

# JOHNSON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Zoom Webinar

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## MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

February 23, 2021

5:45 p.m.

### A. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Planning Commission of Johnson County, Kansas, was convened at 5:46 p.m. on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, and was called to order by Chris Iliff, Chair, with the following members present and participating; to-wit: Dave Johns, Roxanne Morse, James Neese, Randy Hutchins, Dennis Bollin, Roger Mason, Mark Huggins and Lindsay Grise. Absent was George Lund. Also present were Jay Leipzig, Leslie Davis, Karen Miller, and Sean Pendley, Johnson County Planning Department.

Chairman Iliff: *In order to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Johnson County Planning Commission meeting is being conducted using a Zoom Webinar. The Planning Commissioners will not be physically present in the Board meeting room. If you're using Zoom, you may participate in the meeting using your computer, phone or other electronic device. If you e-mailed the Planning department in advance of this evening's meeting and signed up to speak at the public hearing cases, your name will be called by the moderator in the order received. If you are unable to sign up in advance and you would like to speak, then prior to the start of the agenda item that you want to speak on, click the "raise hand" function in the Zoom app. By phone, you may raise your hand by dialing \*9.*

*All speakers will be limited to three minutes, unless the Chair designates a different time period in order to accommodate all the speakers desiring to speak. When your name is called by the moderator, your microphone will be unmuted. Please state your name and address for the record, followed by your comments. With respect to all board members and presenters, please state your name every time you begin talking, so the notes can be transcribed accurately for the record. This is a public hearing. We are presenting live and recording the meeting. Thank you.*

### B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - *Approved as printed.*

Ms. Miller: This is just a reminder that the two speakers wish to change order.

Chairman Iliff: Thank you, Karen. You have been kind enough to send me a notice of that. I don't think there will be an objection to that.

### C. CONSIDER MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Chairman Iliff: Is there any objection to, recommendations for, changes or amendments to the meeting of January 26, 2021? Hearing none, do I hear a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting?

*Motion by Comm. Morse, seconded by Comm. Huggins to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2021, Planning Commission meeting.*

*Motion approved unanimously.*

## D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Iliff: Before we get to Public Comments, I would like to take just a moment to recognize that we have a new member to our Commission. That is Lindsay. Welcome aboard. If you would, would you just kind of tell this group a little bit about yourself?

Ms. Grise: Hey, good evening, everybody. My name is Lindsay. My last name, I married into it, so if you mispronounce it, it's totally forgiven. It's like the word, café. It's Grise, and I have children that are talking to me. Sorry. I'm an attorney with Burns McDonnell Engineering Company. I've been there about seven years. I do all energy contracts, power plants, solar plants, solar panels, battery storage. I do the negotiations with the utilities for those contracts. Before that I was a mechanical engineer. I did coal power plant design for five years, and I got my professional engineering license before I went to law school. I live out on a little ten-acre hobby farm in Bucyrus. I have two daughters and a husband who owns a construction company, and I'm grateful to be a part of this group.

Chairman Iliff: We're glad to have you, and I think your particular background is especially appropriate for some of the topics that we're going to be dealing with, so I think your expertise may be called upon. We're glad to have you here. We're sorry Jason Meier is no longer with us, but as part of the natural transitions when new commissioners come onboard, they like to appoint new people, and at some point or another, that's how all of us got appointed. So, we're appreciative of your being able to be here.

Ms. Grise: Thanks again. By the way, I was just going to say, I'm very excited to learn, so please give me tips or suggestions, I'm very interested in learning, so thank you very much .

Chairman Iliff: And Lindsay, you're a member of the Zoning Board as well. Is that right?

Ms. Grise: I don't think so. I think that's maybe Fred Wingert. Fred Wingert is on the Zoning Board.

Chairman Iliff: Okay. I wasn't aware of that for sure. A number of people have been both Zoning Board and members of the Planning Commission, and I thought maybe you had a dual appointment. That's good to know. I will open the meeting to public comments. Is there any member of the public that would like to address any items that are on our agenda, or even not on the agenda this evening?

Ms. Davis: Currently, Chairman, there is not anybody from the public.

Chairman Iliff: All right. We will move on. The Kansas City Regional Climate Action Plan is the next item on our agenda, and we have Tom Jacobs here to talk about that. If you would, Mr. Jacobs, feel free to take it away.

Ms. Miller: Chris, if you remember...

Chairman Iliff: You're right. So, Brian Alferman with Johnson County Sustainability Program.

Mr. Leipzig: I wanted to sneak in just for a second and give everyone a quick little introduction to Brian and his role in the County. Brian is our Sustainability Manager for Johnson County as part of the Department of Health and Environment, and he has really taken a rough concept of the position of the job and really turned it into something pretty amazing. He's doing a lot of different things throughout the county. I've had the pleasure of working with him on solid waste things, on our sustainability committee, some work on recycling programs. He's really going in several different directions at once, but he's really making an impact in the county. So, our first speaker tonight, Brian, is going to present an overview of what Johnson County is doing in terms of

sustainability programs, and then Tom Jacobs will be providing an update or overview of the Climate Action Plan that Mid America Regional Council has developed. So, this is the general theme here this evening. We have a lot of environmental expertise here that's gathered for this meeting.

I did want to mention one thing. This is a chance to put a good word in for staff. There's about 4,000 employees of Johnson County. One of the highest designations that we have for our employees are the Leadership in Action Award winners, which is an employee that makes an original contribution to their job to further efficiency or further the goals of the County, or does something really impactful that can be utilized and be a resource Countywide. Every year this award is given out to roughly one percent of our total employee population. It's about 35 to 40 people every year that are given that award. This evening, by pure luck, we're lucky to have our next speaker, Brian, who was a Leadership in Action Award winner last year, and then two years ago, Karen Miller was also a winner of the Leadership in Action Award. Then, this last year, Leslie Davis also was able to win that award. So, pretty amazing that three staff people in the one percent of the population of our County employees that win that award, so we're proud of that. I think that says a lot in terms of the leadership of the people in this department in Johnson County. Just wanted to give you a little plug there, Brian, before you start. With that, I'll turn it over to you, and I will be quiet for the rest of the meeting.

