

Meeting Minutes

Environment and Climate Committee



CITY OF BEND

Location: Council Chambers, 710 NW Wall Street

Date: June 12, 2025

The meeting of the Environment and Climate Committee (ECC) was called to order at 11:02 a.m. on Thursday, June 12, 2025, in the City Council Chambers, 710 NW Wall Street, and online.

1. **Roll Call:** Kavi Chokshi, Nick Millar, Neil Baunsgard, Ray Hartwell, Rory Isbell, Scott Nordquist, Laura Tabor (Online)

Absent: Mark Buckley, Madalyn Paquette (ex officio), Sasha Sulia (ex officio)

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

5/08/2025 ECC Meeting Minutes

Approved given that name typos are fixed.

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 complete! 3 new members appointed on 6/18
 - Smita Mehta resignation
- **Climate Action Partner Grant Program**
 - Adopted on June 4
 - **City Fleet Electrification Resolution**
 - Adopted on June 4

- **City Projects Update**
 - Invest Bend Workshops – June 10, July 10, August 28, 5:30-7:30 pm

5. Climate Action Partner Grant Program | Discussion

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

Slides included:

- **Program Updates**
 - Longer timeframe for implementation – 2 years
 - Not restricted to new programs
 - Added planning to dedicated use of funds
 - Added capital costs as an explicit allowable use of funds
 - Allow partners to subcontract with private entity
 - Swapped order of “General Programs” and “Technical Assistance Programs”
 - Expanded descriptions of criteria
 - Adjusted scoring allocations to weight Impact as the highest
- **Approach to scoring and awarding**
 - Staff to review for eligibility
 - Staff to score based on criteria
 - Staff create recommendation about which applications to award and at what \$ amounts, based on scores
 - ECC to deliberate on which applications to award and at what \$ amounts, using staff recommendation as a starting point
 - Option to invite applicants to attend the meeting to answer questions about their projects
 - ECC votes to recommend funding awards to the City Manager

Member Baungard expressed appreciation for the inclusion of feedback from members with grant experience in shaping this first round. He asked whether the evaluation and recommendation process would occur in a single meeting or be split across multiple meetings. Lacy responded that the goal is to complete the process in one meeting, though discussions may continue if necessary.

Member Chokshi asked whether 501(c)(7) social clubs and pass-through organizations would be eligible applicants. Lacy clarified that applicants with a fiscal sponsor would be eligible. Selkirk added that the intent is to exclude for-profit and political organizations, but being a 501(c)(3) is not a strict requirement if the applicant aligns with the Council’s intent.

Selkirk addressed conflict of interest concerns, emphasizing that ECC members must recuse themselves from deliberations or decisions involving organizations with which they or their family members are affiliated, either through employment or financial interest. This provision is included in the program overview to protect both ECC members and the integrity of the program. Recusal must occur during deliberation, though not necessarily during project development discussions. In most cases, members would need to recuse themselves from the entire meeting.

Member Chokshi noted that four members had indicated potential conflicts of interest at a previous meeting and asked how this would affect quorum. Selkirk clarified that while a conflict of interest does not affect quorum, recusal does, and the committee will address this as needed.

Member Chokshi also asked whether staff scoring would be publicly disclosed. Selkirk confirmed that staff scores will be presented at an open ECC meeting and are subject to public records law. Lacy added that while scoring is not conducted in a public meeting, both individual and aggregate scores will be available for public review.

Member Tabor asked whether ECC members would receive the applications in advance. Selkirk confirmed that they would.

Member Nordquist appreciated that the program is modeled after AHAC programs, where all applicants are invited to present. He suggested doing the same here, noting that proposals typically generate a lot of questions. Lacy responded that this is the intent, but if the number of applicants is too large, a threshold may be set. However, no selective invitations will be made.

Member Nordquist also asked whether recommending funding to the City Manager still constitutes a conflict of interest. Selkirk confirmed that it does. The program includes a rule that goes beyond legal requirements to ensure ethical integrity, stating that if someone has a financial interest in an organization, they must be separated from the deliberation process.

Member Chokshi raised a concern about the subjectivity of the “alignment with CCAP goals” evaluation criterion. Lacy clarified that for a project to be ineligible, it would need to have no connection to the CCAP at all. Given the broad nature of climate action, a wide range of projects could support CCAP goals to varying degrees.

Lacy outlined the next steps. Staff are currently finalizing application materials. Two informational sessions will be held after the application opens to encourage participation. The ECC will reconvene in October to score applications. A press release will be issued, and ECC members are encouraged to promote the program, especially through personal outreach, which tends to be the most effective.

The committee recessed at 11:37 a.m. and reconvened at 11:46 a.m.

