybe there's a way to appeal to the neighborhood or there's some kind of other trade off, to the benefit is to the community as a whole. Seydell-Johnson replied that's definitely possible as those are areas, they actually contract out for mowing so they can very quickly calculate the cost. Soglin said she was looking for the actual dollar and also what the accounting of the greenhouse gas emissions maybe.

Nations noted that's something that they're going to be looking at in the recent grant that Iowa City is a part of from USDN (Urban Sustainability Directors Network) and they're going to be looking at the carbon sequestration from trees and as much as they can in prairies and they're going to be looking at some of those as well as how much carbon is sequestered from area gardens that use compost added to them.

Sarsfield had a quick question about the prairies, are they really only focused on City owned land or is the City looking to partner with any institutions within the City. Is there any sort of outreach to encourage private companies to donate their land to prairie. Seydell-Johnson stated up to this point, they have been concentrated only on City owned property. Interestingly, though, since the Council discussions on this a few months ago, they have been approached by a couple different private property owners, homeowner associations, asking if the City would be interested in in doing some prairie on their areas. The City has not pursued those at this time, with COVID and everything else happening right now they don't have the capacity at this time. But they are keeping a list of those so in the future it can be explored.

Nations asking about planting cover crops. Seydell-Johnson said they typically do that anytime they have disturbed soil and they do it as quickly as possible so that they have covered crops until other things grow in. With regards to doing cover crops over the community garden areas, Seydell-Johnson noted that is an interesting question and doesn't have an answer, it's something that they would need to discuss with the people that have been renting the garden plots as they're pretty particular about what the City does during the offseason. She did acknowledge however that the soil could be vastly improved through composting or something in those garden plots.

Krieger thanked Seydell-Johnson for her presentation.

### **STAFF/COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Action Items from last meeting:** Nations asked if the recap of actionable items from the last meeting worked well, they were in the minutes and also emailed out to everyone right after the meeting. There were no objections from the Commission.

Nations also wondered if the zoom directions were an issue as it is unusual that Giannakouros and Tate aren't here and was wondering if it didn't get on their calendars. Nations acknowledged more than one person had some issue as they have to do it in that way that people have to register for the meeting and cannot get in without the registration link. Nations just wants to make sure the meeting gets on everyone's calendar. It is a complicated process and different than other zoom meetings but is necessary so they don't get zoom bombed. If anybody is not getting that notice of agenda and registration links, let her know.

Next, Nations pointed out it was added to the agenda about the public comments so that people don't think that the Commissioners are being rude by not addressing them, it states that Commissioners can't engage with the public.

Nations did email the Grannies about the parks question with the cover crops and will follow up with them on what Seydell-Johnson shared with the Commission today. Soglin updated the co-benefits sheet and it is in the Google Doc. Nations will make sure it is in the Commission packet next time so the public will know that it's there too.

Nations is still working on locating the website for transportation where one can see how it offsets greenhouse gases. She did share with the Commission the two Gazette stories about communication. She also called Johnson County motor vehicles and asked about the data for the electric cars, which was kind of interesting. They said they don't have that data, the State does, and it is by county. Nations found the link with the information, it's a quarterly update of how many electric vehicles are registered and as of right now it's like, something like 484. The information does go away at the end of the year, so we will have to keep track of that.

The online version of the action item list should have been posted today or if it's not, it should be online for the public tomorrow. It will be updated every other month and posted online. The working groups were supposed to think about public input methods, and any input on metrics. The discussion on equity will be given later in the working groups updates and questions for the Parks Department were just answered by Seydell-Johnson's presentation.

### **Discussion of updated work plan for “Accelerating Iowa City’s Climate Actions”:**

Nations stated she took the Excel spreadsheet with the phase one actions and for 35 actions from the Accelerating Iowa City's Climate Action and rearranged those in a way to see the status of each. First of all they are ordered in what month we were going to start working on those and so you can see the first one in buildings is like April, May, June, July and in that order. For the actions that we have been currently working on, we gave two different types of status, some that are in development (shaded green), which staff are working on getting ready to roll out but not quite underway for the public to use, such as the realtor work that the buildings group is working on. The other type (in darker green) are things actually in progress and counted as underway. So, all of the actions shaded green we're actually working on but are in various stages of development.

The action times in yellow are not started yet, because they can't start all 35 at once. However, all of these were supposed to be started by the end of the calendar year and of the 35, they only have seven that are not started yet. Nations added this is for all City staff to work on, and they are making sure that they are actually implementing what they said would. They also have the equity focus on the ones that it applied to and will show that they are considering those in our actions as well.