#### **F. JOHNSON COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS**

*Brian Alferman, Johnson County Sustainability Program Manager, appeared before the Zoning Board via Zoom, and made the following comments:*

Mr. Alferman: And it's too bad we can't do the secret handshake over Zoom, Karen and Leslie. Thank you, Jay. That was great. I appreciate the introduction, and I definitely appreciate the time you guys are allowing. I asked to go first on this because I think it will give a little bit of context. I'll serve as the undercard for the main event, which is Tom's presentation, the Climate Action Plan. I think it will give it a little bit of context on what we're doing in Johnson County, let you know what we've been up to, both in the recent past and currently. That will lead up to what the future holds for framing our sustainability work in the form of the Climate Action Plan. I think sequentially it makes sense for me to just roll through this pretty quickly. I do intend to go through it pretty quickly. This is something that I give to different departments and different community groups and things like that, and I promised I would limit it to about five or ten minutes. I tried to eliminate some slides, and I couldn't do it, and I thought, well, what the heck, I'll just roll through it as quickly as I can. But feel free to stop me if there's anything you all want to linger on, information-wise. Just stop me, and we can certainly discuss it. As Jay said, I'm a County employee. You know where to find me, and if you want to get in-depth with anything, I'm certainly there to do that. I could talk about this stuff all day long.

Just a quick definition. It's a pretty run-of-the-mill definition of sustainability, but it's how we define it – responsible management of resources; we meet those environmental, economic and human needs for today and generations to come. That is, like I said, a pretty run-of-the-mill definition of sustainability. I like to say that I don't really do any of the sustainability work. It's really the work of all the departments and the day-to-day delivery of services that they provide, which is really where sustainability happens, and I get to try to sew it all together. I get to connect dots. I get to ask hard questions, and one of those questions that I like to ask all the time is, can we continue to operate how we do today without depleting the resources that are listed there – environmental, economic or human needs? If the answer is no – and it's always no – what do we need to change

in how we do what we do, or what do we do specifically to get closer to a yes? That's one of those hard questions, but it leads to more interesting questions, and, more importantly, it leads to more interesting solutions. Then, what I always like to remind people is that who we are as an organization is very diverse. It makes dealing with sustainability both difficult and intimidating, but also lends itself to a lot of opportunity. If you think about who we are as an organization, we are a major employer in the metropolitan area. We're a major property owner. We're a major landowner. We are a utility. We're an occupant to a lot of our buildings, and of course, we're policymakers, just like you all here. If you think about who we are and how we approach sustainability work, like I said, it lends itself to a lot of opportunity to perform this work, but it also is a bigger opportunity to lead in this work and ask ourselves, if we're going to a major employer or a utility to do something, are we willing to do that ourselves? In a lot of respects, we are a reflection of our community. See? I already lingered too long on that slide.

What guides our work? How do we lead by example? And then, future efforts is really what I'll roll through quickly. There are a few bullets there that guide our sustainability work. One of the first ones I'll touch on is the Pillars of Performance, our guiding principles. Then I'll go through, we have a GHG Resolution, which is really kind of the first piece that we rolled out as a sustainability program in the early days of having a sustainability program. We do have a rich history, but the Greenhouse Gas Resolution was really the first written piece that came out, and I'll touch on that a little bit later, too, and then an outcropping of that was the Emissions Inventory in 2013. We had an Energy Conservation Resolution. We worked with a cohort to develop a Climate Resiliency Strategy, and the of course, we don't do anything in a silo. It really comes down to partnerships at a lot of different levels.

But this one, if you've spent any time in the County whatsoever, we have these Pillars of Performance. You'll see them posted everywhere. You'll hear them mentioned all the time. So, one of the first things I did was try to pull out the pieces in the Pillars of Performance that speak to the sustainability efforts. What could we lean on that structures the work that we do, that speaks to sustainability? There were two easy pieces that popped out at me. One, you'll see on the left side under Leadership Philosophy. The last sentence is, "Together, we will leave our community better than we found it." Of course, inherent in that is that we don't continue to do things the same way forever. We have to evolve. We have to use our experiences and our knowledge to change how we do things for the betterment of our community. It's just inherent in our leadership philosophy. Then on the far right side, one of our operational values couldn't be more explicit in how it speaks to sustainability, and that's the stewardship value. It's that we, collectively, it speaks to the community today and for future generations and, again, speaks to the creative, effective use of resources to meet environmental, economic and human needs and ties right back to our definition of sustainability. It's easy to do the work of sustainability when you have these Pillars of Performance to lean on and say, "This is who we are as an organization, and here's how this work ties into who we say we are."

Of course, we use, the "Better than we found it" in some of our graphics for our sustainability program. So that early piece that guides us is the 2007 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Resolution that was passed by the Board of County Commissioners. In it are some really important pieces that we intended to achieve. The first one is to reduce County operations greenhouse gas emissions by 33 percent by 2020, below a 2005 baseline. We don't know yet whether we achieved that, because we don't have all the data for 2020, but I can tell you, we're probably pretty close to that. Some of it is because of the work that we are doing, operationally and organizationally, but most of it will be because of the work that our utilities have done, specifically Evergy, in

cleaning up their power generation. We are one of the biggest energy users in the county, so anything that our utilities do, we necessarily benefit from.

Then there's a Facilities goal in there for substantially renovated buildings, to get that down to zero by 2030, associated energy use. Then, communitywide emissions reduced 80 percent by 2050 below a 2005 baseline. You'll see – and I think I've got a bullet later on in the slides – we need to update some of these. Obviously, they are old, but there are new experiences, new priorities, new strategies that are rolling out specifically with this Climate Action Plan that really dictate that we re-address this. We need to update this as an organization and get a better handle on where we are and what we need to be working on.

