



Fort Collins Climate Task Force

March 5, 2008
215 North Mason, Community Room
MEETING MINUTES



Present:

Board Members and Alternates

John Bleem	P			Garry Steen	P
William Farland	P	Blue Hovatter	P	Norm Weaver	A
				John Phelan	P
Bill Franzen	P	Jeff Lebesch	P	Steve Wolley	P
Phil Friedman	P	Eric Levine	P		
Stephen Gillette	P	Liz Pruessner	P		

Others present: Art Bavoso, Facilitator
Judy Dorsey, The Brendle Group
Lucinda Smith, Natural Resources Department

Public Input

There was no public input at this meeting.

Task Force Member Input

Jeff raised the concept of a Utility for waste (CO₂) gas, and therefore enabling the potential of charging for management of that gas, in lieu of an actual “carbon tax”. Phil shared some articles, one that is available at AEworld.com

Minutes Approval

Postponed until the next meeting.

Work Session Review

Art asked Task Force members for their impression of the Feb. 26 Council work session. Blue indicated some disappointment that the Council had not been aware of the struggle to meet the 2020 goal earlier and the need to look beyond 2010. But he was pleased that Council was supportive of looking longer term, which now gives the Task Force more latitude to look in greater depth at transportation issues, etc.

Phil thought Council covered the issues at a superficial level and got caught up in the costs. He was upset that there was confusion about the goal, and a belief that the 2010 goal was so much more stringent than the state goal, for example. But he thought that while Council was concerned about costs, they also realized it was necessary to figure out ways to find funding. Council

missed the fact that many measures clearly pay for themselves quickly. The ability to move to a longer- term horizon will allow the CTF to move away from RECs. Eric had concerns about the way the information was represented in the newspaper, with costs portrayed out of context. He pointed out that the existing goal is only a slowing down of emissions and does not swing the emission trajectory downward. He suggested seeking a dedicated budget fund in the next budget cycle for implementing strategies. He thinks a commitment to implement strategies in the short-term is very important. He suggested that staff present materials to Council before the actual meeting, and allow Council members to ask questions in advance. Lucinda said that Council would have to request a separate work session for answering questions, but they do receive materials in advance and can ask questions through the Leadership Team meetings. Liz pointed out that Council did not plan to back away from short-term strategies, even while re-visiting the goal, so she was encouraged by this.

John P. felt that more education is needed about how progress on greenhouse gas goals is evaluated. He was encouraged that the discussion stayed at a high level. He said that regarding cost, there are big differences between General Fund annual costs and Utilities capital costs and the Council did not apparently glean this from the materials. John also felt the delay in process would allow better alignment with the Energy Policy work.

Judy used the analogy of embarking on an energy audit for a building; until you do the hard work, you don't know what the outcome will be.

Blue felt the work session helped get across the message about the opportunity for Fort Collins to be a leader, and that could be a counterpoint to concerns about our effort being overshadowed by China's emissions.

Greenhouse Gas Goal

Art introduced the discussion by suggesting the importance of having a vision before developing goal, and the value of guiding principles. This is the model often used by other organizations and processes. He asked if the CF would like to discuss a vision first. John P indicated that the Electric Energy Policy Committee identified both near-term and mid century objectives. Eric and Blue mentioned carbon neutral as a possible vision. Bill Franzen asked what other departments are doing to parallel the effort at Utilities to set a vision. Back in 1999, a goal was set but all the pieces were not put in place to achieve that goal. "What are the mission statements from other departments? How is the City working towards one common goal? This is a question for Darin. John P. said that perhaps carbon metrics needed to be established in City Plan. Lucinda pointed out that the City organization does not have a formal short-term carbon goal or strategic plan, but the Energy Management Team is planning to propose one to Darin. Liz said there are so many different things going on in the City, and it's exciting, but not necessarily tied together.

John P. points out there is a distinction about internal efforts (such as establishing a GHG goal for municipal operations) and the provision of services to the public, like Utilities does.

Phil points out that other communities' examples of GHG goals are all over the map. We don't need to get too hung up on the goal; we want to reduce GHG emissions and get back on track. When Council discussed the goals, there was apparent confusion about what the goal means.