6. Energy Navigator Program | Presentation

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

- **Background/Research**
 - City staff researched models of navigator programs from other communities and local markets
 - Identified community partners providing similar services:
 - Neighbor Impact
 - Central Electric Cooperative
 - The Environmental Center
 - Energy Trust of Oregon

- Volunteer electrification coaches trained by Rewiring America
- Feedback from partners:
 - Focus on **boosting visibility** of existing programs.
 - **Clarify** differences between programs
 - **Facilitating collaboration** among service providers
 - **Drive participation** in existing programs.
 - Avoid **duplicating** programs that may cause confusion.
- **Research Findings Cont'd.**
 - **Review of existing programs and resources found that free Navigator-like programs exist for certain demographics in our community:**
 - Neighbor Impact – low-income individuals
 - Environmental Center – low-income and other underserved groups
 - Central Electric Cooperative – CEC customers
 - Electrify Oregon (volunteer coaches) – community-wide
 - **Review found that the gaps and opportunities areas include:**
 - Free navigator-like services for the rest of the community (over 120% AML in Pacific Power territory)
 - Clarifying and promoting existing programs
- **Purpose**
 - The Navigator designed to serve as a trusted, centralized resource that connects residents with accurate information, technical assistance, and financial support for electrification upgrades.
 - Home electrification is confusing and overwhelming due to abundant information and resources
 - Simplifying the process is essential to encourage residents to electrify their homes
 - Navigation support programs:
 - Amplify and coordinate the work of local partners already offering electrification services
 - Simplify the electrification process
 - Understand the different service providers and who is responsible for what
 - Help access financial incentives
 - Assist residents in understanding electrification options
 - Connect residents with qualified service providers (contractors)
- **Scope**
 - Educate Bend homeowners and renters about local, state, and federal resources for energy efficiency and electrification upgrades
 - Coordinate existing programs, expand reach, and clarify roles
 - Fill in existing gaps by reaching the entire Bend community
 - Provide services (see slide 13) and assess gaps and opportunities over the next 6 months to build a more robust program as desired by the community

Lacy shared background for newer committee members, explaining that the energy navigator program has long been identified as a priority. It was originally envisioned as part of the city's electrification education and outreach strategy. The Council approved development of the program as a short-term action, recognizing that regulatory changes take longer. While the program was initially planned to launch this summer, Council recently reprioritized its goals for the biennium. As a result, the navigator

program has been deferred to the next fiscal year. This shift allows staff to focus on the electrification fee and grant program in the near term and to build a more thoughtful navigator program with input from the ECC. Additionally, revenue from the electrification fee could potentially support and enhance the navigator program.

Member Baunsgard noted that one of the key opportunities the navigator program addresses is related to the federal HOMES and HEAR funding, which lacks associated outreach and adds complexity. While delaying the program is not ideal, the uncertain status of this funding makes the timing difficult.

Council Member Norris emphasized that the decision to delay was not made lightly. The city currently lacks the resources to implement the program effectively this year, but it remains a priority. She expressed interest in learning more about grant opportunities, though acknowledged that the federal funding landscape is complex.

Member Baunsgard suggested incorporating more information about HOMES and HEAR into community engagement efforts. Member Isbell asked about the availability of these rebates. Member Baunsgard responded that funding exists, but implementation is still being worked out on a state-by-state basis.

Lacy clarified that the programs listed on slide 9 are free for underserved community members. While paid services are available, cost can be a barrier. Member Baunsgard asked whether any of the listed groups, aside from Electrify Oregon coaches, are allowed to discuss switching fuel sources. Lacy said that question was not asked during their conversations. Baunsgard noted a gap between efficiency and electrification opportunities, which can be confusing for both providers and participants.

Member Hartwell encouraged the group to consider the broader scope of energy conservation efforts. He suggested that the program should promote all options for saving money and reducing carbon emissions, not just electrification. Since the program will not offer one-on-one assistance, subsidizing energy audits could provide an accessible entry point for residents. Comprehensive audits are preferred to ensure residents understand the full picture and aren't pushed toward electrification if it's not the best option for their situation.

Member Hartwell also recommended that audits be broadly scoped, not limited to electrification. Lacy responded that the RFP for contractors would require them to specify the scope of their audits. The goal is to ensure audits are comprehensive and not solely focused on fuel switching.

Member Hartwell asked how the process of employing the Home Energy Score compares to a full energy audit. Lacy explained that the Home Energy Score is a simplified federal tool designed for home sales, while audits are more comprehensive. The group may need to decide whether to prioritize broader access to simplified assessments or fewer, more in-depth audits.

Member Hartwell also raised the idea of creating a list of approved contractors rather than selecting a single provider through an RFP. Lacy said that if multiple providers are used, they would need to use the same audit tool to ensure consistency. Selkirk added that if the city is funding the work, public purchasing and procurement laws would apply, adding complexity to the process.