That last one is to provide leadership and create open dialog and partnerships, which we do a great job of. So, this is just for interest sake, for those that are interested in this sort of thing, that the last emissions inventory we did was using 2013 data. We actually did it in 2015, but it was 2013 data. You can see, on the left is our operations, our top five operations emitters. On the right side is our communitywide emitters by emissions. You'll see the typical culprits there – electricity, natural gas. Wastewater, interestingly enough on our operational one, is a huge user. It's just incredibly energy-intensive to move water. As a matter of fact, one of the biggest takeaways is wastewater processing accounts for 50 percent of our operational emissions. Again, that presents a big opportunity for us to have that big a chunk come from one specific source and say, "Well, we know where we should be putting our attention," and of course, we do. JOCO operations accounts for one percent of the community as a whole.

Then we have an Energy Conservation Resolution. Nothing too awfully groundbreaking in that, other than just putting it in writing that we need to make reasonable efforts to conserve energy and natural resources, and exercise sound financial management. A lot of this is very intuitive, in that the more energy we save, the more dollars we save, so it becomes a pretty good gimme to approach this.

The Climate Resilience Strategy was in 2017. We were part of a Climate Champion region, so we partnered with the City of Kansas City, Missouri; Mid America Regional Council; and Bridging the Gap, to develop the Climate Resilience Strategy. A lot of this work you'll see reflected in the current Climate Action Plan that Todd will talk about, specifically the work around targeting vulnerable populations and looking at all of this through a lens of equity, and what does this mean for people? Not what does it mean for pocketbooks, although, it certainly does. Not what it means for our buildings. Not what it means for transportation, but what does it mean for the people? One of the examples I like to throw out is the weatherization part of the picture. I saw a stat that Kansas City Metropolitan Area has the fifth highest level of percentage of income going to utilities, so when you talk about equity, we have a very highly burdened society on how much of their income is spent on utilities. So, if we start talking about energy efficiency and weatherization, we are directly impacting, not only these climate resilience strategies, of course, but again, down to the people aspect of that. We're changing peoples' personal economics. That can be very, very impactful at the individual level. How do we leave -

Comm. Hutchins: Brian, can you help me understand, as the Planning and Development Commission, how are we supposed to utilize this information to take action?

Mr. Alferman: Yeah, and you'll see more of that in the Climate Action Plan as Tom talks about it. I think it's important for the group to understand what we're doing as an organization, again, as what I explained who we are as a major component of our community. This is what guides our

work, and we hope that we're leading by example. There are definitely planning elements in this, but I think I'll hold the answer to that question until we get more into the Climate Action Plan, if that's okay, Randy.

Mr. Leipzig: And Randy, I just wanted to reiterate, as we move into our development of the Comprehensive Plan update, these type of sustainable energy provisions will become more important as we're looking into the development of the document in the future. This is kind of laying the groundwork for some of those discussions at a later date. Just letting you know that there are ideas out there that might be incorporated in later. Does that make sense, if that helps clarify a little bit?

Comm. Hutchins: Yes. Thank you, Jay.

Mr. Alferman: So, one of the higher profile elements of leading by example are our LEED buildings. We now have nine of them. The most recent one is the Lenexa City Center Library that has been LEED Silver certified, I believe. That's a great example. The building energy management is something that we take a lot of pride in. We recently hired a full time energy manager to handle the energy consumption of our building portfolio, but back in 2015, we underwent a behavioral energy management program. This didn't include any kind of capital expenditure. It didn't upgrade HVAC systems, or anything like that. This was entirely how are we managing our buildings and how the people in the buildings are interacting with it, and what does that mean for our energy usage? Bottom line, we've decreased our energy usage 13 percent, corresponding emissions reductions and, most impressively, \$3.5 million in cost avoidance to date, and that figure is pretty old, frankly. We did things like move janitorials to day shift instead of working overnight, when we would have to condition the space. We would have to light the space. We simply moved janitorial shifts during the day to when we were already doing those things, because the buildings were occupied. We eliminated space heaters in our buildings. We established temperature limits, so we didn't have people going over and pressing the thermostat up and five minutes later, somebody's pressing it down.

So, simple behavioral management things like that yielded a great savings to the organization. We have a lot of EV electric vehicle charging stations around the county. I'm sure you all have seen those. We're excited to have applied for some CMAC funding at the federal level that flows through MARC for some solar charging stations and to fund the difference between our traditional vehicles and upgrading them to electric vehicles for our organizational fleet. So, we're hopeful on that front.

Wastewater, I mentioned, biggest energy user in the County. There are some pretty innovative things going on at Wastewater. If you didn't already know about them, one of which is the co-generation plant at Middle Basin, which captures the gas created through the wastewater treatment process and uses it to generate electricity to be used on that campus. Right now, it's running at about 50 to 60 percent of the energy demand for that facility is generated onsite, by itself, through capturing that gas. It's a fascinating process, and we're trying to integrate more of that into more of our wastewater treatment plants, but this is kind of our proving grounds at Middle Basin. We're also re-starting more anaerobic digestors at some of the other plants, specifically Nelson, and so what would used to be landfilling as wet tons of sludge, we're now reducing that tonnage by digesting it onsite and then land applying to some of the outposts afterwards.

We have a Food Policy Council that does great work. It works mostly on those four work groups. Food waste solutions. Hunger and healthcare. Local food production – more of the ag side. K-

State Extension is really active in our Food Policy Council. And then food security, again, addressing some of the vulnerable populations. We have a WIC garden outside of the Health Services building that yields tons of food that gets donated to the Women, Infants and Children's clinics there onsite, and then some of it goes home to people who volunteer. If they're a WIC client, if they work in the garden, they get to take home food as well.

Something the Planning Department was involved in is the Solar Ready Gold Community that establishes us as a solar ready community. We have addressed it in our codes. We've addressed it in how we issue permits on solar. Really, a lot of that was just being more transparent upfront and easy to use for people considering implementing solar on their properties. In the future, we've subscribed to the Evergy Renewables Direct program, which allows us to purchase, right now about half of our electricity through a wind generated source that's located out of the metropolitan area, but we'll be saving money by subscribing in that program, and also helping to be the impetus for the production of more wind energy. This was a brand new wind farm that was constructed based on the demand of their highest users, again, of which we are one. We'll continue to make building efficiency improvements, LED retrofitting, things of that nature. A full-scale facilities energy program is a task of the new Energy Manager. Then, of course, we make upgrades to roof insulation, windows, things like that, on an ongoing basis.

