

Meeting Minutes

Environment and Climate Committee



CITY OF BEND

Location: Council Chambers, 710 NW Wall Street

Date: May 8, 2025

The meeting of the Environment and Climate Committee (ECC) was called to order at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 8, 2025, in the City Council Chambers, 710 NW Wall Street, and online.

- 1. Roll Call:** Kavi Chokshi, Laura Tabor, Mark Buckley, Neil Baunsgard, Ray Hartwell, Rory Isbell, Scott Nordquist, Smita Mehta (Online)

Absent: Nick Millar, Madalyn Paquette (ex officio), Sasha Sulia (ex officio)

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

4/10/2025 ECC Meeting Minutes

Approved with no additions or corrections.

3. Public Comment (2 minutes each)

Visitors can use "Raise Hand" feature when prompted to provide public comment

None

4. Staff Updates | Cassie Lacy

Presented by Senior Management Analyst Cassie Lacy.

Slides included:

- Committee member updates:
 - Committee recruitment underway – application closes on May 15
 - Good number of applicants so far
- Community Climate Action Plan Update
 - Council adopted on April 16
 - Agreed with ECC's priorities - incorporating into Council Goals

- Electrification Policy Update
 - Council agreed with ECC's letter and gave direction to pursue a fee on natural gas appliances and to use the revenue for an incentive program.
 - Planned engagement process will be updated for this approach
- Engagement update
 - Newsletter launched in April
 - Tabling at Earth Day Fair
- City Projects Update
 - Invest Bend Workshops – June 10, July 10, August 28, 5:30-7:30 pm
 - Mark Buckley will be the ECC representative

Member Isbell noted that Council was enthusiastic and unanimous in supporting the CCAP update. Council feedback emphasized the desire for Bend to be more ambitious in its climate goals.

Member Buckley asked whether Council proposed additional actions on natural gas, as discussed at the Stewardship meeting. Lacy clarified that Council directed staff to develop a natural gas appliance fee, modeled after Ashland's, to act as a disincentive, and to create an incentive program funded by the fee, consistent with ECC's recommendation.

Lacy stated that the process will continue as planned, including forming a joint advisory committee and gathering input from stakeholders such as utilities, developers, and contractors. She will return to Council in a work session in August to present a work plan and outline how stakeholder feedback will be incorporated. In the meantime, staff are consulting with other cities that have implemented similar fees and collecting data on electrification costs. The public engagement process will begin in the fall.

Winters added that staff are monitoring current NOx legislation and related litigation. Although this issue is not part of the current stakeholder process due to Council direction, it remains an active area of interest and discussion. Lacy confirmed that while not included in this year's work presentation, work on this topic is ongoing behind the scenes.

Member Hartwell asked whether Council discussed the tradeoffs between utility ratepayer costs and carbon reduction—specifically, what level of cost is considered reasonable versus excessive. Lacy responded that Council did not engage in that discussion, but the joint advisory committee is expected to explore those questions to help determine a reasonable fee structure.

Member Hartwell expressed concern about the speed of the recommendation to Council, stating that more data collection and research should have been done before making such a recommendation. He clarified that he is not opposed to the fee itself but emphasized the importance of due diligence to avoid unintended consequences. He urged more thorough analysis in future recommendations.

Member Baunsgard responded that advancing the policy process is how those important questions will be addressed. He views the recommendation as a necessary step forward in evaluating feasibility and ensuring the policy works for Bend. He noted that the Council goal has been in place for two years and that the recommendation followed conversations with legal counsel, consultants, and review of example cities, making it consistent with how decisions are typically made in the City.

Winters emphasized that the Council-directed process is intended to explore tradeoffs, such as impacts on housing and utility costs. He noted that Bend's fee will not be a direct copy of Ashland's and that local context will be carefully considered.

Member Hartwell agreed that Bend's landscape is different from Ashland's and that this must be taken into account. Member Baunsgard clarified that Ashland was presented as a local example, not a model to replicate. Lacy agreed, stating that staff will conduct research to ensure the policy is tailored to Bend's needs and will outline next steps accordingly. She asked ECC members to consider whether they would like to participate in the joint advisory committee, which will begin in the fall.

