The following are summary minutes for the meeting of the City of Las Cruces - Transportation-Sustainability-Infrastructure Policy Review Committee on March 2, 2021. The meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
- Gill Sorg, Chairman
- Gabriel Vasquez, City Council
- Johana Bencomo, City Council
- Philip Simpson, Southern New Mexico Trails Alliance
- John Moscato, Las Cruces Homebuilders Association
- Mark Gaiser, EMNRD
- Peter Ibarbo, SCRTD/SCSWA

STAFF PRESENT:
- Andy Hume, Airport Administrator
- Adrienne Widmer, Water Deputy Director
- Delilah Walsh, Utilities Director
- Lisa Larocque, Sustainability Officer
- Francisco Pallares, Economic Development Deputy Director
- Cynthia Villanueva, Administrative Assistant

I. Call to Order: Chairman Sorg called the meeting to order at approximately 8:30.

II. Conflict of Interest: None.

III. Acceptance of the Agenda: Committee Member Vasquez motioned to approve the agenda; seconded by Committee Member Bencomo. Motion passed unanimously; agenda was accepted.

IV. Minutes for Approval - TSI PRC Meeting of February 2, 2021: There was a question as to whether Committee Member Vasquez was present at the last meeting; Committee Member Ibarbo was present. Committee Member Ibarbo added that he provided comments and input which aren’t noted on page three line 48, page 4 lines one and two, nine through eleven, and eighteen. Committee Member Bencomo motioned to table the minutes until next meeting; seconded by (inaudible). Motion passed unanimously; minutes were tabled until next meeting for corrections.

V. Discussion:

   a. New Mexico Green Building Codes: Mark Gaiser from the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department and Energy Conservation and Management Division gave the presentation; he is also the Clean
Energy Program manager. He noted that certain things he says will be his opinion and may not represent the governor, legislature, or New Mexico stances on this topic. Lisa LaRocque added that there is another presenter who will discuss a similar project specifically for the municipality once Mr. Gaiser is finished.

Mr. Gaiser went over a brief history; New Mexico has been lacking the national standards for quite a few decades, International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) conservation codes for 2009 are used state wide, there is a New Mexico CID effort to adopt the 2018 codes, and Albuquerque has adopted the IECC 2018 and began March 1st. There is a New Mexico senate bill is in the legislature which would mandate that New Mexico building codes be maintained at the current release version; brought by Senator Bill Soules. There is also a draft version of the IECC 2021 code available including appendices on stretch codes for net zero building.

The IECC is concerned with how one builds a building to keep the heat in or out. Items on a building include fenestration which is all the doors, windows, and sky lights in the building, ceilings, walls, floors, slabs, and crawlspaces. Insulation is important depending on where the building is; Las Cruces can have temperature swings of almost 80 degrees in summer. Insulation is also important in frozen climates as well as desert. Buildings will be around for a long time which means how you build it will affect the performance of the building over time. The three components to a net zero building include heating and cooling energy star equipment, the IECC envelope, and add solar PV.

Data from the IECC 2007 was shown; buildings are the most energy consuming devices compared to agriculture, industry, energy supply, and etcetera. Mr. Gaiser believes it makes sense to build with as much energy efficiency as possible as it will pay off in the long run. If building stock becomes more efficient then utilities don’t have to build more power plants reducing bills for everyone. Zeroenergyproject.org states a zero energy home costs roughly 7% to 8% more than a standard built home presently but it pays back over time with not having to pay so much on utilities. Mortgages tend to set up looking at principal, interest, taxes, and insurance; it is suggested to include energy efficiency as well. Mr. Gaiser suggested that there needs to be listing services so that zero energy is noted on the realtor’s multiple listing service.

Committee Member Ibarbo asked if there’s any new trends going towards zero waste and efficiency for residential; there are architects on the east coast in institutional buildings that are incorporating design for recycling and managing waste. Mr. Gaiser responded that he hasn’t looked into it yet. He added that manufacturers provide packing materials that must be gotten rid of which is a big problem; if you don’t generate the waste you don’t have to get rid of it. There was discussion on waste and transport in regards to emissions. Lisa LaRocque discussed how these international energy
conservation codes focus on the envelope which is a critical problem in the
low and moderate income housing stock. There isn’t much ability for the
homeowners to be able to deal with weather extremes; compounded with
urban heat the neighborhoods have hardships with comfort and cost. These
codes are important to be energy efficient but also aid in updating the
standards. Contractors will have a learning curve and increase in cost but
the rewards outweigh the costs. To be thoughtful in how we waste energy,
water, or materials is important as it affects everything from drought to
climate change. The codes for building, net zero codes, and National
Energy Conservation Codes are important guidelines to follow for creating
a safe and equitable community.

There was discussion on how the home buying market and end users will
be affected; the median house price has gone up recently. Committee
Member Vasquez is in support of the new building code and believes it is
necessary. However, as there is a concern on how the increased cost will
be passed on to the consumer; contractors may see it as an opportunity to
arbitrarily raise prices or profit off of them. For an energy efficient home
under IECC it would be a 2% or 3% addition. Mr. Gaiser suggested
reducing the square footage to reduce the cost of the home; reducing by
5% wouldn’t make much difference and could be sold at the same amount
and reduce energy use. Rocky Mountain Institute states there would be a
2% to 3% adder to build a home efficiently which would be paid back within
two to three years if the utilities bills are cut in half. Chair Sorg suggested
if energy is added to the mortgage algorithm then perhaps it would result in
lower mortgages.

Tierra del Sol has been doing energy efficient buildings for 10 years. There
were increases but their buildings are now sustainable and efficient.
Committee Member Bencomo suggested using Tierra del Sol as the model
for the energy efficient buildings. There was suggestion to watch the pricing
of housing for the concerns. Insulation would have an R factor as per codes
to be energy efficient; the 2018 codes don’t change much of the R factors
as compared to the 2009 codes. The biggest changes are with the
fenestrations energy efficiency and ceilings; the code for the tightest built
homes requires an air exchange unit to keep the air quality good in the
building. The building’s ceiling would be wrapped in impermeable barrier to
make sure there are no drafts.

Lisa LaRocque introduced Kat Mortimer from Pax Consulting. Ms. Mortimer
has been working for the past 35 years in environmental and sustainability
planning and is an architect as well as an environmental planner. She was
a sustainability manager in Santa Fe and has done cutting edge work to
help residents and the municipality be accountable for energy and water
efficiency. She is currently helping staff put together a plan to have
consistent and best practices in the municipality; help demonstrate the
contribution to greenhouse gas reduction as well as water and energy
conservation.
Ms. Mortimer gave a presentation. They are currently working on a strategy to ensure energy and water conservation in municipal projects; this will save money and preserve limited resources for the City. As part of the process Ms. Mortimer reviewed Elevate Las Cruces, the current water conservation plan, and other documents the City has adopted. She found a number of goals and strategies to reduce energy and water use in City facilities. Benefits of resource efficiency include saving money, increase resiliency to water or energy shortages, and lead by example to show the community how they can save.

Energy is an important resource to conserve due to direct connection with greenhouse gas emissions. Water is also important to conserve; a diagram was shown illustrating how it takes a lot of water to deliver energy and a lot of energy to deliver potable water. Energy needed for water and wastewater combined is 48% of the City of Las Cruces’ electric use which is similar to other cities. Water is greater in this area due to effects of climate change predicting longer and more severe droughts. Determining success includes collecting data and reporting on the metrics chosen to determine how much water and energy is saved. This project will include steps the City can take to reduce energy and water as well as how to track, report back, evaluate, make adjustments, and improve the program over time.