Nations wanted to highlight a few of the items. First of all, last month Wendy Ford talked about the Green Business Recognition Program and they are about ready to accept applications for that, it should go online in the next day or two. If anyone knows of any businesses that you think should apply, or you would recommend, you can either recommend them or let them know that they should apply. They are still finalizing the funds, but there should be a \$500 recognition fund for them, and they really want to promote the businesses that are doing a great job and are working consistently towards the things in the Climate Action Plan. The EV readiness plan which you've been hearing about for a long time, is very close to having a signed agreement. Nations had hoped to finish the greenhouse gas inventory for 2019 but still needs a few numbers from other people, so hopefully next month she can give an update on that.

Krieger asked what was the document that was that is to be posted to the website, is it this complete list or is it the more abbreviated one. Nations said it will be the complete list to show the public what actions staff and Commission members are working on regarding the Climate Action Plan.

Monroe next gave an update on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the marketing plan. First, she wanted to add to Nation's list of projects that are timely and upcoming the urban renewal projects are up for first consideration at Council tomorrow night. So those are the economic resources from TIFF areas that will allow them to put that TIFF money towards industrial energy efficiency improvement projects for businesses in those particular areas. Council is seeing that for the first time tomorrow, and that is one of the additional building objectives there.

Onto the RFP, before they put out a request for proposals to the public, Sarah Gardner has been really doing a wonderful job of drafting a consultant inquiry for branding and communications strategy about the climate initiatives. These things will primarily focus in areas where there's a variety of audiences and they're making sure to incorporate elements of equity and a particular population focus. In doing that will give us enough information and templates to work from going forward. Monroe stated the purpose of this project is going to be having someone assess our populations here, the needs we have, compare it with our plan objectives and provide us templates and messaging that will be able to be used throughout our communications about the climate plan and other things that connect to the City and climate actions.

Monroe wanted to gauge the Commission's response to was if there are particular things that we should be looking for as we select a consultant, either something specific that you want them to provide to us, or if there are criteria in which we should be looking at. Typically, when we look at our request for proposals, it looks at the firm's experience, their awareness of what our community is, the project scope, the project schedule, and any references that we would look at and cost of the project. So those are the overarching things they look at on a regular basis.

Fraser asked what the end product is when the controls are done. Monroe replied the end product is going to be strategic messaging for a variety of populations throughout the community, which can be visual and text or verbal messaging.

Soglin thanked Monroe for that explanation and was just wondering since there are several Commissions whose purview has some kind of intersection with what the Commission and what the staff are doing. For example, Parks & Recreation, which they obviously just spent some time talking about today, so is there a shortlist of commissions that staff would ask the firm to kind of keep in mind and that eventually the messaging can be part of their actions, the different Commissions action, so that Parks & Rec knows what kind of messaging will be going out related to prairies and so forth. Monroe agreed that was a really good suggestion, they haven't gone out and discussed with Seydell-Johnson about messaging for Parks, they have talked with Darian Nagle-Gamm, the transportation services director, with the implementation of the soon to be completed transit study, the messaging that pertains to both the transportation system as well as the Climate Action Plan. There are all those intersecting objectives to be incorporated into the requests and into the outcomes of this proposal. Soglin suggested also that eventually the Planning and Zoning Commission be made aware because again there's goals that relate to issues that they will end up discussing and deciding on in the future. Monroe agreed and acknowledged there is a long list of commissions that somehow will be engaged and need to be informed. Monroe said they can certainly reach out to the commissions and that membership for doing that and right now they are for sure including the staff that are liaisons for those commissions and are incorporating review by transportation services, equity and human rights, and neighborhood and development services because of the connections to buildings and the development aspects. They will add in the commissions as another layer of feedback as well.

Krieger stated as part of the qualifications for selection if they should put anything in there about preferred expertise with GIS or mapping, targeting messaging and communications with populations, and that technical expertise. Monroe made note of that.

Gardner said they haven't asked for GIS technical capabilities, it's a little unusual for marketing, but they can certainly put it in and see what they get. Nations noted they do have equity mentioned in the RFP.

*{Giannakouros joined the meeting}*

Fraser noted it goes without saying that whomever is chosen needs to really have a positive mindset relative to the reality of climate change and the challenges that they're facing. Not to be political, they wouldn't want a company that was a climate denier. They need to have the right mindset and not go with a five-word slogan, such as "learn to live with it", that is not a positive approach. Monroe confirmed there was no need to worry about that, they are going to make sure that they hire somebody looking at positive behavior change and have it be a call to action.

