

Austin Independent School District

**Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

January 31, 2019

5:30 – 7:30 pm

Carruth Administration Center, 1111 W. 6th Street, Board Auditorium

Attendees

Members in Attendance

Pamela Abee Taulli
Aimee Aubin
Bianca Bidiuc Peterson
Karen Bishop
Rob Borowski
Alecia Casper
Amir Emamian
Charlie Gutierrez
Cari Land
Sherry Lepine*
Monica Lopez Magee*
Kate Martin
Amanda Mortl Walker
Susan Peterson
Mary Priddy*
Justo Ramirez
Richard Shearman
Ilya Schmulenson
Dub Taylor
Jeff Wacker
Louis Zachary

Visitors

Melody Alcazar
Christian Clarke Casarez
Christine Riera
Rocio Villalobos
Ann Teich

Staff Coordinators in Attendance

Matias Segura
Bob Cervi
Darien Clary

Members Not in Attendance

Jake Carter**
Liz Cardinal
Sam DeSanto
Irene Dooling
Colleen Garland
Kris Hafezizadeh
Kristi Hibler-Luton**
Lauren Maples**
Anne Muller**
Lonnie Sclerandi**
Cory Skuldt
Anneliese Tanner
Jessica Wilson

Citizens Communication

none

* Indicates Committee Tri-Chair

**Indicates excused absence

Minutes

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

The ESAC Tri-chair Mary Priddy facilitated the meeting and called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. New members, Kate Martin and Irene Doling, were welcomed to the group and guests introduced themselves. The ESAC member, Carrie Land, motioned to approve the November meeting minutes, which was seconded by Irene Dooling. The minutes were approved with no modifications.

II. Public Comments & Announcements

The ESAC Tri-chair, Mary Priddy, spoke about the City of Austin Office of Sustainability Bright Green Futures Grant. They had over 120 applicants and will be able to fund approximately 70 projects this year. Winners will be announced on Monday. Funded projects include a light pollution survey, firewise demonstration garden, cycle academies, garden and outdoor science lessons, rain gardens, wildlife gardens, outdoor classrooms, tree plantings, and recycling campaigns, among others. Please see meeting materials for additional information.

The ESAC member Bianca Bidiuc Peterson announced a free training for teachers, February 26-27, hosted by the Sustainable Food Center. Teachers can also receive credit hours for participation.

AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, listed the ways in which ESAC members and their organizations have been contributing expertise and input into the 2017 Bond Projects and thanked them.

The ESAC Tri-chair, Monica Lopez Magee, thanked the ESAC for mobilizing and showing support for the letter that advocated for continuation of staff positions that support the District's vision for sustainability, namely the outdoor learning specialist and administrative Science position. The letter highlighted how these key positions help the District achieve its commitment to integrating sustainability into the student learning experience. Science Chair, Charlie Gutierrez, also thanked the ESAC for their support.

AISD District 4 Trustee, Ann Teich, shared remarks with the ESAC and commented that she has been recycling since 1970. She reminded the committee that Trustees are entrusted with the well-being and education of the children in their district, as well as the staff. AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, thanked Trustee Teich for her long-standing support for sustainability at AISD. The ESAC Tri-chair, Monica Lopez Magee, reminded the ESAC that Trustee Teich participated in the 2016 community visioning session and thanked Trustee Teich for helping to shape the vision of sustainability in the urban school experience.

AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, reminded members that we would be having Tri-chair elections at the May meeting, and the position currently open for election is that of the parent representative.

III. Austin's Cities Connecting Children to Nature Initiative

Melody Alcazar of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) and ESAC Tri-chair and Director of Cities and Nature for the Children and Nature Network, Monica Lopez Magee, co-presented about the Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) program in Austin. The presentation began with the news that the City of Austin was one of six cities nationwide to receive a \$25,000 planning grant from the National League of Cities and the Children and

Nature Network to support the initiative. The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department committed another \$25,000. As a result, the City of Austin now has an implementation plan with four key strategies that include green school parks, public awareness, code next and master plan tracking, and park programming and activation.

As part of the initiative, Austin ISD signed the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBOR), which was then passed by Council in November of 2016. The public awareness campaign has focused on the developmental benefits of time spent in nature. The COBOR brings awareness and attention to the issue of children's health and development as it relates to nature connection. Austin ISD and PARD are also updating their Joint Use and Development Policies to align standards for design and maintenance of outdoor spaces that enhance learning and facilitate connecting families to nature on jointly-owned sites. The ESAC Food and Nature Subcommittee also contributed to the CCCN effort by conducting an inventory of schoolyard habitat features at every AISD school. The survey revealed that there are over 630 features at the AISD 130 schools. The most frequent features include vegetable gardens, habitat gardens, learning ponds, outdoor classrooms, compost/vermiculture, and rain barrels or cisterns. The presentation then focused on the Wooldridge Elementary Green School Park vision, which has already completed its design phase. The design includes tree planting, riparian restoration, an outdoor classroom, nature play, a wildflower meadow, and green stormwater infrastructure. PARD is also seeking partnerships to fund additional features that include a community garden, nature trail, picnic tables, and new signage. Green school park upgrades have already been installed at Barrington Elementary School, and Sanchez Elementary will also receive new features.

The Austin CCCN program is unique in that it is using nature to target disparities in health, wellness, and academic achievement. In short, it is addressing equity through park access. Also, the PARD/AISD shared ownership of school sites enables the two agencies to collaborate to connect Austin's children and families to nature at these sites.

For additional information, see the presentation slides in the meeting materials.