One of the things that our Sustainability Committee is involved in is our LEED for Cities pursuit. Just like you can get a building LEED certified, we are going after certification for our whole county, our whole community, and it really provides a globally consistent way to measure our performance up against other communities in the world. I took a quick snapshot of that bottom left racetrack graph there, where we sit right now on performance. It gauges energy, water, waste, transportation and human experience; otherwise known as quality of life aspects, which are things like high school graduation rate and crime rate and unemployment rate, things like that. Not surprisingly, Johnson County ranks pretty high in human experience. Some of the areas we don't do so well in are transportation, waste, so I did a quick snapshot of where our current transportation gauge is. What's interesting about this, again, is that it measures our performance against like communities. Down here is where we rank, and here's the global average, right here. Of course, higher is better, on a scale of 100. Globally, transportation scores are sitting right about here, but locally we're looking right about here. So again, it's something we're right in the middle of pursuing. It should yield pretty interesting results to help guide our sustainability work. It's been really interesting to go through that process.

We're going to be pursuing green purchasing policies. Again, our Sustainability Committee is involved in a lot of this work of which Jay and Sean are active members. And then, the Client Action Strategies, again, which are what we need to update for ourselves, based on our history, our performance, our new knowledge, and the Regional Climate Action Plan that will help guide some of our work and how we participate regionally and these strategies. Tom will talk about that, so I'll skip that one. There's my information if anybody should want to reach out to me. I lingered longer than I wanted, but I hope that some of that was new information for you and gives you a little bit of a sense of what we're doing in Johnson County, both as an organization and as our role in the community at large.

Comm. Bollin: Brian, has the County checked into buying any of these electric vehicles yet?

Mr. Alferman: We do have one. We have one that's part of the air quality program, and we're kind of cutting our teeth on that. We're getting some good experience. I helped write an alternative fleet vehicle sustainability plan and am working with Chris Butler in Fleet. He is very interested in

accelerating our adoption of electric vehicles for our fleet. Right now, there's the complication that it costs more. So, always being sensitive of that makes it a little bit difficult, but know that it's definitely on our radar. I will say, the new wastewater treatment plant at Tomahawk, they are purchasing electric vehicles and have intentionally designed into that project the charging stations that will be needed. They have a yard truck that they bought, an electric yard truck, that will be just used there on the grounds, and then EV vehicles for their staff to use as well, so they should be completely electric vehicle usage at Tomahawk. Again, that will give us more experience to feed off of going forward.

Comm. Bollin: The reason I ask, I just purchased one, and General Motors is giving some fantastic deals on them right now. That's the reason why I purchased one. The reason why I ask, for short trips – which a lot of the County employees' trips are short trips – they're a great vehicle for a short trip. The electric vehicles are good for about 150, 200 miles between charges, so my curiosity was aroused as to what the County was doing as far as electric vehicles.

Mr. Alferman: It's a huge opportunity, for sure, and we're only driving them in Johnson County, really. I mean, we're not taking long trips with our fleet vehicles for the most part, so that certainly lends itself to that having a good application for our purpose.

Comm. Bollin: Okay, thank you.

Chairman Iliff: Are there any other questions for Brian? If not, Brian, thank you very much.

Mr. Alferman: Thank you all.

## **E. KANSAS CITY REGIONAL CLIMATE ACTION PLAN**

Chairman Iliff: We will go to our next speaker, Tom Jacobs, Director of the MARC Environmental Programs.

*Tom Jacobs, Director, MARC Environmental Programs, appeared before the Zoning Board via Zoom, and made the following comments:*

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you very much. I want to begin by just harassing Brian for holding out on me. I was unaware that he had received that award. He's a genuine all-star. We've worked together for years, and in fact, he was the co-chair of the Planning Committee for this Regional Climate Action Plan and has provided just incredible leadership, not only in Johnson County but in the broader metropolitan area. It's always a pleasure to work with you, Brian. It was really fun. I forget how long ago it was, Jay, but one week or two weeks ago we met with some of the departmental leadership in the County, and I did a similar presentation to that group. My takeaway from that discussion was the things that we're talking about regionally seem like they fit incredibly well with work that's ongoing in the county. Jay said right away, "Well, I can see five different places where this kind of work can fit," and that's really consistent with the overarching kind of starting point that I want to offer for what this work is about. The title here, you see, "A Net Zero Region by 2050," this is an ambitious and comprehensive plan that has many of the elements, probably all of the elements, that you would see in any similar plan across the country. We tried to tailor for our metro area. We had an extensive community involvement process. I would say more than 1,000 people were involved over the last 18 to 24 months of this plan's development. The plan is more of a framework, really, than a plan. It's not a prescriptive document. It's not a regulatory document. It's not one that says anybody has to do anything. It is a piece of work that's intended to put wind in our collective sails to make progress where we believe we can make a really positive impact.

We use a sustainability lens, so we're thinking about, how do we create jobs? How do we save money? How do we make the environment cleaner and healthier? How do we enhance the social dimensions of our community? How do we improve public health? We're thinking expansively about what we want to do, but this whole effort is wrapped around the idea that our work together, the collaborations that are in place or that we might create in the future, are going to be what puts wind in our sails. That's the starting point for all of this. All of the work was developed in partnership with Climate Action KC. Brian zipped through that slide in his presentation. I'm not sure, let me ask, are you guys familiar with Climate Action KC?

Chairman Iliff: No.

Mr. Jacobs: Okay. It's such a fascinating entity. I want to say it's maybe three years old, maybe. It was founded by Mayor Michael Kelly, from Roland Park, and Councilman Lindsey Constance from the City of Shawnee. It began as a kitchen room conversation and then a basement meeting that ultimately included 130 people, among them 70 elected officials from local and state levels, to a climate summit with 750 people at Johnson County Community College in September of 2019. They have a partnership that includes over 100 elected officials from ten different levels of elected leadership, from Water One or the school board, or a city council, or a county commission, or different places. There are many, many community stakeholders and leadership roles in the business and nonprofit communities. It's a giant collaboration that has built energy and support for all of this work. MARC and Climate Action KC jointly applied to a thing called the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. You all might recall that ten or so years ago, Mayor Nickels from Seattle was heading up a climate-focused agenda through the National League of Cities. Similar efforts were underway in Asia and in Europe, and all of that has coalesced into one global entity called the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.

