



Councilmember Marni von Wilpert

City of San Diego • District 5

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 7, 2022

TO: Councilmember LaCava, Chair, Committee on the Environment

FROM: Councilmember Marni von Wilpert 

SUBJECT: Committee on the Environment Priorities for 2022

Thank you to Chair LaCava for the opportunity to share my priorities for the development of the 2022 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.

The people of San Diego are proud of our environment. Our oceans, bays, hiking and biking trails provide us with the great quality of life we value. We as a City must take action to protect the environment, so that the next generation can enjoy the outdoors for years to come. 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 promote 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 2022 include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Climate Action Plan Update and Implementation**
 - In November 2021, the Environment Committee heard an informational item from the Sustainability Department shortly after the release of the Draft Climate Action Plan update. This informational presentation highlighted the upcoming public engagement efforts that would be undertaken prior to coming back to the Environment Committee and City Council for adoption. In 2022, the Environment Committee should work with the Sustainability Department to move the update of the Climate Action Plan forward as soon as possible. After adoption, the

Committee should work with the Sustainability Department to hold discussions about the implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

- **Implementation of Climate Resilience Plan**
 - 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. Now that the Mayor's office has debuted a standalone Climate Resiliency and Adaptation Plan the Environment Committee should regularly review the plan's implementation with the Sustainability Department.
- **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.
- **Monitor Gas and Electric Franchise Agreement**
 - In 2021, the City negotiated a franchise agreement with SDG&E to provide gas and electricity to our businesses and residents. During the negotiations, SDG&E committed to help the City meet our climate action goals as well as protect our communities from wildfires made worse by climate change. To that end, the City negotiated an "Energy Cooperation Agreement" with SDG&E, in which both parties agreed to take action on many important environmental goals including pursuing clean energy projects, rooftop solar installation, and zero emissions vehicles.
 - The City and SDG&E must draft an implementation plan for the Energy Cooperation Agreement as soon as possible. I request that the Environment Committee work with the Sustainability Department to bring forward a discussion item related to the Energy Cooperation Agreement implementation plan that holds SDG&E accountable to their environmental commitments.
- **Public Power Feasibility Study**
 - During the discussion of the City's Gas and Electric Franchise Agreement, I advocated to fund a Public Power Feasibility Study using the franchise revenues to better position the City for future franchise related discussions. The funding for this study was approved as part of the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. The Environment Committee should work with the Sustainability Department to get updates on the status of this feasibility study and continue the conversation about the franchise options available to the City in the future.

- **Monitor Climate Equity Fund**
 - I was proud to support the creation of a Climate Equity Fund in last year's budget. It 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 continue to monitor and support the environmental projects this fund supports.
- **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/ AB1383 Implementation**
 - 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 status of the Zero Waste Plan to determine next steps to advance our waste reduction goals.
 - AB 1383 requires cities and counties to cut organic waste by 75 percent by 2025, and it sets a target of recovering 20 percent of food that is now discarded in landfills. The Committee should work with the Environmental Services Department to monitor and support the City's implementation of this new law.
- **Review of City Storm Water Program and Funding**
 - The Storm Water program continues to threaten our investments in our infrastructure assets with its growing backlog and significant increase in costly emergency repairs. The Environment Committee should work with the 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 regular 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) Program Update and review of Public Utilities Department's billing practices**
 - 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 and ensure adequate public engagement is occurring as part of the roll out of this new technology.
 - The Committee should work with the Public Utilities Department to schedule an informational presentation to review the Department's current billing system and processes.

- **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.

- **Prioritize the Use of Native Plants**
 - According to the San Diego County Invasive Ornamental Plant Guide, some non-native plants "are invading the natural environment and displacing native plants and ultimately altering natural landscapes and habitats. Biological impacts of invasive species include: Competition with native plant species (e.g. space, water, nutrients, and biological resources such as pollinators and dispersers). Change in natural fire occurrences and frequencies (e.g. invasive annuals and desert fires). Decrease in quality of food and habitat for local fauna (e.g. poisonous weeds and poor nesting sites) Potentially adverse genetic effects of hybridization among invasive species and natives (e.g. swapping out of genes)."
 - For these reasons, I request the Committee investigate the City of San Diego's use of native plants and encourage/incentivize native plant establishment in the City of San Diego particularly located in its parks and open spaces.

- **Review the City's policies related to the use of Pesticides and Herbicides**
 - The Environment Committee should work with the Park and Recreation Department to bring forward an informational item to review the City's current policies and practices related to the use of Pesticides and Herbicides.

- **Discuss the future of Building Electrification**
 - Building electrification is one of many actions called for in the Climate Action Plan to help reduce local carbon emissions. The Committee should work with the Sustainability Department to discuss the future of Building Electrification in our City.

CC: Brian Elliott, Environment Committee Consultant.