IV. Remarks from Matias Segura, Austin ISD Operations Officer

AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, introduced AISD Operations Officer, Matias Segura, and read his bio. Mr. Segura then addressed the committee and shared that his was born and raised in Austin, his mom is a teacher, and he has two children currently at AISD schools. While he oversees many different divisions at AISD, his primary role is to support staff and allow them to do great things. He reports to AISD CFO, Nicole Conley-Johnson, and he supports AISD's vision by mitigating risks and finding ways to move forward efficiently. Mr. Segura serves on the Keep Austin Beautiful Board, and sustainability and green stormwater infrastructure are very important to him. Mr. Segura praised AISD Energy and Water Manager, Richard Shearman, for his efforts to save energy and expressed that he would like to integrate all facets of sustainability into AISD. Mr. Segura then answered a few questions from committee members:

Q: What is your perception and guidance for carrying out your work?

A: I appreciate initiatives founded in logic and detail that consider long term cost savings, which can be more valuable than short-term cost savings. I look for data-driven cost analysis, and I am interested in better managing our assets to reduce costs.

Q: Are there efforts to create data that may not currently be quantified?

A: Yes, we now have a data mining group to inform our decision-making progress. Qualitative

data can also be important, depending on how it is used.

Q: Could you share how your data driven process could help us build partnerships?

A: It can be hard for two partners to work together. To help with this, we have engaged with the City of Austin in a comprehensive planning process. Over the next 8-9 weeks we will work with the new city manager to address city and district needs including affordable housing, libraries, etc.

Q: How can we reach you?

A: If it is an idea that needs staff support, include the relevant staff. I am accessible and involved, and I encourage you to reach out.

V. Action Area Updates

AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, presented the Food Action Area slide prepared by Food Subcommittee leader, Anneliese Tanner. The bidding process for compostable utensils has been initiated for the 2019-2020 school year. According to data submitted to the Good Food Purchasing Program, AISD used 46% of its food budget on local food. We are still awaiting the results for the 2017-2018 school year. This success is attributed to farm fresh Fridays in partnership with Johnson's Backyard Garden and produce sampling days in schools.

The ESAC member, Karen Bishop, presented the Nature Action Area slides. Brooke Elementary is the District's newest Green Flag School, an extremely high honor from the National Wildlife Federation for schools that integration sustainable practices into their culture and student experience. Brooke is now the fourth AISD school to receive this award. O. Henry Middle School and Bailey Middle School recently became Monarch Heroes schools through the National Wildlife Federation for their efforts to increase monarch habitat and awareness at their schools. OutTeach (formerly called Real School Gardens) is working with Casey Elementary to design and build outdoor learning spaces and offer instructional coaching to teachers for three years. The Sprouts grocery store chain is a major funder of the project. Some of the ESAC Nature subcommittee members attended the workshop on equity and diversity, organized by the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin. This was the first in a regular occurring series to address racial equity through outdoor environmental leadership.

AISD Energy and Water Manager, Richard Shearman, presented the Energy & Water Action Area updates. The subcommittee completed two community engagement sessions and has one more planned for the Austin science fair. Utility costs have decreased about 1.6% and saved about \$200k, when compared to the previous 12 months. The savings is mostly due to decreased Austin Energy rates. Water use decreased by 5% and we saw a decrease in cost by 11%. AISD has many projects underway to reach additional cost savings.

AISD Zero Waste Specialist, Amanda Mortl-Walker, and ESAC member, Alicia Casper, co-presented the Zero Waste and Procurement Action Area slides. Keep Austin Beautiful started a new round of its Generation Zero K-12 curriculum. If a school wants to register, they may do so on the website. The subcommittee conducted outreach for the AISD sustainability plan at Fulmore Middle School and worked on their strategies for the campus improvement plan. Ms. Mortl-Walker Highlighted schools with highest levels of waste diversion in school district. These nine schools have a diversion rate of 64%, measured by the frequency they require compost, landfill, and recycling waste removal. Ms. Mortl-Walker is currently targeting 15 schools to reach 50% diversion by increasing recycle dumpster pick-ups and decreasing landfill dumpster pick-ups. Recycling is also the least costly waste stream to have removed, so this should also

reduce costs for the district. In the past year Ms. Mortl-Walker has trained over 5,700 AISD students and over 840 teachers in recycling and composting.

The ESAC Member, Rob Borowski, and ESAC member, Justo Ramirez, provided the Transportation & Air Quality Action Area update. Mr. Ramirez shared that AISD received a \$233,500 grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to replace five old model busses with new low emissions busses. This will achieve a 25% emissions reduction for each bus. Mr. Borowski added that a clean fleet grant is currently available and a TERP rebate grant will be forthcoming. CAPCOG will also host a grant workshop that interested parties are invited to attend. Also, the Commute Solutions website will relaunch this Spring. It will feature personalized subsites and "school pool" options to encourage carpooling. The site will also support commuter contests. Capital Metro can also help schools with bus transportation for field trips on any fixed route bus service. Contact Capital Metro for field trip Transit Adventures!

ESAC Tri-chair and Community Engagement subcommittee leader, Monica Lopez Magee, provided feedback about the community engagement sessions that have been completed thus far. ESAC members have garnered public input from 719 participants at 14 events. She listed the top 4 AISD sustainability strategies of public interest and identified opportunities for improving outreach.

For additional information, see the presentation slides in the meeting materials.

VI. Subcommittee Planning

Due to the thorough presentations and discussions, subcommittees were asked to touch base briefly if needed after the meeting adjourned. They will continue to work on their Campus Improvement Plan strategies before the next meeting.

The ESAC Tri-chair, Sherry Lepine motioned to adjourn the meeting. ESAC member, Rob Borowski, seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm.