



## SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT CITY OF PROVIDENCE

### Sustainability Commission Meeting | March 17, 2025, 4 p.m. | Minutes

#### 1. Attendance

**Present:** Chair Julian Drix, Enza Cucitrone, Greg Gerrit, Dwayne Keys, Jaylyn McNeill, Chandelle Wilson, [Kevin Proft, Deputy Director of Sustainability, Sophie Worsh-Farnum, Sustainability Policy Associate, Nick Poulos, Legal Department]

**Absent:** Jesus Holguin, Vatic Kuumba, Justice Gaines, Leandro Castro [Priscilla De La Cruz, Director of Sustainability]

#### 2. Approve Minutes from the February 24, 2025 Sustainability Commission meeting (for vote)

- Chandelle Wilson notes that the draft February minutes indicated that two Commissioners who attended the meeting were absent.
- *Chandelle Wilson makes a motion to approve the minutes, with the correction to attendance. Greg Gerrit seconds the motion. All in favor and the motion passes.*

#### 3. Department Updates (for discussion)

- Kevin Proft says the stormwater and sewer study crossover meeting with GSCS will be postponed to July.
- Post-Comprehensive Plan zoning amendments will ramp up in spring 2025.
- The next Port Master Plan MPAC meeting is on March 18, 2025. The next public meeting is April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the MET School at 5:30pm.
- The Resilience Hub Manager position is unfilled. The backbone organizations (WRWC, ONA, Sustainability) are filling in the gaps for the time being. When the job is reposted, it will be a part-time position to stretch grant dollars. The Department and WRWC are planning on posting the position on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Commissioners to share out widely.
- Implementation of the Building Energy Reporting Ordinance (BERO) is continuing with building owners of 50,000 sq ft required to report their energy usage by May 15, 2025.
  - Greg says at the state level, where there are Building Decarbonization bills in the House and Senate, supporters are using Providence as an example of a successful program.
- Sustainability applied for two grants to improve Resilience Hub site circulation, commercial kitchen, and ADA improvements -- Lowe's Home Improvements and Thriving Communities Tier 3.
- Sustainability grants that are currently paused are EECBG and CFI. The Community Change grant with RIFPC is on again, off again.

- Sophie Worsh-Farnum gave an update on the Department exploring options for revenue generation through polluter fees in the port area. The Department is also compiling research and options for addressing diesel emissions in residential areas in Providence.

#### 4. Commissioner Updates (for discussion)

- Community Events:
  - Dwayne Keys shared that the Planning Dept. partnered with Congress for New Urbanism on the hospital district planning. They had two community meetings last week. Planning will post meeting materials on the website. Outreach was not successful for residents in the neighborhood – it was very professional heavy. There were a lot of people there, but they were not representative of the neighborhood.
  - Greg Gerrit shared about the Compost Conference. RIFPC and RIC do the outreach which resulted in great attendance. The keynote speaker was excellent – Domingo Morales from NYC doing compost at NYC Public Housing.
  - Julian Drix went to the Working Women’s Day rally outside City Hall. Good intersectional event.
  - Jaylyn McNeil shared that the Garden Time Green Reentry application just opened up for spring. The application is on social media.
  - Jaylyn McNeil and the Groundwork team presented at the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA) conference.

#### 5. ProvPort Sustainability Reserve Account protocols

- Sophie Worsh-Farnum indicated changes made to the memo since the previous iteration.
  - Adding stipends for guest experts
  - At least one member of the subcommittee lives in South Providence or Washington Park (or another port-adjacent neighborhood)
  - All projects should benefit port-adjacent neighborhoods
- Greg Geritt noted that the process is in memo form and that the language should be shifted into policy language in the next iteration.
- Nick Poulos (Legal Department) says the Commission can vote to establish a standing subcommittee and appoint members.
- Greg Gerrit asks if there is work the subcommittee should do before the next Commission meeting.
- Julian Drix says that 1) the subcommittee can work on the framing of the RFP prior to the ProvPort Master Plan being published and 2) we can reach out to City Council to amend the enabling ordinance for the Commission to include its responsibility for consulting on the allocation of the Reserve Account.