Lacy reiterated that implementation is not imminent. The current phase is focused on answering key questions to ensure the fee is effective and responsibly developed. She added that having clear direction from Council helps focus staff and committee efforts. It's possible that data may show the fee is not feasible, but having a direction allows for a more structured process.

Member Buckley asked whether any existing programs have faced legal challenges. Lacy responded that Ashland's program is new and has not yet been adopted. She is planning to speak with other cities that have implemented or are considering similar fees.

Member Isbell acknowledged Member Hartwell's concerns but emphasized the importance of not getting bogged down in process. She stated that at some point, a direction must be chosen, which is why the committee recommended the fee to Council.

Lacy asked if any other ECC members were interested in participating in the Invest Bend workshops. Member Buckley will represent the ECC.

Member Chokshi asked whether the Sustainability Newsletter's upcoming events section will include community events in the future. Lee explained that it's challenging to highlight some community organizations and not others. After consulting with legal, the decision was made to spotlight community organizations through the Climate Action Partner Grant Program by featuring program applicants.

5. Climate Action Partner Grant Program | Discussion

Presented by Senior Management Analyst Cassie Lacy.

Slides included:

- Program Purpose
 - Facilitate the execution of community-partner led CCAP strategies by providing financial assistance to qualifying organizations so that they have capacity and resources to implement CCAP programs
 - Intended to accelerate GHG reductions beyond business as usual by helping to establish new programs and initiatives that support climate action
 - Formalizes partnerships focused on climate action and allows us to support more directly (i.e. cross-promote programs, etc.)

- A mechanism through which to facilitate and support “community ownership” of CCAP, aligned with the original vision
- Eligible Project Types
 - Eligible projects and programs must be directly fulfilling CCAP actions
 - Most actions are in the categories of:
 - Outreach and education
 - Workforce development
 - Technical assistance and/or community support programs
 - CCAP Actions that are eligible are noted in the CCAP Update by “Community Partner” being listed as implementation partner
- Eligible Costs
 - Staffing to coordinate and deliver in person and/or virtual programs, events, trainings, etc.
 - Technical experts to deliver in-person and/or virtual trainings
 - Development, translation, and printing of outreach, training, or other programmatic materials
 - Supplies and other materials needed to deliver programs and services
 - Room reservations, food, and other expenses associated with hosting events, workshops, and classes
 - Stipends for participation in trainings and events to ensure access to programming
- Application and Award Process
 - Organizations fill out and submit application to City via email
 - Once or twice per year application cycles
 - Staff screen applications to ensure eligibility
 - ECC reviews and scores applications, makes recommendation about what to fund
 - Recommendations delivered to City Council, City Council makes final decision on awarding funds
 - Contractual agreement, funding and reporting
 - Evaluation criteria:
 - Project impact, organizational capacity, feasibility, alignment with CCAP goals, equity & accessibility
- Impact & Next Steps
 - \$150,000 annually requested in budget for grant program
 - Anticipate 3-7 grants awarded per year, depending on size of requests and prioritization (\$20-50,000 awards) → an additional 3-7 CCAP programs or initiatives completed each year
 - **Next Steps**
 - Direction to create Climate Action Partner Grant Program is part of the CCAP Update Resolution that Council will adopt on April 16
 - Plan to bring resolution for Council to adopt program in May or June
 - Interested parties informational meetings in June
 - Application launch in June/July
- Discussion
 - Do you have feedback for any aspect of the Climate Action Partner Grant program?
 - Do you think the goals, objectives, and structure of the program are clear and accessible for applicants and community members?

- Any improvements suggested for the application process?
- Any feedback on the evaluation criteria?
- Do you support this approach for the Climate Action Partner Grant Program?

Member Tabor asked for clarification on the total funding available. Lacy confirmed that the program will offer \$150,000 per year, totaling \$300,000 over the biennium.

Member Tabor also asked whether a project could receive a two-year award to allow for a longer implementation timeline. Lacy responded that this could be possible and would depend on coordination with other City staff, including procurement.

Member Baunsgard declared a potential conflict of interest due to his employment with an organization that may apply for the Grant (The Environmental Center).

Member Chokshi declared a potential conflict of interest due to his employment with an organization that may apply for the Grant (The Environmental Center).