We applied to them to receive technical assistance to develop our Regional Climate Action Plan, and we received technical assistance through the European Union's International Urban Cooperation Program, of which GCOM is a subset. That got us going. So, this whole deal is predicated on a giant set of partnerships. I'm not going to go through all of these bullets, but we've had a lot of process. This has been 24 months, over a thousand people. We started out with the Board approval and the Climate Action Summit, to technical work groups to begin working on our Emissions Inventory and our Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. Some of you may be familiar with the Climate Action Playbook, which was a product of Climate Action KC, a volunteer committee that tried to answer the question, if cities or local communities want to do something, where should they start? It's a phenomenal piece of work. And on and on we went. As we launched the plan, we wanted to be able to set regional priorities. We wanted to address issues of social equity, because we know that those who are most vulnerable amongst us are typically the hardest hit when bad things happen. We had lots of different committees on different topics.

Since we did this work during the pandemic, almost all of it was online. We used an online engagement platform called MindMixer, where hundreds of people engaged and gave us their thoughts about, what are reasonable solutions related to transportation or energy efficiency, or green infrastructure, or innovation and job creation and workforce development? Right now, we're at the very tail end of the process. In fact, over lunch today I made a presentation to the MARC Board of Directors. We've presented to other MARC policy committees, and it is our hope that we will be able to present...Well, we intend to present this to them again in March and are hopeful that their consideration will lead to their adoption of this plan.

To frame this thing up, there's a number of guiding thoughts here. I mentioned that meeting with Brian and Jay and others a week or two ago. Much of what we need to do, we want to do anyway, so the plans that the County has in place, whether it's in respect to transportation or stormwater or parks or facilities, all of the kinds of things that we're talking about, you've already started working on, so we're building from existing successes. We've already proven we can do this, and we're trying to figure out, how do we scale up? The thing that's really crucial – and my first comment about this not being a prescriptive plan but one that rests upon high levels of collaboration in all parts of the community – we believe that leadership comes from all of us, so whether it's the Planning Commission or the MARC Board or professional organizations and energy or public infrastructure design or neighborhood leaders, there's opportunities for leadership all over the place, and our job is to build capacity and energy and support, so we can get as much done as possible. We know that we don't want to do any harm, but doing nothing is, in fact, harmful in this case, and we've proven that doing a lot is possible. We've already done a lot. Brian's presentation is proof of it.

So, how do we take the next step? Brian already had a number of slides about recent successes in the county. Here are a few more. Our plan really has two sides to it. One is about climate mitigation, which is about greenhouse gas emissions reduction. The other slide is about adaptation. On the emissions side, our Greenhouse Gas Inventory revealed that about one-third of our emissions are attributable to transportation, and almost two-thirds are attributable to using energy to heat and cool our buildings. Our mitigation strategies focus accordingly. On the risk and vulnerability piece, back in the work to develop the Climate Resilience Strategy, Kansas City, Missouri had hired a meteorologist who developed a downscale climate model for our metro area. The downscale model, as you might read in the newspaper on global projections about how much the temperature is rising globally, what does it mean for Kansas City? The downscale model helped answer some of those questions. It showed that we have three principal risks that are attributable to extreme heat, drought and flood. The map on the right, Socioeconomic Stress Index, to some of you it might look familiar. To all of us, it shows where there are places of social stress, of economic stress, of vulnerability, and you can begin to overlay a map like this on flood plains, or on areas where there are heat islands, or where there are food deserts, and we can begin to appreciate how we can begin to focus our policy work and our planning work and our program delivery work to address acute needs or product needs that may be still emergent.

Our plan is broken up into nine chapters, nine action areas. You can see those here. Each of these different elements are par for the course. You might imagine tree planting or public transportation or windmills, or bicycle paths, or recycling, or urban food systems, or energy efficient buildings. That's all what we're talking about. The collaboration and leadership piece, we intend to form a new committee at MARC, and it would probably mirror other work that would be happening in Johnson County, where we're trying to bring people together and say, how do we advance all of this work in meaningful ways? There's a focus on innovation and finance. We've had a lot of conversation with the innovation community, with different incubators and accelerators, thinking about where there might be opportunities for job creation, business creation, workforce development, to help us achieve these goals. The Community Resilience piece is... We're such a nonprofit-rich community. It's a caring community. People work on literacy and health and education and environment, and every single one of these aspects intersects with climate risks, and we're thinking, can we begin to create more bridges around the community to help us get further faster?

On the mitigation side, there are really four main strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The first two are renewable energy and building energy efficiency. There's a lot of opportunity there. I will confess, for example, I only insulated my house this past year after I refinanced, and I had a little bit of spare money. This is my job. I live and breathe this stuff, so I know how many houses have not yet done that, and it makes a big difference. Return on investment from that kind of investment in my home is paying me back.

On the transportation side, MARC completed a long-range transportation plan last year, and the climate plan really mirrors what's in the long-range transportation plan. We're trying to electrify our fleet. We're trying to reduce vehicle miles traveled. We're trying to advance alternative ways that people can get around the region besides their driving alone in their cars. We're trying to build more resilient infrastructure to help address issues of urban heat islands, flood risks and the like. Everything that we couldn't achieve by the first three strategies, we're working to address through carbon sequestration. Carbon sequestration is putting soil back into the ground through sustainable land stewardship kinds of efforts. It's planting a tree. It's restoring a prairie or a wetland, or supporting sustainable agricultural practices in ways that build carbon in the soil and support the productivity of those natural systems.