#### 6. Review draft procedure for Sustainability Commission consultation (for discussion and vote)

- *Greg Gerrit makes a motion to adopt the Sustainability Reserve Account protocols memo as is, with the expectation that it will be shifted to policy language. Dwayne Keys seconds the motion. All in favor and the motion passes.*

#### 7. Select sub-committee membership (for discussion and vote)

- The Commission decides to hold off on voting for subcommittee members until the April meeting so more Commission members can be a part of the decision.
- At the April meeting, determine subcommittee members and have a full Commission discussion on what themes and topics the subcommittee can prioritize.

**8. Executive Session - Sustainability Commissioner Applicant Review (for discussion and vote) 1. (The Sustainability Commission will seek to go into Executive Session pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 42-46-4 and Rhode Island General Law 42-46-5 (a)(1).**

- *Greg moves that the Commission go into Executive Session pursuant to Rhode Island General Law to review Sustainability Commissioner applicants. Jaylyn McNeil seconds. All in favor and the motion passes.*
- *Greg moves to end the executive session. Dwayne seconds. All in favor and the motion passes.*

**9. Disclosure of Executive Session**

- Kevin Proft and Julian Drix report that no votes were taken during the executive session to the public.

**10. Public Comment**

- Linda Perri asks about the oil leak from the pipe on Public Street. Kevin Proft said the Sustainability Department is working with the Public Street project contractor Fuss and O'Neil investigate the issue further.
- Linda Perri says that Eastern Salt's salt piles shouldn't be there all summer and that the space could be used for recreation.

**11. Adjourn**

- *Greg made a motion to adjourn. Chandelle seconds. Approved unanimously.*



## DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY CITY OF PROVIDENCE

### Sustainability Department Update | 4.16.25

#### Staffing Updates

- No Vacancies

#### Commission Membership Updates [11.2024]

- One City Council seat is vacant due to Kevin Essington's resignation.

#### Climate Justice Plan Update [4.2025]

- *The Climate Justice Plan, published in fall 2019, is the plan that guides most of the Sustainability Department's work. It's goal is to create an equitable, low-carbon, and climate resilient future for Providence. The plan is due for a 5-year update, as required by the Sustainability Department's establishing ordinance.*
- The Department is in the early stages of planning for the 5-year update, which it plans to begin in fall 2025. The Department intends approach the update in a manner consistent with how the plan was originally developed, including collaboration with frontline community members and shared decision-making.

#### Zoning Amendments [4.2025]

- *Project Description: Following approval of the comprehensive plan, the City is required to update its zoning ordinance to align with the goals and strategies included in the comprehensive plan. Among other items, this will include amendments to permit increased residential density in the City's zoning districts and potential changes to land use regulations impacting development in the City's industrial areas. Zoning Amendments are drafted by the Planning Department for the City Plan Commission's and City Council's approval.*
- The Sustainability Department is working with the Planning Department to recommend zoning amendments that align with the updated comprehensive plan, the Climate Justice Plan, and Sustainability Department priorities.
- An amendment including zoning map changes, language changes around R-4, the elimination of R-2 and C-1, and inclusion of new dwelling types in residential zones has already been approved by CPC, City Council, and signed by the Mayor.
- Future amendment topics could include the Port of Providence and industrial development, student housing, design standards, parking minimums, gas station prohibition, and inclusionary zoning. Beginning in spring 2025, these amendments are expected to advance individually or in groups as they are ready to be presented to the CPC by the Planning Department. Some items may be included on the May CPC agenda for review and approval, but not industrial zoning or other higher-profile items.

#### ProvPort Master Plan [2.2025]

- *Project Description: As part of the ProvPort lease agreement, ProvPort is required to partner with the City's Planning Department to develop a Port Master Plan. This plan will guide the strategic direction of the port*

over the 30-year time horizon of the lease. Among other elements, the plan will include chapters on community development and sustainability. Public engagement is required.