Member Isbell declared a potential conflict of interest due to his employment with the Central Oregon LandWatch, a local advocacy group.

Member Nordquist declared a potential conflict of interest due to his employment with an organization that may apply for the Grant (Habitat for Humanity).

Member Nordquist suggested that the program not be limited to new initiatives, noting that expanding or enhancing existing programs could be a more effective use of funds. Members Mehta and Buckley agreed.

Lacy clarified that the program is open to higher education institutions and other public organizations, and that staff are considering adding evaluation criteria related to diversity and inclusion. She noted that the program is intended to build and strengthen community partnerships, and while the applicant pool may be small initially, it is expected to grow over time.

Member Tabor suggested offering smaller grant amounts to help organizations develop or pilot programs, similar to utility planning grants. Lacy agreed this could be considered in future iterations but recommended keeping the first year simple. Member Hartwell suggested explicitly allowing planning costs as eligible expenses to increase flexibility.

Lacy confirmed that project timelines can exceed two years, as grant payments will be made upfront.

Member Baunsgard recommended including capital costs as eligible expenses. Tabor asked whether the program would prioritize pilot projects or broader program scopes. Lacy responded that this would be determined during the review process.

Member Isbell asked whether eligibility should be limited to public entities (e.g., waste haulers). Member Chokshi recommended keeping the application process simple and inclusive of private businesses, with the option to deprioritize them during review. Member Tabor noted that nonprofits can subcontract with for-profit partners, and Member Isbell suggested making this clear in the application.

Member Chokshi expressed concern that excluding for-profits could limit innovation from small businesses addressing CCAP goals. Winters noted that all applications are public record, with some exceptions. Lacy said she would consult with legal about including an anonymity clause but will clarify in the application that submissions are public.

Lacy summarized the feedback and agreed to the following updates:

- Maintain eligibility for nonprofits only but clarify that they may subcontract with private sector partners.
- Allow for two-year project timelines.
- Permit planning costs and capital costs as eligible expenses.
- Remove the restriction to new programs only, allowing for expansion of existing efforts.

Member Mehta suggested using a disbursement model instead of upfront payments, with reporting required at the end. Lacy responded that upfront payments are administratively simpler. Member Chokshi proposed a 50/50 split to reduce risk if a project underperforms.

Member Chokshi also asked about ineligible costs and whether other expenses might be considered. Lacy said the list was meant to be specific, and Isbell suggested adding a clarifying line: "Other costs may be eligible and will be reviewed by the committee." Lacy agreed to include this.

Member Chokshi inquired about how to handle confidential information in applications and suggested adding cost-benefit impact to the project impact criteria.

Member Nordquist recommended allowing more than one month for the initial application period, given this is the program's first year. In future years, a shorter window could be used with adequate promotion.

Member Chokshi emphasized the importance of keeping the application simple and not overly burdensome for organizations.

Members discussed the evaluation criteria, suggesting:

- Increasing the weight of Project Impact.
- Reducing emphasis on Feasibility and Organizational Capacity.
- Making Project Impact more open-ended.
- Adding a note that the scoring matrix is a guide, not a rigid formula.

Winters suggested reviewing how other government's structure similar programs for additional ideas.

Lacy asked if members were comfortable moving forward with the current direction and reevaluating after the first year. Members agreed to retain numerical scoring and aim to bring the program to Council in June.

Member Chokshi noted that subjectivity in scoring is inevitable, and no rubric will be fully comprehensive.

Members expressed support for the direction and gave staff the go-ahead to finalize the program and incorporate ECC feedback.

6. Energy Navigator Program | Presentation

Presented by Senior Management Analyst Cassie Lacy and Management Analyst Megan Lee.

Lacy provided a brief overview of the program scope, but given the lack of time, are saving the comprehensive presentation and discussion for the June meeting.

7. Agenda Review

Slide:

- June
 - a. Energy Navigator Program
 - b. Electrification process
 - c. Choose 3 people to be part of electrification joint committee meetings
 - d. Invest Bend meeting
- July meeting cancelled
 - a. July 10: Invest Bend Meeting
- August
 - a. August 28: Invest bend Meeting

8. Adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Megan Lee
Management Analyst - Environment, Climate & Sustainability



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