

## Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation (ACSI)



### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 10/11/23, 9am - 11am

Remote Access Only

### Next Meeting

TBD

### ACSI MEMBERS PRESENT / PHONE

Lukas Angus, Adah Crandall, Jona Davis, Mara Gross, Samantha Hernandez, Sasha Pollack, Amanda Zuniga

### MULTNOMAH COUNTY LEADERSHIP / STAFF / PUBLIC MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicole Buchanan, Tim Lynch, Sara Mihm, Monique Smiley, Silvia Tanner, John Wasiutynski (Office of Sustainability), Multnomah County Commissioner Brim Edwards, Jennie Brixey (Multnomah County Public Health)

### ACTION ITEMS

- **Adah Crandall** will share contact information of **Clean and Just Transportation Network** with **Tim Lynch** so that a presentation to the Transportation subcommittee can be scheduled.
- **Mari Margil** will share some recommended reading to gain more understanding of the rights of nature.
- **Amanda Zuniga** will reach out to folks to begin outlining **ACSI's** annual letter.

### DECISIONS MADE

- None.

### WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS

### REVIEW & APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

- **ACSI members** present approved the meeting minutes from 7/12/23 with no corrections.

### ANNUAL LETTER

- **John Wasiutynski** shared that:
  - In the past **ACSI** has weighed in on legislative matters, approved in December, that the County should prioritize.
  - The **Multnomah County Chair's** Executive Budget is introduced in April, so **ACSI** may consider including items in the letter that require a budget, like new programs, supporting existing programs, or policy, to help shape the Chair's priorities.
- **Sasha Pollack** shared that the theme of the letter could be actionable items that fall within the Multnomah County sphere of influence. She said that the letter should consider the parameters

within which Multnomah County has the ability to act, and that core values like public health, will be key. Other factors to consider include current political, financial, and social pressures on the County as it relates to housing, homelessness, mental health, and addiction.

- **Amanda Zuniga** shared that subcommittees have been discussing heat pumps and getting them in more homes, mental health and housing, and climate and resiliency.
- **John Wasiutyhnski** shared that federal funding could be an option for ACSI recommendations. He also cited examples of existing infrastructure at the County, like the wood burning exchange program, where funding could be applied so that staff are already in place to implement new funding. And, while the weatherization exchange program supports very-low income households there is still a need for efficient heating and cooling for low and moderate income levels.
- **Lukas Angus** expressed the need for ongoing nutrition support with locally, culturally appropriate food. He also shared that rights of nature is something he wants included in the annual letter.
- **Adah Crandall** shared that the **Clean and Just Transportation Network** would be a good addition for the Transportation subcommittee.
- **ACSI members** discussed the **Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program**, which will include \$4.6 billion from the **Environmental Protection Agency**. **Metro** is developing the priority climate action plan, and the funding that is applied for has to be included in that plan.
- **John Wasiutynski** shared that:
  - Supporting jurisdictional partners to receive as much funding as possible from EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant could be a recommendation from **ACSI**.
  - He's connected with the Multnomah County REACH Director, **Charlene McGee**, and the conversation is ongoing about the County securing more land to support culturally specific food cultivation.

## RIGHTS OF NATURE PRESENTATION

- The presentation was [recorded](#) and [transcribed](#).
- **Mara Gross** shared that **Mari Margil** is the Executive Director for [Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights](#), working with rights of nature in local communities and across the country and world. The County's Tribal liaison joined the Food & Water subcommittee and had ideas to bring people together, including tribal leadership, to help get more input on developing a recommendation.
- **Lukas Angus** shared that tribal people have related to colonization and the way they've navigated legal systems to uphold their law of the land. To hear it in legal terms is what they have done to survive as tribal people. He said, "How do we look at the system that is here and use it to get what we need?"
- Depending on how the law is written, two basic components need to be established:
  - Establishing legal rights of what needs to be protected.
  - Enforcement for government, people who live within the jurisdiction, and nature itself, the party that holds the rights.
- Many rights of nature laws also include the human right to a healthy environment.

- **Mari Margil** has worked with many governments and state legislatures on non-binding resolutions and county charter amendments. They have found that most local communities have engaged themselves when they've had to, like following fracking, the negative implications of factory farming, or something else that motivates people to take action. She said that people in communities become the drivers for enforcement.
- **Samantha Hernandez** said that the presentation inspired her to think about protections for rivers particularly from the disastrous consequences from a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.
- **Commissioner Brim Edwards** expressed interest in an inventory of natural spaces within the County's jurisdiction, and is curious about how those spaces are doing. **John Wasiutynski** said Land Use within the **Department of County Services** would be good partners in conversation.
- **John Wasiutynski** recommended following up on the Commissioner's recommendation of understanding the County's current inventory of natural spaces, and reiterated past publicized concerns about [oil trains](#), the [Critical Energy Infrastructure Hub](#), and potential to bring the rights of nature conversation into the [climate justice](#) planning space.
- **Commissioner Brim Edwards** said that introducing Commissioners to the rights of nature concept as part of a comprehensive strategy, including the climate justice planning, would be helpful to illustrate how it fits within the larger scope of climate justice work. She also recommended including a comprehensive set of short, medium, and long term strategies.
- **Amanza Zuniga** expressed the importance of including actionable items in the annual letter, including engaging with the community about the rights of nature.
- **Lukas Angus** recommended including something in the annual letter about rights of nature, to begin laying the groundwork.
- **Jennie Brixey** offered appreciation for being included in the rights of nature conversation and asked that ideas on how Multnomah County Public Health can support the effort be shared with her.

## NEXT STEPS & FOLLOW UP