- ProvPort and its consultant (GZA) convened a Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) of local stakeholders, including near-port residents, who advise ProvPort on the planning process. The Sustainability Department is participating in MPAC meetings, and working internally with the Planning Department and ProvPort to incorporate Sustainability Department and Climate Justice Plan priorities into the Master Plan.
- The Master Plan [website](#) includes resources and public engagement opportunities/dates. The next public meeting will be held later this spring at a date still to be determined.

#### **Sustainable Stormwater and Sewer Study [4.2025]**

- *Project Description: The sustainable stormwater and sewer study is analyzing the City's existing stormwater system, identifying deficiencies, and recommending a sustainable financing mechanism to make improvements and maintain the system into the future.*
- The Sustainability Department supported the Stormwater Task Force which is comprised of individuals from several key stakeholder groups that represent a wide set of interests. Task Force members' unique knowledge and skills are helping guide the project by making recommendations and providing key information. The Task Force reviews and provides feedback on the consultant's draft deliverables including the funding needs and financing analysis.
- The full Sustainable Stormwater and Sewer Study will be published in July 2025. The Sustainability Department is aiming to schedule a joint meeting of the Sustainability Commission and Green and Complete Street Committee in the summer to present the study, including the recommended sustainable and equitable funding mechanisms the study recommends.

#### **Public Street Waterfront Access Project [2.2025]**

- *Project Description: The Sustainability Department is working to finalize design and construct improvements at Public Street between Allens Avenue and the river. This street has been designated a public right-of-way to the waterfront by the Coastal Resources Management Agency, but to offer meaningful access to the waterfront, the site needs safety and site aesthetic improvements.*
- The Sustainability Department secured \$175,000 towards final design (NBEP and local funds) and has hired Fuss & O'Neill as the project consultant. The City has secured ~\$1.5M towards construction (SNEP, RIIB, local funds).
- The Department conducted additional public and stakeholder engagement during summer 2024-winter 2025 and adjusted the schematic design to align with feedback.
- Prior to advancing to the engineering phase of the design, the Department is attempting to work through an existing underground infrastructure issue that needs to be addressed before the project can be permitted by CRMC. This has slowed the speed at which the project is advancing. The Department is currently developing a scope of work to add to Fuss & O'Neill's contract to investigate the issue and develop a pathway forward.

#### **Resilience Hubs [4.2025]**

- *Project Description: The Olneyville Resilience Hub at Joslin Recreation Center is the City's first pilot resilience hub. The goal of the resilience hub is to provide a space where residents can connect to needed community services and go to for safety in the event of a disruption like a storm or high heat.*
- The Department and hub partners facilitated a public engagement effort relating to major building renovations at Joslin Recreation Center funded by the State's Capital Project Fund. The goal of the

engagement is to understand community priorities so that the architects can design the renovation to meet community needs. The architects have designed a project that includes new multi-purpose rooms, community room improvements, a new roof for the gym, and electrified heating and cooling throughout the facility. Construction will commence in August 2025.

- Recent activity at the hub has included language exchange classes and English classes with Coalition for a Multilingual RI and Community Libraries of Providence, Nuevas Voces classes, a Spanish-language Until Help Arrives class taught by multilingual community members in partnership with PEMA, a Tree Forum with Providence Neighborhood Planting Partnership, and Feinstein Senior Center programming, among others.

#### **BERO Implementation [4.2025]**

- *Project Description: The Building Energy Reporting Program ordinance (BERO) requires building owners of buildings over 20,000 square feet to report their building's energy use to the City for public disclosure. The goal of the program is to permit building owners to understand how their building performs compared to peer buildings and enable cost-effective energy upgrades. The program will also provide the City with data to inform future decarbonization policies.*
- The Department is (1) designing the Building Energy Reporting Program, (2) securing necessary software and services for implementation, and (3) reporting on municipal properties. The City was required to report on its own buildings in May 2024, privately-owned buildings over 50,000 sf are required to report in May 2025, and buildings over 20,000 sf are required to report in May 2026. Disclosure of energy use will typically happen annually in October.
- The Department is now conducting outreach to buildings with over 50,000 square feet about reporting requirements ahead of the May 15 deadline to report. The City, RI Energy, and our program software provider will provide a webinar aimed at assisting building owners with reporting on May 7, 2025.

#### **Municipal Energy [4.2025]**

- The Department has executed an agreement with PowerOptions to develop a decarbonization plan for municipal buildings, required by City ordinance. The study will focus on efficiency improvements, HVAC upgrades, operations management, and electrification strategies. The study will prioritize facility upgrades based on equipment age and environmental benefits. The study will also include a high-level feasibility analysis of rooftop solar on City-owned buildings. We expect the plan to be completed summer 2025. [4.2025]
- The Department has developed a strategy to deploy renewable energy on municipal rooftops and property. The strategy includes an initial round of pilot projects to be installed over the next two years and a study to inform future project selection. The initial round of pilot projects includes the Public Safety Complex, The Roger Williams Park Maintenance Facility, Narducci Learning Center, D'Abate Elementary School, and Spaziano Elementary School. Together, these projects will have a capacity of 722 kW (DC), producing enough energy to power 129 New England homes.

The Public Safety Complex is the first of the pilot programs to move forward. Plans for a 188 kW (DC) rooftop solar system are now under an installation and maintenance contract with Solect Energy. Construction is anticipated in summer 2025. The system will be owned by the City and go online in fall 2025.

The City is monitoring whether the Trump Administration rolls back the investment tax credit (ITC) and low-income community bonus funding for solar projects. Of the \$1.9 M in solar pilot development costs,

federal funding is expected to provide \$770K, or 40% of the total cost. Alternative funding sources and system ownership models are being investigated as a fall back should federal funding become unavailable. [4.2025]

- The City signed an agreement with C-Power, an approved vendor for RI Energy and ISO New England, to participate in their respective New England demand response programs at the Public Safety Complex. The goal of the programs are to encourage buildings with high energy loads to roll back usage during peak demand periods in return for payment. The Public Safety Complex is the first building to enroll in the program and has the potential to earn \$62,000 over five years. In total, 20 City and school buildings are eligible to enroll in these programs. Participation in these programs is highly dependent on the ability to manage energy usage via modern building management systems. The Public Safety Complex is currently upgrading its BMS, which has enabled its participation. The Sustainability Department secured a \$100,000 RIOER grant to assist with this upgrade. [4.2025]

#### **City Vehicle Fleet [4.2025]**

- The City's 2024 Master Lease, the method by which the City procures vehicles and equipment, included \$100,000 in funding for EV infrastructure to be administered by the Sustainability Department. The Department is working with the City's Fleet Manager and the Parks Department to plan and implement a project at the Carriage House in Roger Williams Park with this funding. The goal is to pilot the City's first electric pickup truck at this location. [4.2025]
- The Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant awarded to the State for public-facing EV charging and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant awarded to the City for fleet charging both remain on hold due to the Trump administration's actions. [2.2025]

#### **Waste Reduction [4.2025]**

- The City issued a Waste Removal Services RFP on October 7, 2024 aimed at securing a new contract with a trash and recycling hauler. The RFP includes a number of clauses aimed at improving waste diversion rates. The City received three proposals and is currently reviewing them and preparing to make an award. [2.2025]
- The City issued an RFP for new trash and recycling carts. The RFP requests pricing to replace all carts and one route day worth of carts. The Sustainability Department has secured a EPA grant to replace at least one route day of carts. The Department has also secured additional grants and low-interest loans to help the City potentially replace all of the carts. The City will receive bids on May 5, 2025. [4.2025]
- The Department is procuring services to provide recycling education and outreach. The City has procured Zero Waste Providence to provide in-person education and outreach, and has issued an RFP to secure a vendor for a print/mail education and outreach campaign. The City has secured grant funding from multiple sources to implement these programs through January 2027. [4.2025]

#### **SNEP Opportunity to Advance Resilience Flooding Studies [4.2025]**

- The Department received a SOAR grant from SNEP to study flooding in up to two recurring flood locations within Providence. Phase 1 of the project includes the recruitment of a community cohort of interested residents, the delivery of a curriculum on flooding to the cohort, and shared decision making about which areas to study and what solutions to prioritize. Phase 2 will include the selection of an engineering firm to conduct the flood studies. The community cohort's first session is on April 28, 2025.