Monroe thanked everybody for their feedback, and they'll think about all this as they proceed with this process. Another thing she wanted to mention is if there was a desire for a commission member to participate on the selection committee. It would be an opportunity and willingness to review the proposals that would come in and spend some time with staff to select or provide feedback on the respondents. Perhaps take some time to think about that and decide before the next meeting and let Nations know if interested.

Fraser added one more comment as a non-staff member of the Commission, he is so impressed with the work that the staff is doing, it's really impressive.

### **REVIEW AND DISCUSS BUILDING, ADAPTATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE METRICS:**

Krieger stated this is coming out of the meetings with the working groups. Nations stated she discussed some preliminary metrics with the buildings working group and they're going to hopefully be discussing those at the next working group meeting. With the adaptation group, they decided that they really need more information to do that, and with this sustainable lifestyle, they decided that those are things that are really going to move the greenhouse gas emissions and they might not even have any metrics for that one. Therefore, they're going to be really carefully looking at these last groups and then hopefully, maybe by the end of next month, they'll have a set of metrics and start gathering the baseline data.

Nations noted next month is already August and they want to get something out in September out as it will be the two-year anniversary of the plan and want to show progress. It's going to take some time to gather that data. So, she is really hoping to kind of wrap this up and start looking at where in these two years there has been change, they're not going to see any huge changes, but hopefully they can start looking at those and seeing what direction they're going in. So, the plan is to have the metrics and two years of data released in September.

Krieger stated even though they may not have measurable greenhouse gas emission reduction metrics related to like sustainable lifestyle there are still other metrics or targets or goals that they're trying to track such as the number of businesses that have been recognized for the Green Building Business Recognition Program, or the number of climate ambassadors that we have, etc. Additionally, they can show the number of acres of trees, the number of trees planted, or the number of acres of prairie planted or whatever it may be, they did just learn there is a tree inventory.

### **PUBLIC INPUT ON "ACCELERATING IOWA CITY'S CLIMATE ACTIONS":**

Krieger stated they talked about this specifically in the outreach working group meeting, where they actually discussed essentially what Seydell-Johnson brought up on the public input process and is there already a process in place that we should be tapping into for feedback and building awareness on certain projects. In general, it sounds like Neighborhood and Development Services does have an established process we should probably better utilize for all of our climate action base work.

Additionally, Krieger acknowledged one of the other things that the Outreach Working Group discussed was that this is a primary issue for climate ambassadors going forward now that program is in development. If there are other opportunities that they want to put out there for public input, either on a specific topic or broad based issues, they need to bring those to the table to discuss. So as part of the working groups, please add that to the next agenda.

Fraser commented that the consultants that are going to be working on the messaging should draw from the public. Not just initial marketing messaging, but it's a way to communicate to the public to not only inform, but also making an effort to glean more and more input from the public as they become more and more aware. Nations acknowledged that consistent messaging is key and repetition. Gardner stated that's written into the RFP, they asked them to fold in existing efforts and strategies and help create something that's cohesive. There's nothing preventing us from moving forward on what we want to do now. We'll just get some expert advice on tweaking it in the future.

### **EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL CLIMATE ACTIONS:**

Nations stated that the Equity Working Group didn't get a chance to really go over this last time but will be talking about the equity focus of the what was put in the packet and looking at and making sure that works.

Monroe wanted to let everyone know City Council approved on the 16th of June a 17-point resolution addressing how the City is planning to address and remove systemic racism and also other measures to support Black Lives Matter movement. Staff is thickly involved in pursuing some of those options as well as are several of the other City Commissions, specifically the Human Rights Commission who did provide an official statement on behalf of the commission regarding Black Lives Matter in response to some of the demonstrations across the country and identified ways in which they plan to assist in this effort community wide and the support that they're giving as this community commissioned body. So if this group would prefer that there's some official statement made, following a similar model in terms of connecting climate action to impacts on people of color or other avenues, whatever you may choose to present as rationale for being a support for these efforts in whatever way you choose or want to communicate would be fine. It many not have to be an official statement, it could just be in the form of correspondence to Council, just addressing however the Commission feels if you want to pursue that route. Monroe is not going to infer that the Commission should have a statement, but if they choose to go that path, they're certainly welcome to and she thinks it would come best through correspondence to Council.