On the left you'll see two additional bullets around a circular economy and food and agriculture. Our methodology did not enable us to quantify emissions reductions benefits from recycling and supply chain management or urban food systems. The benefits are staggeringly large. We weren't able to measure it in this process. There's a lot of literature that supports the rationale to invest in those areas as well. On the adaptation side, I like to start this part of the presentation by saying trees are the low-hanging fruit of climate adaptation. They cool our cities. They soak up water. They clean the air. They provide habitat. They make streets more walkable. They increase property values. Nature-based solutions, including urban forestry, have just enormous opportunities to mitigate climate risks. There's a very profound intersection between that and urban food systems. Brian had the four areas that the Food Policy Coalition is working, one of which is urban food production. We can design landscapes that turn the soil into a sponge and that produce more food. I love the Giving Grove. They've planted 200 orchards in their first four years of existence as a nonprofit, and they're generating a lot of apples and pears and berries that are feeding people at community centers and libraries and churches and the like. At the same time, the organic waste piece, this is one of the huge wins, so it's not anaerobic digestion at a wastewater treatment plant, but we throw away as a region some 350,000 tons of food waste a year. Some of that might be recoverable as excess food that is still edible, but for logistics, is not feeding people, but if we could compost all of the rest and then put it back onto the land to restore soils and increase productivity and steward the land better, it's an elegant circle, with positive feedback that provides lots of solutions.

On the finance and innovation side there's real opportunities, in our view, to create jobs. One of the very significant moves that's coming is Climate Action KC is about to launch what they're calling a Regional Building Energy Exchange that's modeled after the New York City Energy Efficiency Corporation. It's like a green bank, a hub of activity that will provide technical support to homeowners and businesses to think about how they make their buildings more efficient. They'll provide direct services. There will be private equity that's leveraged to support lending to those who need financial support to get this done. It should really enhance our whole region's capacity to do more of this work. The last piece of that resilient infrastructure, I think it was in 2017 we had back-to-back 500-year floods in Indian Creek. There's real need to think about how do we design our infrastructure to deal with changes and extreme weather that relate to climate change.

It's not just about building a bigger culvert. It's about how we can think at a systems level to deal with what's coming at us, and use a people-centered approach to make a difference. With the system linkages piece, we are very mindful all through the process about trying to identify strategies that may be focused on adaptation and mitigation at the same time, or us talking about how green infrastructure and urban food systems relate.

We're talking about 15-minute neighborhoods, where folks can walk to where they need to go. That, in turn, relates to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and more regional transit systems and compact walkable mixed income developments or redevelopment. Any complete street will be treelined. There's opportunities to weave these together in a cohesive idea that really provides lots of different benefits at the same time. I don't want to be too facile and say I know how to do this. I'm painting a picture, but the hard work is front of us to try to figure out, how do we get there? I think there is a pathway. There are models in this community and nationally and internationally. We need to think about how we tie the pieces together.

If you were to ask me, what are going to actually do next, I've got three bullets. This is from a regional perspective. We need to form a committee that brings people together from around the region to figure out how we coordinate this work and move this whole plan forward. Climate Action KC is launching this regional building energy exchange. I believe that expanding regional tree-planting and green infrastructure initiatives is really a simple first step, but there's a lot more to do beyond that. The report has many different recommended actions that we could think about. This slide about local government actions, I'm a little bit squeamish even about putting this up. We're not asking for this committee to take any action tonight. This is merely for information-sharing and discussion, but over time I'm hoping that every local government can really embrace this plan and think about, of all the stuff that's in here, what makes the most sense for us to work on locally, and how do we partner with our neighbors to make progress? You already have a point person and he's part of a larger team, so you're way down the road on a lot of this stuff. There's a lot of public building retrofits that have saved \$3.5 million in the county. The question then is, well, then what? And how do we get more partnerships in the county with the business community and some of the different institutions, whether it's school districts or hospitals, and so on?

There's a lot of different kinds of things to consider, from the planning perspective, we identified a variety of different opportunities that local governments could consider. On the energy side, there were five things that popped out. Kansas City, Missouri, adopted a benchmarking ordinance some five years ago, where the largest buildings just have to measure how much energy they're using. The ordinance doesn't go beyond that. The hypothesis is if you measure how much you're using, you've got an incentive to save some. Building performance ordinances like St. Louis, and I think Washington, D.C., and a couple other communities have adopted would be a next step. There's been a lot of discussion about adoption of the new International Energy Efficiency Conservation Code. The 2021 code is out. Some folks have looked at the '18 code, but modernizing our codes for efficiency is important. We had discussions about energy disclosure at time of rent or at time of sale, solar-ready work, as Brian indicated, the County has already made quite a bit of progress there. On the urban greening side, thinking about tree protection, native landscaping, stormwater standards. We last updated our regional stormwater standards in 2003. It's time for an update. Our current standards do not reflect changes in precipitation patterns attributable to climate change, and we know that they're coming. We're moving from an empirical, historical-based approach to one that's more focused on risk management and accounting for modeled projected changes and temperature and precipitation.

On transportation and land use, there's been long-standing discussions about if you want to have a walkable community, a transit-oriented community, what do you do? As a region, I know we have north of a hundred square miles of parking lots. These are places that, from a climate perspective, generate heat and runoff. They undermine the viability of public transportation and make communities less walkable. How do we address these kinds of issues? There's no silver bullets in these things. Looking at these kinds of issues requires a holistic kind of assessment of what the Planning and Zoning Regulations say, and how do we evaluate where we're going to go? There's opportunities to look at these things through a climate lens that might give some insight into opportunities for improvement. Similarly, food systems offer opportunities, perhaps, for considering different zoning adjustments to facilitate that work. I'm going to stop here. I really appreciate you letting me share this with you, and I'd be thrilled to entertain any questions you might have. Thank you.

Chairman Iliff: Any questions for Tom? Or comments? It was a pretty comprehensive presentation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jacobs: I'm thrilled to do it. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Iliff: That's great. The only action item with regard to the two reports by Brian and Tom is to receive the presentations and discuss them, if we want, among ourselves. We could forward comments to the Board of County Commissioners, but I do think that both presentations should be sent on to the Board of County Commissioners.

Mr. Alferman: Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the committee.

Chairman Iliff: Sure.

Mr. Jacobs: Is there any part of this that gets anybody fired up and saying, "Yeah, we can really do something on this piece. It fits with exactly what we wanted to do anyways, and it will help us get there further, faster?"