#### **Grants [4.2025]**

- Pending Applications:

- Lowe's Hometowns Grant – Resilience Hub circulation and ADA improvements - \$100,000
- Thriving Community Grant – Resilience Hub commercial kitchen - ~\$350,000
- CNCA – Climate Justice Plan Update - \$40,000
- The Department is experiencing uncertainty regarding funding it has secured from the Federal Government. A summary of grants is included below:
  - USDA CFWR (Compost) – No impact to date
  - USEPA SWIFR (Recycling) – No impact to date
  - USEPA SOAR (Flooding) – No impact to date
  - EPA/SNEP SWIG (Public Street) – No impact to date
  - EPA NBEP (Public Street) – No impact to date
  - USDOE EECBG (EV Infrastructure) – Paused
  - RIOER CFI (EV Charging – Public Facing) – Paused
  - RIFPC Community Change (Compost) - Paused



# Sustainability Department

## FY 2026 Budget Summary

### Citywide Budget

#### Balancing the Budget

The City is experiencing a **challenging budget year**. Expenses include salaries/benefits, PPSD investments, and services and supplies that support our neighborhoods.

96% of costs are fixed. 4% are flexible for adjustment from services supplies & salaries.

Mayor Smiley drafted a balanced budget via a tax increase, **department cuts**, & new revenue.



#### Proposed Reductions

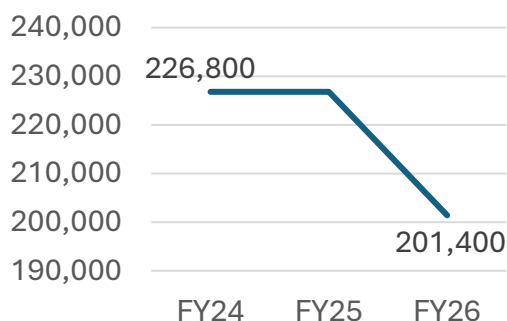
FY26 budget savings include **reductions in supplies and services** across all departments and a thorough evaluation of all **positions**.

	Reduction	% change
Supplies	\$1,402,405	-7%
Services	\$2,897,173	-8%
Defunded Positions*	\$1,476,425	-2.5%
Overtime	\$3,294,800	
Waste & Bulky Fees	\$343,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,413,803</b>	

\* 23 total positions defunded

### Sustainability Department Budget

#### Operating Budget (\$)



**-\$25,400**

**-11%**

#### Staffing

The Department currently has 6 positions. We are **losing 1 position** in FY26:

- Director
- Deputy Director
- Sustainability Policy Associate (**FY26 Layoff**)
- Fiscal & Comms Coordinator
- Energy Administrator
- Energy Manager

**Capacity Reduction:**

**-16%**

**Defunded Position:**

**\$98,000 (sal+approx ben)**

# Policy for Administering the *Sustainability Projects Reserve Account* Established by the *Ordinance Establishing A Tax Exemption Agreement* *For Provport, Inc.* (ORD-2023-1)

## Subcommittee Formation and Standards

- a. The Sustainability Commission (Commission) shall establish a five-person subcommittee to determine top priority projects or project types to fund through the Sustainability Project Reserve Account funding for a given project cycle. The Sustainability Department shall provide staff support to the subcommittee.
- b. All iterations of the subcommittee shall consist of *at least one* Commission member who is a resident of a port-adjacent (or port-impacted) neighborhood.
- c. The subcommittee shall be subject to all Open Meetings requirements. The subcommittee may enter Executive Session when reviewing bids and/or discussing recommendations.
- d. The subcommittee may invite subject matter experts to attend subcommittee meetings to provide context and offer expertise to inform the Commission's project recommendations. Subject matter experts shall be fairly compensated for their time with stipends paid through the Sustainability Reserve Account fund.
- e. All organizations or groups receiving Sustainability Reserve Account funding shall be able to demonstrate alignment with Climate Justice Plan values – including racial, environmental and economic equity – through past projects or partnerships.