Eric said there is no "one size fits all" for a goal, different cities have different circumstances such as climate, etc. Jeff asked what the goals are of the Colorado Climate project. Lucinda said there are two goals: reduce emission 20% below 2005 by 2020, and reduce emissions 80% below 2005 by 2050. Jeff asked whether it would be a good idea to select the same direction as the Colorado Climate Action Plan. Liz had suggested the same thing by e-mail and noted that the Mayor has already endorsed it through his participation on the CAP. John B. said it's not accurate to tell people in the community that if Fort Collins reduces emissions by this level, it will change the global climate. It makes sense to follow the same direction as the state on the goal but let's be clear about what it means.

John P. points out that we will not be able to measure reduction in the inventory to track progress on the goal. John also said it's fair to say that we need to reduce by this level in order to do our part. Art began to track points that he thought could be considered Guiding Principle. John P. restated that the goal is based on an inventory, not a reduction level. Bill Farland said that 1) Fort Collins should continue to be a leader in sustainability, and 2) there is a scientific basis about the level of reduction that is needed and we each must do our part, and 3) there are large ancillary benefits to these efforts. There is a need to do something soon and to do something concrete. He hopes that the measures already under consideration are still valid even under a longer-term goal. Eric asked how we could expect China to reduce if we don't start to do it ourselves? And by doing it ourselves, we are promoting the evolution of reduction technologies.

Judy shared her perspective from sitting on the CAP. The CAP also asked, "What is the vision?" and felt there was a lost opportunity to develop a vision statement that could distinguish Colorado from all the other dry, numeric state goals. Blue noted that Council wants more regular reporting. If we are creating this much GHG right now, we may need to set an annual goal to start reducing right away. Today I want less GHG than yesterday; can't we translate these long-term goals into immediate numbers along the way. Can we use that concept to create a simpler goal?

BREAK

Art asked Lucinda to review some concepts that were mentioned by Council mentioned at the last work session, to inform the discussion on Guiding Principles. Steve W. shared the underlying reason why he got involved in this was to do everything in our power to address a problem that we are all contributing to. History shows that some civilizations have so completely damaged their environment that their culture ended. We will have done everything in our power to keep from destroying the planet. He recognized that we can't destroy our economy and we can't destroy ourselves socially in doing these things, that's why he said "everything on our power". But we do have a collective ability to say we want to make a difference, to start checking off the reductions. John P. mentions the concept of responsibility.

Eric used the analogy that we are digging ourselves into a hole, and the current goal only reduces the rate at which we are digging and doesn't even begin to fill in the hole. It would help Council to see the numbers this way. Blue's concern is that the public may perceive that Fort Collins just changed the goal because they couldn't make it. We need to explain this to the public. The language of the goal doesn't get us working on it year by year. John B. said that it's the actions that matter, more than the actual goal. All these cities are probably focusing on actions. Bill Franzen still believes there is a need for a firm statement of leadership with actions to back it up. Council indicated they are on board with it, but there needs to be some dramatic statement to get departments behind this, so they can have a common theme. Then citizens would say, wow, the City is leading by example. And the Council needs to be doing the same thing, and so does CSU, and other large private businesses, etc. Phil wants to avoid getting too hung up on the goal. Find something that works and let's start making actions happen.

Ultimately, Eric wants to present a full package to Council, including budget, so they can decide on next steps.

Jeff moved to adopt the same goals as the Colorado Climate Action Plan.

Liz seconded.

Discussion:

Lucinda referred to how these two goals look graphically, when applied to Fort Collins emissions. They compliment each other, almost falling in a straight line. Judy said the 2020 goal was built "bottom up", based largely on measures that were analyzed, and the 2050 goal was based on scientific need. John P. supported that goal but feels that guiding principles are necessary too. John B. want to see a limit on costs placed on the goals, and asked if that is important to the CTF. A lead-in statement acknowledging that unknowns may occur along the way was suggested. Art asked if a principle about "financially feasible" covers John B's concern. John B. said PRPA is working on numbers and costs. John P. cautioned against setting things up as "winners and losers".