Giannakouros stated they are going through a similar process with his office at the University of Iowa and trying to figure out how to calibrate a statement within an institution. He thinks that because Iowa City has been so proactive in coming up with a 17-point plan, he would hate the Commission to try to say anything different than that message. Conversely, though, he does think they should think about how they are more artfully indicating that they are addressing through the climate commission, these inequalities, and part of that is having an equity task group subgroup, It would be nice to say something to Council to the effect we are aware of the intersections here and that we want to do something.

Fraser echoes that as it's important to fit under that umbrella of the 17-point plan the City has already voices, otherwise it becomes controversial. I think the biggest message and we can keep it pretty simple, is we recognize the systemic nature of the situation we're in and we're going to constantly be aware of that. He acknowledged that's hard to do because by definition we've all got blind spots. But the fact that we admit that it's systemic, and we've got blind spots, and we constantly are cognizant of that, that's about all the message we really need as long as we go along with what the City is doing, and he totally agrees with what the City is doing.

Soglin asked if the equity committee could perhaps get a copy of the Human Rights Commission

example and propose a draft for the rest to see.

Nations will get the copy of what the Human Rights Commission to share with the Equity Working Group.

### **UPDATE ON WORKING GROUPS:**

**Equity and Adaptation:** Krieger noted no one from this working group was present at the meeting to give an update.

**Waste:** Sarsfield gave an updated noting a lot of their actions are things that they want to do in person like doing different tours of waste management systems. So that's been a little bit of an issue during COVID. Bradley has been talking to the LENA Project and also Table to Table about how they're managing and to see what we might be able to plug into there.

**Buildings:** Soglin stated they met with Nations and discussed the metrics and she'll have an initial draft on that part tomorrow so they can discuss more at the July 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. They also went over the development density and carbon footprint topic in relation to the original climate action goals and will discuss that more also on at the July 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Karr updated the group that the Johnson Clean Energy District was using their grant to get some LED light bulbs and distribute those in as equitable away as possible.

Soglin reiterated Nations mentioned they have reached out to the realtors and are looking for a way where energy scores of some type could be added to the listing when a house goes up for sale and the realtors have indicated some limitations so maybe they can discuss that at the building group and whether there's some creative ways to get around those.

**Transportation:** Giannakouros said they did not have anything significant to report.

**Outreach:** Krieger stated they got an update on the climate festival planning, and Gardner has been leading that effort. Now that it's all virtual, it sounds like there's some good material there for a focus on each topic each day of the week both with activities planned in both virtually and some even in person with limited capacity. But then there's also challenges that people will be able to do partake in during the entire week. They're also doing some outreach to area businesses and organizations as part of the efforts and building a group of partners to participate.

They talked a bit about the climate ambassador program, and how there's a proposal that's being reviewed by staff right now and training modules being developed. This is something that is one of the actions that will have a big impact on many things in our mission here and all the projects the City is working on.

Finally, as already mentioned they talked a little bit about that public input process and the kind of communication failures of a couple of the more recent projects and what can be done to help that effort in the future.

Fraser added he would still want very much to work with Gardner on the ambassador program, and keeps waiting for the ability to have a face to face meeting, but that's likely not going to happen so

should just start zooming because it very critical to move forward.

Fraser acknowledged the challenge they're all facing is when all these plans were made in the last several weeks it was based on what was happening that was fairly optimistic, and all of a sudden trend are going the other direction. So it's a very challenging time for all of us.

**RECAP OF ACTIONABLE ITEMS FOR COMMISSION, WORKING GROUPS, AND STAFF:**

Nations gave a recap of the actionable items.

1. She will add the co-benefits to the August packet.
2. She will send that link about transportation and how to offset greenhouse gases.
3. She will find the draft of the Human Rights Commission statement about the recent developments and share that with the whole Commission.
4. She will work to make sure the meeting zoom invitations get to all the members.

Nations noted she will be out of the office next week, the 13th through the 17<sup>th</sup>, back on the 20<sup>th</sup>. She will be unavailable to be reached by email.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Krieger made a motion to adjourn.

Giannakouros seconded the motion.

A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

CLIMATE ACTION COMMISSION  
 ATTENDANCE RECORD  
 2019 - 2020

NAME	TERM EXP.	10/7/2019	11/4/2019	12/2/2019	1/6/2020	2/10/2020	3/9/2020	5/4/2020	6/1/2020	7/6/2020	8/3/2020
Madeleine Bradley	12/31/2022	--	--	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	
John Fraser	12/31/2020	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Stratis Giannakouros	UI Rep	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Grace Holbrook	12/31/2021	X	X	X	O/E	O/E	O/E	X	X	X	
Kasey Hutchinson	12/31/2022	--	--	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
GT Karr	12/31/2020	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Matt Krieger	12/31/2020	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Jesse Leckband	MidAmerican Rep	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	
Katie Sarsfield	12/31/2020	X	X	O/E	X	X	O/E	X	X	O/E	
Becky Soglin	12/31/2022	--	--	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Eric Tate	12/31/2021	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	

KEY: X = Present  
 O = Absent  
 O/E = Absent/Excused  
 NM = No Meeting  
 -- -- = Not a Member

# Climate Action and Outreach Office Updates: September 2020

## Recent Activity

### Community-wide Climate Action

- Climate at Work
  - 5 Awards given during Climate Fest Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>
    - Buildings -Neumann Monson Architects
    - Transportation – Adamantine Spine Moving
    - Waste – Dumpling Darling
    - Adaptation – Old Brick
    - Sustainable Lifestyle – Crowded Closet
  - A nice [video](#) was created about the awards.

### Events

- Climate Festival: Sept. 19-Sept. 26
  - Good participation overall and some positive press impressions; interviews with Press Citizen, Gazette, Daily Iowan/DITV, and KGAN
  - Video highlights: [recap video](#), [LEED Residence Home](#), [EV charging station ribbon cutting](#)
  - Resources created for the Fest will remain on the website ([icgov.org/ClimateFest](http://icgov.org/ClimateFest)) until the 2021 event planning is underway; several are also housed on other departmental pages (resource management, climate awards, etc.) and will remain there going forward

### Marketing RFP

- 10 viable proposals received
- Phase one scoring to be completed by October 9
- Next step: interviews

### Climate Ambassadors

- [Webpage](#) launched and [application](#) window opened at the end of the Climate Fest

### Staffing

- October 5: Brenda's last day
- Applications under review for part time communication assistant
- Climate Action Analyst position budgeted, pending City Council approval

## Ongoing Projects

### Equity Outreach Program

- Received update of Equity Report (some minor additions still needed), work with equity working group, and introduce to community groups to begin equity outreach program development

### Implementation of Accelerating Iowa City's Climate Actions, tracking and reporting

- Continuing to work the plan for the 2020 actions – focus on tree planting, industrial TIFs, business awards
- Starting to think ahead to 2021 goals

### Reporting and Metrics

- Annual community-wide GHG reporting and reporting – 2019 inventory was been completed
- Data collection for CAAP metrics for prior two years was completed and will be finalized

### Current Grant Projects

- IEDA-Eastern Iowa EV Readiness Planning- kickoff meeting with steering committee was held 9/18
- Heartland Carbon Sequestration – underway, identifying local projects to quantify, topics to research, considering community project

### Communications (with part-time Sustainability Communications Assistance)

- Ongoing monthly Sustainability Newsletter
- Second annual update on CAAP due out first of October
- Denice is leaving and staff is going over applications for her replacement

### Municipal Energy and Climate (with part-time Climate Action Assistant)

- Municipal utilities tracking and analysis
- Tracking water usage of municipal facilities
- Municipal GHG inventory reporting (~ every 5 years)
- Staff Climate Committee – municipal climate plan
  - Working with staff to incorporate GHG reductions and increasing sustainability practices within City operations (new analyst position will take over these responsibilities)

### Ongoing Sustainability Groups and Committees

- Urban Sustainability Directors Network groups
- Heartland (Midwestern) Monthly calls, annual meeting
- Johnson County Sustainability Working Group, quarterly meetings

## Solar Energy Planning Study / Scope of Work / September 2020

*A study to investigate solar energy options for residential, commercial, industrial, and public buildings in Iowa City and Johnson County. Investigation includes both site-solar (on-site at individual buildings) and utility-scale systems (off-site community solar or solar farm). It will assess energy demand and goals, technological requirements of different options, and key economic, environmental, and social equity considerations*

*NB: For budgetary and other reasons, this study may be broken into 2 phases, beginning with crucial technology/siting issues, and followed by UI-assisted economic, environmental, and social impact studies. We are also identifying information and analysis that can be produced without need for hired consultant.*