## Project Selection and Implementation Process

### 1. Development of RFP

- a. In all RFPs, the Commission and the Department shall include:
  - i. A description of desired qualifications for project applicants based on expertise or experience needed.
  - ii. Scoring categories required in the RFP shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
    1. The project uses funds primarily to benefit port-adjacent neighborhoods.
    2. The project prioritizes meaningful involvement and leadership of impacted communities in all phases of work.
- b. The Department and the subcommittee will co-draft the RFP(s) to present to the full Commission for review and approval.
- c. The Department will issue the RFP and manage the procurement process.

### 2. Project Selection

- a. When bids are received, Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Department staff shall review bids, determine a recommended bid(s) and an alternate bid, and present them to the full Commission for discussion.
- b. The full Commission shall review recommended and alternate bids and select the bid(s) in agreement with department staff.

### 3. Implementation

- a. Department staff shall be responsible for all contracting and overall project management as well as providing monthly updates of funded projects to the Commission.

## Sustainability Projects and Reserve Account

### Definitions:

Per the *Ordinance Establishing a Tax Exemption Agreement for ProvPort, Inc.* the term below is defined as follows:

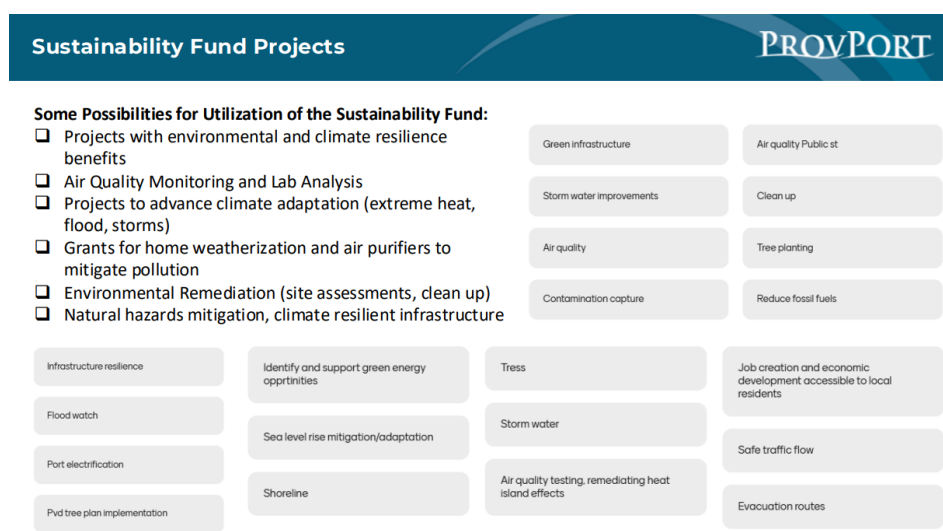
- **“Sustainability Projects”** shall mean environmental sustainability projects, as provided in the Master Plan including, but not limited to, air quality testing, environmental remediation, or projects to advance climate adaptation and mitigation infrastructure.

### ProvPort Master Planning Process:

The following projects or categories have been discussed at Advisory Council (MPAC) meetings and at Master Plan community meetings:

- Projects and categories compiled by GZA for the 4/3 meeting based on prior community input
  - **Highest Priority, indicated by dots\***
    - Air quality testing (monitoring and lab analysis)
    - Environmental remediation (site assessments, clean up)
    - Reducing fossil fuel use
    - Reducing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions
    - Racial and environmental justice benefits
  - **Not highest priority, indicated by dots**
    - Projects to advance climate adaptation (extreme heat, flood, storms)
    - Natural hazards mitigation, climate resilient infrastructure
    - Climate resilient infrastructure
    - Environmental sustainability projects
- Community Suggestions from the 4/3 community meeting
  - Give funds to community organizations already doing the work (MEO, PPA, REJC, PRP)
  - Has a participatory budgeting process been considered?
  - How do we ensure community oversight of these funds.

Further examples of projects suggested by community:



*\*limited sample size*