A straw poll indicated the motion would pass. Stephen commented that while he is here representing Larimer County, the Board of Commissioners would look at what Fort Collins is doing but make their own decision. Stephen thinks Larimer County has a responsibility to participate, but he can't ensure that the county will follow suit with respect to a goal. He recognizes that we have to start somewhere and is supportive of this, but can't commit anything for Larimer County. John B. expressed hesitation about voting for it without a caveat about the economics. Bill Franzen felt it would be City Council's responsibility to make the financial assessments. If we add a caveat about economics, we'd have to do that for everything. Steve suggests adding a clause about "reasonable and prudent". Judy suggests that if we add longer-term measures to the package, it may improve the cost-effectiveness, as it did at the state level. Blue views this as a goal, not a mandate. If things are not financially feasible, then we miss our goal. Steve said that we should give Council a recommended goal, guiding principles, and specific measures, and how much they cost and comment on whether they are effective financially, then Council will decide. Phil said all measures have costs and impacts.

Jeff moved to adopt the same goals as the Colorado Climate Action Plan:

* reduce emissions 20% below 2005 levels, by 2020

* reduce emissions 80% below 2005 levels, by 2050

Liz seconded.

Vote: 12 in favor

John B. did not completely support the draft goal for the following reasons: (1) the accounting of potential reductions did not recognize the lack of alignment between the goal and the reductions related to measures outside the city (e.g. recycling), (2) there was no recognition of the need for or commitment to emission reduction efforts by other entities, particularly large emitters such as China, whose increases in CO2 emissions dwarf local and regional reduction activities, and most importantly, (3) there is no limit or “safety valve” placed on cost to reach the goal. However, he ultimately decided to vote in favor of the goal.

John P. moved to provide Guiding Principles to Council, along with the goal.

Garry seconded.

Discussion ensued about Guiding Principle and Art recorded them. Points to include in a preamble or introduction to the memo were also identified. Points recorded on the flip charts included:

- The Fort Collins community can and should be a leader in greenhouse gas reduction efforts at the regional, state, and even national level.
- Fort Collins will realize huge ancillary economic, environmental, and social benefits when implementing greenhouse gas reduction strategies.
- It is imperative for the City organization to lead by example in this effort. How can we tell other to do it if we don't do it ourselves.
- The recommended 2050 goal is grounded in scientific basis that reductions of global greenhouse gas emission on the order of 80% are needed by mid-century to avoid the most significant and catastrophic impacts of climate change.
- The measures introduced in the Fort Collins “Short-Term Provisional Package” can play an important role in making progress on the recommended 2020 goal that is consistent with the statewide goal. The state 2020 goal is built upon a plan of action strategies and state leaders believe it is achievable.

Vision statement

“We will have done everything in our power to keep from destroying sustainable life on the planet.”

Guiding Principles

- Focus on action but use goals to guide development of plans.
- The City of Fort Collins must lead by example in policy-making and implementation.
- Engage all sectors, including large organizations within the community who can provide a special type of leadership and influence.
- Greenhouse gas reduction strategies must consider the technical, economic, political, and social feasibility, and be reasonable and prudent.
- Identify and factor the multiple co-benefits of strategies into decision-making.
- Address all aspects of the challenge, including emissions source categories (electricity, transportation, natural gas, and municipal solid waste) and user sectors (residential, commercial industrial).
- Commit to and institutionalize regular reporting to track progress and determine whether course correction are needed. Plans should identify milestones and reporting metrics.

The organization of the points in the memo was also discussed, and it was determined that the specific language could be resolved by e-mail after the meeting. Bill Franzen suggested including language about challenging convention to go beyond what's been done before.

John B. asked about issues of emissions inventory and the mismatch between recycling benefit. Lucinda said it could be accounted for by quantifying the energy that goes into materials used in Fort Collins.

John P. moved to provide Guiding Principles to Council, along with the goal.

Garry seconded.

Vote: All in favor; none opposed. Motion passes.

Next meeting:

March 31, 2008

5:30-9:00

215 North Mason, Community Room