### Study contents (proposed)

- Energy loads – identify and quantify major electrical users. Determine RE goals (example: 20% RE by 2030, with related GHG reductions)
  - Residential
    - Low-Moderate Income areas or buildings
    - Multiple family buildings
    - General
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Public facilities, schools, churches, hospitals, etc
- Site-solar systems (on-site, behind-the-meter)
  - Potential site-solar locations, by use sectors (see above)
  - Greenhouse gas emission reduction potential
  - Social equity, economic, environmental impacts
- Utility-scale systems: community solar and solar farms
  - Transmission and distribution factors
    - Locations of substations, transmission, and distribution lines in county
    - Transmission requirements and line load capacities
    - Connection costs
  - Sites and capacities
    - Interconnection requirements and line load capacities
    - Site factors (water, road access, size)
    - Solar resource (solar panel production)
    - Greenhouse gas emission reduction potential
    - Environmental, economic, and social equity impacts
- Economics
  - Site-solar
    - Project savings, including avoided costs for landowners
    - Incentives (similar to Solarize Johnson County)
    - Net-metering
  - Community solar

- Ownership models
  - Economic benefits to participants
  - Net metering
- Solar farms
- Project finance options
  - Government grants, loans, tax incentives, etc
  - Public/private partnerships
  - Private investors
- Legal / Regulatory status
  - Franchise Agreements
  - State
  - Local (county, municipal)
  - Utility considerations: siting, permitting, utility costs, other
- Public information and input process
  - Community information and outreach, including to stakeholder and advocacy groups
  - Outreach to potential solar energy users or “loads”;
  - Outreach to landowners in fringe area to solicit sites of 1-5 MW solar installations
  - Reports to relevant City and County agencies and commissions

*Not included*

- Engineering feasibility study
- Full economic assessment
- Project management
- Regulatory status

*Budget: TBD*

## **Proposed: Iowa City and Johnson County Solar Energy Planning Study**

**Objectives:** 1) Develop pertinent technical, landscape, and economic information to accelerate solar energy production in Iowa City and Johnson County; and 2) initiate a dialogue among government, private sector, and residents about strategies for on-site and off-site (grid-connected) solar projects.

### **Project Description**

A group of citizens and organizations have put together ideas for a study of solar energy demand, options, siting, interconnections, technologies, and financing in Johnson County, with an initial focus on Iowa City and surrounding area. A well-designed solar energy program would help the City meet its climate action goals by diversifying the energy supply and reducing greenhouse gases and other pollutants. It also has the potential to reduce energy costs for a broad cross-section of area residents, businesses, industries, and public entities; support local economic development; and provide social equity benefits to neighborhoods.

Four models exist for distributed (on-site) and centralized (grid-connected) solar energy: **site solar, solar schools, community solar, and solar farms**. *Site solar* -- small, distributed photovoltaic (PV) arrays for homes and businesses – is the focus of the popular county-led “Solarize Johnson County” program. How could this be expanded to include more businesses and other “large roof” buildings? *School solar* are projects led by community school districts to provide electricity and educational opportunities for students and communities. What potential exists in the ICCSD? *Community solar* refers to centralized, grid-connected PV arrays (~100 kW-2 MW) jointly owned or leased by individual homeowners, renters, and/or businesses that lack the roof or ground space for solar but are interested in low-cost strategies to tap into it. Are neighborhood solar projects possible here and, if so, where? *Solar farms* also refer to larger, centralized installations (1 – 5 MW) owned by governments, utilities, or third-party investment groups to supply large energy users with specific load, interconnection, and business requirements. Bloomfield and State City, Iowa have constructed municipally-owned solar farms (1.8 and 1 MW, respectfully) to help meet their energy-independence goals. Identifying larger tracts of land appropriate for solar farms would provide a pathway for future development.

The initial focus of this assessment will be on (1) quantifying energy demand of commercial, industrial, residential, and public facilities; (2) technology infrastructure issues, including interconnection and capacity requirements; and (3) reaching out to private and public landowners to identify potential sites for solar projects. The study would also provide economic, legal/regulatory, and environmental impact information. An open and transparent public educational and outreach campaign to consumers and investors is a key element for future success.

### **Participants**

We propose that this study be a collaboration between the City of Iowa City, the Iowa City Community School District, Johnson County, the University of Iowa, energy companies, and the Johnson Clean Energy District, which coordinated development of this proposal.

**Timeline: Fall 2020 – Spring 2021**

**BY-LAWS**  
**IOWA CITY CLIMATE ACTION COMMISSION**

ARTICLE 1 THE COMMISSION

Section A. The name of the Commission is the Climate Action Commission of Iowa City, Iowa, as established by Resolution No. 19-251 of the City Council of Iowa City, Iowa.

ARTICLE 2 PURPOSE

Section A. The purpose of the Commission is to enhance and enable further community efforts to achieve the City's ambitious climate goals.