Chairman Iliff: One thing that stuck out to me was your emphasis on trees, which are the low-hanging fruit, because they are so easy to do. They are ubiquitous. They're beautiful. Everybody enjoys them. They're good for every aspect of our being, you know, both because of their CO2 absorption, their oxygen production, and not least of which, because they're just beautiful. They make life better for everybody. I would really like to make sure that the County in all of its projects always tries to figure in as much as possible how they can add more trees to the area. The other thing is I think – I don't know that we would put this into Zoning and Subdivision Regulations – but we have always said with new developments, especially if they impinge on anyone else's, we've always recommended that a certain number of trees with certain caliper always be put in along lines, and berm lines and that sort of thing. I think that's something that we really ought to continue to emphasize and not let go.

Mr. Pendley: One thing I was going to mention, Tom, I don't know if we explained to you or Brian, but we had, at the last Planning Commission meeting last month, we had a local government consultant give a presentation on utility-scale solar energy facilities. Although we have examples, as you mentioned, we have solar-ready examples. We have regulations in place today for site-specific examples, like with accessory uses on individual properties, but we don't have anything that addresses a large-scale facility that would serve power for the grid for a large area. That's one example. What I think the Commission will be seeing soon are ways that we incorporate goals into our Comprehensive Plan like Jay mentioned at the beginning. There will be examples that

we'll see these types of climate action goals put into place, into practice, with our future Comprehensive Plan goals, and with our Regulations. So, there's probably some examples coming soon, but I think any of these kinds of goals will serve to provide that framework in the future.

Mr. Jacobs: That's so interesting. Well, the NextEra project is one in the county.

Mr. Pendley: Right. That's what we're trying to get ready for.

Mr. Alferman: And I'll mention, too, I know you all haven't seen the full plan. I think only the executive summary was forwarded to you. I think we'll have a final version here pretty soon, to be able to forward on to you, but you will notice a lot of similarities or a lot of overlap in the Comprehensive Plan that are very apparent in the Climate Action Plan, specifically in the land use section of the Rural Comprehensive Plan that I think this will be a useful tool for you over the next couple years as you update that plan to be able to use as a reference. To know what's being prioritized, what's being stressed in other areas, and certainly our neighboring communities. I do think this will be a useful tool for you as you go through that update process, and I promise you, having read both documents, you will see a lot of similarities, whether it's protection of natural areas, or regional coordination. Connecting natural resources is highlighted, I know, and growth management and energy conservation, and agricultural communities in the unincorporated areas are stressed, and food systems is highlighted very significantly in this Climate Action Plan. I think you guys will enjoy it as a tool to be used.

Mr. Jacobs: The final draft plan is posted on the MARC website now. You can see it at [MARC.org/climate-action](http://MARC.org/climate-action).

Chairman Iliff: Okay, good.

Ms. Grise: Chris, I didn't know if I could ask a quick question.

Chairman Iliff: You may. Absolutely.

Ms. Grise: Okay, Tom, I was curious with the recent, last week, with the rolling outages with Evergy and a couple of the other local utilities. How does that intersect, if at all, with your presentation? Because that's a timely thing, I'm sure, for a lot of us that we recently lived through last week.

Mr. Jacobs: First, I'm not an expert. I'll give you a couple of top-of-mind answers that I hope are not going to be laughable if you speak with an expert in grid management and utility/energy generation. The first point I would make is it seems like there's a very high level of confidence in the climatological community that this is a climate change driven event. We have weakening of...It's warming at the poles much faster than other parts of the planet, which reduces the difference in the temperature of the poles, the equator, it weakens the jet stream that enables a cold front to reach all the way down to the Gulf. It's an extraordinary phenomenon that is a product, at least in part, from climate change. How much? People debate these things. How much was Hurricane Harvey a product of climate change? One climatologist said 28 percent. Who knows? These are probabilistic kinds of things, but certainly, it's another example of how climate change is radically affecting our lives and creating all kinds of issues.

The second piece is the rolling outages were not determined by Evergy. They were determined by the Southwest Power Pool that manages the flow of electrons across the grid, and they tell the utilities what they need to do. If we're saving our demand through system-level efficiency

investments that would become especially apparent at times of peak demand and would reduce the likelihood for power outages of the kind that we just witnessed. So those are two things that I guess I would share. It's interesting, I am not, again, an expert in smart grids and the future of how this works, but it strikes me as technology improves that that will make a very significant difference in how utilities are able to respond in ever more nuanced kinds of ways as we're moving forward. So, a few different thoughts. I don't know. I'd be curious to hear yours. I have a feeling that you might be much more expert in this than I.

Ms. Grise: No. That was when you were talking about more energy efficient, HTAC, and other users, I think that that was one of the hard things. I think that Evergy and the Southwest Grid had asked for everybody to start conserving power to try to avoid this major peak usage that we knew was coming. It just seems like the goals of your presentation would be perfectly in line with what the grid that impacts and covers Johnson County's goals were to improve energy efficiency, especially for moments like last week, where we were all encountering something a little unexpected. Thank you.

Chairman Iliff: Any other comments or questions for either Tom or Brian? [none]

## **G. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Chairman Iliff: We will move on to Jay's report. Do you want to bring us an update?

Mr. Leipzig: Thank you, Chairman. I appreciate it. My report this evening will be very brief. I just wanted to point out in your packet was the update on the Board of County Commissioners items and the items for the Zoning Boards. That is in your packet. The other thing I wanted to mention, as Sean briefly stated a few moments ago, at our last meeting in January we had a presentation from Daren Coffey with the Berkley Group on large utility-scale solar farms, solar installations. He's an international expert on these types of developments. One of the suggestions he had at our last meeting was to have a joint work session, study session, with the Board of County Commissioners and talk a little bit about what some of the stipulations might be, and working with these large utility-scale operations. To that end, we have set up a Committee of the Whole, or a joint work session, between the Board of County Commissioners and the Planning Commission for Thursday, March 11, at 1:00 in the afternoon. If you are available to attend that meeting, that would be terrific. It will be on Zoom. It will be, again, Thursday, March 11, at 1:00. Mr. Coffey with the Berkley Group will be presenting an overview again, similar to that PowerPoint that he provided before, and we'll have a session with the Board of County Commissioners to ask questions and the Planning Commission to ask questions as well on these utility-scale solar installations. I wanted to let you know about that. Aside from that, that concludes my report, sir.