Member Baunsgard asked whether the program could be structured as a rebate, similar to the city's water efficiency rebate. Selkirk responded that this is something staff would need to evaluate to ensure compliance with procurement and ethics rules. A model like the turf rebate program could serve as a reference, and staff will work through the details on the back end.

Lacy asked whether the program should focus on the Home Energy Score as the primary tool, and whether a rebate model could offer more flexibility for residents to choose their provider and the depth of their audit. Member Baunsgard supported the idea of including both broad efficiency options and fuel-switching opportunities, and suggested exploring how these could align with the Home Energy Score framework.

Member Baunsgard also noted that even if the program provides new opportunities for residents not eligible for other services, there will still be gaps in existing programs that don't allow for exploration of electrification. Lacy said she would follow up with service providers to determine whether they are explicitly prohibited from discussing fuel switching.

Member Millar suggested learning from other organizations' data on audit implementation to inform outreach and program design. Selkirk added that the city could require reporting from program participants as a condition of funding, to track which audit recommendations are actually implemented.

Member Millar asked whether electrification of transportation could be included in the program's workshops, or if the focus must remain on the built environment. Lacy clarified that the workshops don't need to be limited to buildings and that transportation could be considered. Member Millar recommended including electrified transportation options, and Member Baunsgard offered to share materials for that purpose. Member Hartwell agreed that the program should address the full range of electrification options.

Lacy emphasized that the workshops are intended to amplify existing efforts and not serve as comprehensive climate education, given limited staff capacity. She noted the importance of partnering with subject matter experts in the community to provide targeted education.

Member Tabor asked whether the program is targeting single-family or multi-family housing, recognizing that each presents different challenges. She also asked whether the audit would be the only part of the program contracted out, with the rest handled by existing staff. Lacy confirmed that the city does not have the resources to hire a dedicated navigator. Instead, the audit would serve as the entry point, connecting residents to existing technical assistance. The annual budget of \$30,000–\$40,000 is not sufficient to hire a new staff member. Additionally, service providers expressed concern that adding another person could create confusion. Instead, the city plans to contract with service providers to support workshops and office hours.

Member Chokshi asked whether one of the existing service providers could serve as the primary point of contact for one-on-one technical assistance. Lacy said this could be explored if ECC members felt it would add value.

Member Chokshi also asked how the first-come, first-served model would work. Lacy explained that the free audits would be limited by budget and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. However, the workshops would be open to everyone, regardless of whether they receive a free audit. Member Chokshi questioned whether funding audits is the best use of the budget, or if partnering with a nonprofit to expand existing services might be more effective. Lacy clarified that the RFP process is open to all, including nonprofits, and could be used to build on existing programs.

Member Tabor echoed the question about whether audits are the best use of funds, noting that the biggest gap may be in supporting implementation after the audit. She asked whether a portion of the budget could be used to help residents act on audit recommendations.

Member Isbell pointed out that the Oregon Department of Energy offers the HIPPO tool, which acts as a statewide navigator to connect residents with available incentives. Member Tabor suggested that the city could provide a phone number for residents to call after using HIPPO, to help them understand their options.

Lacy responded that she is open to using the funds differently if audits are not the best investment. However, she noted that without an audit, it's difficult to provide tailored advice. The audit is the first step in understanding what options are available for a specific home. She asked Member Tabor what value a phone contact would provide if that person couldn't also offer audit services.

Member Tabor clarified that the phone contact would help residents understand the process and guide them through each step. She acknowledged that audits are necessary, but suggested that the budget could be split between audits and a contact person to help residents interpret results and navigate next steps.

Lacy said the RFP could be structured to include both audit services and a set number of hours for technical assistance. Member Tabor supported this approach, saying she liked the idea of including technical assistance in the RFP.

Member Nordquist suggested that the city publish information about existing service gaps so that other organizations can avoid duplicating efforts. Member Chokshi agreed and added that it would be helpful if audit implementation could lead to incentives, to better measure impact. He also raised equity concerns, asking whether bilingual audits are available and how the program would address differences between renters and homeowners.

Lacy concluded by outlining next steps. Staff will continue to focus on the grant program and electrification policy work for now, and will revisit the navigator program in approximately nine months, closer to its planned launch. Much will evolve between now and then, especially depending on the direction of the city's electrification incentive program. In the meantime, ECC members are encouraged to share additional thoughts, and Lacy is available to meet individually to discuss ideas. Staff appreciated the feedback and will use it to shape the program moving forward.

7. Agenda Review

Slide:

- July meeting cancelled

- a. July 10: Invest Bend Meeting
- August
 - a. Climate Fee Plan update
 - b. Growth Plan (?)
 - c. Invest Bend Plan Update (?)
 - d. August 28 Invest Bend Plan Meeting
- September 2025
 - a. TBD

8. Adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Megan Lee
Management Analyst – Environment & Climate



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