ARTICLE 3 DUTIES

Section A. Duties of the Commission shall include:

- 1) advise the City Council on climate issues;
- 2) research, analyze, and promote climate actions, with particular attention to equity;
- 3) educate and engage with the public on climate action and the City's climate and sustainability goals;
- 4) assist City staff, City Council, and members of the community with implementing approved initiatives that support the City's climate and sustainability goals, including the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and any related or updated plan hereafter;
- 5) recommend to the City Council updates to the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan.

ARTICLE 4 MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Members The Climate Action Commission shall consist of eleven (11) members with backgrounds, knowledge, and expertise offering representation across the community which could effectively guide implementation of climate objectives. MidAmerican Energy and the University of Iowa will each have a standing representative on the Commission.

Section B. Appointment Nine (9) at-large members, representing key stakeholders, will be appointed by the City Council of Iowa City. Key stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, the Iowa City Community School District, area commercial businesses, local industry, design and construction professionals, non-profits and the general public.

Section C. Residency Residents of Iowa City should be given preference, but members are not required to have Iowa City residency. Members must be residents of Johnson County.

Section D. Terms Member terms shall be three (3) years beginning January 1, with a two-term limit.

Section E. Officers The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will be elected annually (in January) from the Commission membership. The Chairperson shall, when present, preside at all meetings, appoint sub-committees with the approval of the Commission, call special meetings and in general perform all duties included in the office of a Chairperson and such other duties as may be prescribed by the members from time to time. The Vice-Chairperson shall take over the above duties of the Chairperson in the event of the Chairperson's absence.

Section F. Compensation and Expenses Commissioners shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred or travel outside of Johnson County on designated Commission business. Such expenses shall have prior approval by the City Manager of Iowa City upon the request of the Sustainability Coordinator. Receipts for all such expenses shall be stipulated to the City Manager of Iowa City through the Sustainability Coordinator prior to reimbursement for such expenses.

Section G. Orientation of new Members Prior to the first regular meeting following their appointment, new Commissioners shall be provided with copies of the By-Laws and other documentation that would be useful to Commission members in carrying out their duties. They may also be given an orientation briefing by members of the staff, the Commission and others as may be deemed appropriate.

Section H. Absences Three (3) consecutive, unexplained absences of a member from regular meetings will result in a recommendation to the City Council from the Commission to discharge said member and appoint a new member.

Section I. Resignations If any member is unable to continue carrying out the duties of membership for any reason, the member, if appointed by the City Council, shall email a letter of resignation to the City Council with a copy to the Chair of the Commission.

Section J. Working Groups The working groups composition, duties and terms will be designated by a majority vote of the members of the Commission. Members of the public may be members of working groups.

## ARTICLE 5 MEETINGS

Section A. Meetings of this Commission shall be on a regular monthly basis. A meeting date and time will be established by the Commission. A regular meeting may be cancelled if no urgent business requires a meeting.

Section B. Special meetings of the Commission may be called by the Chairperson and shall be called by the Chairperson at the request of a majority of the membership.

Section C. Meetings shall be held in an accessible, public meeting place. Notices of meetings (agenda) for all regular and special meetings shall be posted at least 24 hours before any meeting is held. All provisions of the State Open Meetings Law shall be followed. The Chairperson, or a designated representative, together with appropriate members of the City staff shall prepare an agenda for all meetings. Agendas shall be sent to Commission members at least 24 hours prior to the regular meetings.

Section D. A majority of the members of the Commission (six or more) shall constitute a quorum of any meeting and the majority of votes cast at any meeting, at which a quorum is present, shall be decisive of any motion or election.

Section E. There shall be no vote by proxy.

Section F. Time shall be made available during all regular meetings for open public discussion.

Section G. Minutes of all meetings shall be prepared and distributed to the City Council in the manner prescribed by the Council. Minutes of all regular and special meetings will be e-mailed to all the Commission members during the week prior to the next meeting. Specific recommendations for the Council shall be set off from the main body of the minutes.

Section H. A working group/subcommittee meeting is not a meeting of the full Commission, unless six Commissioners are present.

#### ARTICLE 6 AMENDMENTS

Section A. The By-Laws of the Commission shall be amended only with the approval of at least a majority of the Commission (at least six votes) at a regular meeting or a special meeting.