Chairman Iliff: Okay.

## **H. UPDATES/OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Iliff: I'll just make a little add-on comment to yours, Jay. That is, I just read a long report in *The Economist* on utility-scale solar installations in the United Kingdom. What they're finding is that they are universally unpopular with the people who live in the neighborhoods around them. There is a wide variety of reasons, but NIMBYism is a significant impediment to the installation of a lot of these things as they're coming in. People just don't like the idea of 1,000 or 2,000 or 3,000 acres being set aside for solar plants. They come up with a wide variety of reasons, including the fact that they feel it hurts biodiversity and it takes vacant land out of play and puts it into something else. Also, unlike most other power-producing kinds of installations, they don't provide jobs. You don't have people who are coming to the power plant, whether it's a coal or gas or nuclear power

plant. These things are largely supervised by drones, and when there's a problem with one of the installations, they're usually fixed by somebody who's dispatched from a headquarters, perhaps hundreds of miles away, to come and fix it.

So, those are the kinds of things that I think we can anticipate hearing about as we get ready to make stipulations or try to determine what kinds of regulations are appropriate with regard to utility-scale solar power installations. I'm not joining in on this or suggesting that the neighbors in the UK are right, but I do think that we need to anticipate the complaints or the objections that we will hear in the future. Sometimes by simply anticipating them, they can be headed off in some ways.

The last thing I'll say with regard to updates is the Johnson County Charter Commission is having its initial meeting on Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup>. That will be the first of those meetings, and the Planning Commission's representatives are Randy Hutchins and myself. I anticipate being there, and I assume Randy does as well, for the first meeting. Again, like all of our meetings these days, it will be a Zoom meeting. I have nothing further, unless somebody has anything else to add or comment on, I would be open to a motion for adjournment.

Comm. Hutchins: Chair Iliff, there is an ongoing issue in the southwest part of the county. It was a topic of discussion on our Southwest Zoning Board meeting, and that was the process of which North Point purchased the land east of Gardner Road and then had it annexed into the City of Edgerton. So, that's come under great scrutiny. I don't know if it's something that's done, complete, or if there's something ongoing, but the reason I bring it forth to the Planning and Development Commission is it struck me that our citizens were, quite frankly, shocked that that took place. They didn't even understand when they purchased their land that some of that land behind them was even owned by North Point.

I think what it really brought to the surface is, why are our citizens shocked by annexations of land into the cities? I started asking myself the question, what is our charter? If we as a Planning and Development Commission aren't being proactive and working with the municipalities, working with all the right people and doing that one-year, three-year, five-year, ten-year plan, what is our role? Again, I don't think our citizens should be shocked when land is getting annexed into a municipality. I think it should be very well-known what the plans are going to be before they make an investment in their new home or their new property. So, I just was wanting to put it on the table here for tonight, for some of your thoughts and comments.

Chairman Iliff: Randy, when did this take place?

Comm. Hutchins: It was a month ago, Jay?

Mr. Leipzig: Yes. Randy, you're correct. I want to say it was actually, I think it might have started right before the end of the year, mid-December, and then it was, I think, finalized maybe the first or second week of January, something like that. But fairly recently. I will say that Commission Allenbrand has reached out to...we've had several discussions with her, the Planning staff and also Public Works staff, and reached out to the City of Edgerton to have further discussions with them, as well as with the City of Gardner. But yes, it's fairly recently. It was a contiguous annexation that was done. I think it was finalized mid-January.

Chairman Iliff: Randy, just out of curiosity, what is the objection of the citizens to the annexation of that land into Edgerton?

Comm. Hutchins: What happened, Chris, was they jumped a good mile and purchased a bunch of ground on the east side of Gardner Road, so basically from Gardner Road all the way to

Moonlight. It was a considerable chunk of ground that they bought, and they bought down to the county line, and they did it under the name of different companies. So, it wasn't obvious what was taking place for the people that had their homes and whatnot. So, it was a surprise to them when North Point then purchased all that ground from these holding companies that North Point fronted, and then the way they had to connect the piece of land that they owned over by the Kubota plant, they had to connect those pieces of ground. The way they went about it was, I guess, suspect at best. They bought a very small sliver of land that was able to connect it to where they could legally go and annex it into the City of Edgerton. So, long story short, they are now going to have warehouses in their backyard, and they felt like they just lost a lot of the value of their homes. So, they are upset with that.

Chairman Iliff: I think you just hit the nub of why people would be upset. If they felt that... Good planning is good planning, and bad planning is bad planning, whether it's done by the County or whether it's done in the City. But I can certainly understand people who felt they were living in rural areas being upset by the fact that they're going to be backed up against warehouses. I understand the problem now. Thank you.

## **I. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Iliff: Anything else before we depart?

Ms. Grise: Just really quick, Jay, how long is that meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup> expected to go?

Mr. Leipzig: Lindsay, I believe it's slotted for an hour. I want to say it's either an hour or an hour-and-a-half, on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman Iliff: Did you say March 11<sup>th</sup>? I've got it on March 1, for 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., Charter Commission organizational meeting.

Mr. Leipzig: That is the Charter Commission. Lindsay, were you asking about the study session? Or the Committee of the Whole, with the Board?

Ms. Grise: Yes, the study session.

Chairman Iliff: My apologies, Lindsay. Sorry.

Mr. Leipzig: Chris, I think your time is correct, to, for the Charter Commission.

Chairman Iliff: Yeah, it's correct, but irrelevant. All right.

*Motion for adjournment by Comm. Johns, (no second).*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Thereupon, with no further business to come before the Johnson County Planning Commission, Chairman Iliff, at 7:09 p.m. declared the meeting to be *Adjourned*.

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*Chris Iliff, Chairman*

**ATTEST:**

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*Secretary to the Board*