



Councilmember Marni von Wilpert

City of San Diego • District 5

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 8, 2021

TO: Councilmember Elo-Rivera, Chair, Committee on the Environment

FROM: Councilmember Marni von Wilpert

SUBJECT: Committee on the Environment Priorities for 2021

Thank you to Chair Elo-Rivera for the opportunity to share my priorities for the development of the 2021 Environment Committee work plan. I am honored to serve on this incredibly important and impactful Committee. I look forward to working with my fellow Environment Committee Members and members of the public as we address San Diego's short- and long-term environmental priorities.

We must make our communities more resilient to the increasing impacts of climate change, such as wildfires, sea level rise, worsening droughts, and air pollution. We also need to prioritize updating and implementing our long-term environmental planning documents such as the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Zero Waste Plan, and Watershed Asset Management Plan (WAMP). In addition, the committee should focus on strengthening our economy by continuing to evaluate the creation of good, green jobs. It is essential that every family and every neighborhood in San Diego has access to clean, reliable energy and a healthy environment.

My priorities for the Environment Committee for 2021 include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Gas and Electric Franchise Agreement Development**
 - The City's gas and electric franchise will be a significant focus of the Environment Committee in the first quarter of 2021. This is an incredibly important decision that has significant impacts on our city and all options should be evaluated and on the table. Our gas and electric franchise must help us meet our climate action goals as well as protect our communities from wildfires made worse by climate change. The Environment Committee must work quickly and closely with the Mayor's office to ensure we develop an agreement that meets these goals, while providing robust community engagement opportunities.
- **Review and Update City Brush Management Policies and Programs**
 - As climate change-driven wildfires get worse each year, the City's brush management programs have become more important than ever before. We must

work to prevent future wildfires and ensure our City is prepared if, and when, another large-scale fire like the 2003 Cedar Fire or 2007 Witch Creek fire occurs. Regular brush management is one of the most effective ways of protecting and hardening both private and public structures from wildfire risk. The Committee should hold a discussion with the Park and Recreation and Public Utilities Department's brush management staff to ensure our policies are up to date and are following best management practices.

- **Climate Action Plan Implementation and Update**
 - The Environment Committee should work with the Sustainability Department to review short term CAP implementation goals, including a 5-year Outlook, and begin the process of updating the CAP with current data and best practices.
- **Development of a Climate Adaptation Plan**
 - The creation of a standalone Climate Adaptation Plan is overdue. We are already experiencing the effects of climate change, and we must begin planning and preparing our communities for its worsening impacts. This includes, but is not limited to, prolonged periods of drought, increased wildfire risk, and sea level rise. The plan must also focus on specific impacts felt within our low-income communities that are at greatest risks from climate impacts. The Environment Committee should begin discussions with the Sustainability Department to provide direction for the development for this essential planning document.
- **Climate Equity Fund**
 - The creation of a Climate Equity Fund is essential to ensure we are addressing the disproportionate effects of climate change faced by our low-income communities and communities of color. The Environment Committee should work with the Department of Finance to create the Climate Equity Fund and to identify funding and grant opportunities to fill the account for our future needs.
- **Preservation of Open Space Citywide**
 - The City is fortunate to have access to over 20,000 acres of open space parkland, with a rich diversity of plants and animals. The Environment Committee should have discussions with the Park and Recreation Department and our environmental non-profit partners to find ways to expand and enhance access to open space parks citywide, and protect our multiple species conservation program areas.
- **Update and Review of Zero Waste Plan**
 - Since the changes in China's "National Sword" policy, our Zero Waste programs have been under significant strain. The Environment Committee should hold discussions with the Environmental Services Department and the Sustainability Department to receive an update on the current status of the Zero Waste Plan to determine next steps to advance our waste reduction goals.
- **Review of City Storm Water Program and Funding**
 - The Storm Water program continues to threaten our investments and infrastructure assets with its growing backlog and significant increase in costly emergency repairs. The Environment Committee should work with the Transportation and Storm Water Department to review our current program and planning documents to identify funding strategies and determine next steps to better manage our storm water system, with a goal towards environmental sustainability.

- **San Diego Community Power Updates**
 - The Environment Committee should request quarterly updates from San Diego Community Power to learn more about its service rollout and begin the discussions about programs and opportunities to promote the growth of local renewable power generation.
- **Pure Water Implementation and Community Outreach**
 - The Pure Water program is critical for the City's water independence. As the Pure Water project construction continues, the Environment Committee should receive quarterly updates on construction activities. These updates should include information about the community outreach and engagement plans to reduce quality of life impacts in the communities most affected by the construction. My office is prepared to engage with staff and the community to facilitate these efforts.
- **Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Water Meter Program Update**
 - The Committee should request an update from the Public Utilities Department on the current state of the AMI program and discuss ways to increase the pace of implementation.
- **Receive Climate Action Plan Audit Presentation from the Office of the City Auditor**
 - The Environment Committee should request a presentation of the Climate Action Plan Performance Audit by the Office of the City Auditor after initial review by the Audit Committee.
- **Identify Grant Opportunities to Increase the Use of Renewables and Clean Technologies**
 - The Committee should lead a discussion with the Department of Government Affairs to identify funding opportunities at the state and federal level to increase the use of renewables and clean technologies in the City's infrastructure.

CC: Brendan Dentino, Committee Consultant, Committee on the Environment