Section B. By-Law changes may be adopted at the meeting following the meeting at which open discussion was conducted on the specific changes.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

## TREE REMOVAL IN THE SCOTT PARK STORMWATER BASIN

Date: 8-24-20  
To: Iowa City Parks & Recreation Commission  
Cc: Iowa City Climate Action Commission  
From: Chris Stephan

Removal of trees along the Ralston Creek streambeds within the confines of the Scott Park Detention Basin raises a number of questions that need to be addressed by the Iowa City Parks & Recreation Commission and the Iowa City Climate Action Commission.

These thoughts are being submitted to support issues raised by John Barr during the Public Discussion segment of the Iowa City Parks & Recreation meeting on June 17, 2020. Although I'm not one of the ecologists or foresters mentioned at the second paragraph of the Public Discussion minutes, I am the professional engineer in Mr. Barr's Scott Park neighborhood. My comments are also intended to address some of the information that Juli Seydell-Johnson, Parks & Recreation Director, presented to the Iowa City Climate Action Committee, at their meeting on July 6, 2020.

The suggestion that removing trees from the creek bed for those areas within the Scott Park Stormwater Basin will reduce flooding, is poorly reasoned. As a registered professional civil engineer, I spent 30 years designing stormwater basins throughout the greater Iowa City area and have also designed numerous small dams for various other clients. I can state with some knowledge and authority that any trees along the creek and within the confines of the inundation area of the Scott Park Dam DO NOT contribute to flooding of property in and adjacent to the basin. The property lines adjacent to the stormwater basin were established so that the properties would be located outside the flooding limits. The Federal Emergency Flood Maps for this area are based on this information. Trees along the creek bed will slow down the velocity of stream flow, thereby contributing somewhat to functionality of the dam (reducing stream flow volumes below the dam). There is no way that trees located within the designated inundation area of the dam increase flood hazards or elevations. The downstream dam is the entity creating the flooding. We residents adjacent to the Scott Park detention basin witness this phenomenon each and every time a significant rainfall event occurs in the Iowa City area.

One wonders how much additional carbon will be sequestered when an acre of trees is removed and an acre of prairie is established. The trees grow each year and at season's end drop their leaves and the underbrush goes dormant, so the carbon captured during the growing season is pretty much held in-place. We understand that one of the 'good practice' requirements for prairie health is periodic burning. This burning would suggest that some of the carbon that has been captured by the prairie grasses will be released into the atmosphere. Does the life cycle of an acre of prairie grass sequester more carbon than an acre of creek side timber and underbrush? I think this is a legitimate question to be asked.

It was also mentioned that an effort will be made to replace each tree removed by planting two new trees. Has anyone counted and/or documented the number of trees that have been, or will be removed? Is there any provision for providing similar documentation for the trees being planted to replace the removed trees?

Another result of the selective removal of trees along the creek bank in Scott Park will be the loss of screening that these trees provide for each of the residents living on either side of the creek. I have had several residents express to me that they specifically purchased their house along the creek bank because of the trees that are presently there. The trees provide very much of a 'rural' feel to the area. They help screen the lights and activities from opposite sides of the creek, which is a major reason for choosing to live where we do. In fact, one neighbor told me that she spent five years looking for a house on a lot specifically with the park and creek tree characteristics present in Scott Park, prior to purchasing her house on Scott Park Drive

One lesson I learned during my years working with local developers of mixed use developments, was to develop the higher density parcels first, so that the single family parcels could not suggest that they were unaware, or were not told, of the higher density development that was near their property. It would seem that Iowa City, through the removal of the trees along the creek in the Scott Park detention basin, is significantly changing the character of the area after homeowners adjacent to the area specifically chose their location based on the present condition of the creek. If the City wants to change the character along the creek, perhaps it should be done prior to the sale of any of the lots along the creek.

Having watched the mowing operations in the Scott Park Stormwater Basin for the past 28 years, I have to question how much grass mowing effort is going to be reduced when trees on either side of Ralston Creek are removed and the area from which the trees have been removed is planted in prairie grasses. To my observation, the areas now occupied by trees on either side of the creek are not now being mowed and will not be mowed when planted to prairie. So how much mowing effort have we saved? I might also suggest that the periodic burning of the prairie areas will not be well received by the residents downwind from the burn. With the prairie areas being bounded on virtually all sides, it won't matter what direction the wind is blowing when the burn occurs.

A number of neighbors have summarized the question at hand by asking, 'Do we want the area along the creek in the Scott Park detention basin to look like a golf course, or do we want it to remain a natural looking streambed?'

Should any of the commission members, or City staff wish to contact me, my email address is:  
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Thank you for your time and consideration.