Municipal projects can be both large and small. The best way to reduce water and energy in any project is unique. As a result Ms. Mortimer anticipates having a range of requirements depending upon the project. Staff who will be involved in implementing the requirements have been consulted to identify challenges and opportunities; the initial consultation is complete but the staff will continue to be consulted as strategies are created. Initial interviews found that the challenges Las Cruces faces is similar to other cities as well as specific ones to Las Cruces; this ensures the project will be strategic to the localized issues.

Some challenges are ensuring the value engineering analysis includes life cycle cost rather than just the first cost, designing the requirements so that they can be easily updated with new technology and information, ensure maintenance cost is considered, and collect data from pilot projects to learn from. Specific challenges to Las Cruces include more exposure to damaging ultraviolet light which deteriorates building materials quickly and high summer temperatures with low rain fall levels may effect natural water conservation strategies in the landscape. To measure the progress there will be metrics selected and frequent reports will be developed of the data to see if the buildings are making the conservation goals.

An illustration of what the framework may look like was shown; a simple table showing simple solutions moving down to complex solutions. The goal is to not have the cost of doing the evaluation become so expensive that it takes away from the benefits of the process. Ms. LaRocque added that
Rhonda Diaz is the Water Conservation Coordinator at Utilities and has been a great partner during the process. Staff would like to see this framework adopted and incorporated at the municipal level to be a tool for everyone to use and refer to; staff will bring this forward for adoption once the project is complete. The hope is that these best practices will eventually be used at the community level as well. The financial challenges do need to be addressed first. These presentations were to show the work being done as well as the potential for what is in the new building codes and how they can be applied to create a safe environment for the low and moderate income communities in particular.

Ms. Mortimer commented that what has been found as the best strategy on helping to facilitate recycling in residential units is to have the collection area in or near the kitchen; perhaps a built in spot. In many new buildings there are built in trash and recycling cabinets or if the kitchen is too small a space can be made on the inside of the garage. In regards to affordability of the smaller homes there was research into that in Albuquerque with case studies of projects under construction; Ms. Mortimer worked with developers to identify people willing to share their utility bills after it was built. The data collected found that the increased cost of energy in a single family home is roughly 2% to 4% and the payback is usually five to eight years; water may take longer as it’s more expensive. Research showed that new home buyers would be worse off in five or so years if the codes weren’t required. The affordable housing program in Albuquerque was able to increase what someone’s income level would allow them to afford based on the water and energy savings.

Committee Member Vasquez commented that first time homebuyers who are low income deserve to have an energy efficient home; the concern is with the private market side where developers may arbitrarily raise cost not equal to the cost of improvements. He suggests regulations on those industries to make sure it doesn’t happen. There was discussion on how the process began on the City side. It was prompted by all the different plans and resolutions that weren’t consistently presented making it difficult to decide which one to follow. Given that only Ms. LaRocque is working with energy with Ms. Diaz working in water, they decided to try and solve the issue by putting together consistent decision making tools which could be used by staff; helps in aiding the community who have questions as well. Concurrently staff wanted to make sure they could support the new policies coming out with design standards that will be addressed at the community level. The Climate Action Plan that was passed last year as well as the future plan of converting from natural gas energy to renewable energy was also motivation to figure out best practices; not just initial cost but long term impact.

Committee Member Vasquez thanked Ms. LaRocque for her work and how well she’s able to come up with solutions for complex problems.
b. Plastic Bag Ordinance: Lisa LaRocque gave the presentation. Staff is moving forward on checking with the majority of the grocery store managers and other parties that will be impacted for their final feedback of when they think enforcement could begin. Large and local businesses are also being asked for their opinions on the best use of a possible $0.10 charge; what distribution and purposes would be best. Staff expects to present the ordinance in April for Council consideration and to share the feedback.

Committee Member Ibarbo asked if the $0.10 would be kept to support programs such as recycling. Ms. LaRocque responded that there is no consensus at this point; they are asking the retailers opinion. Depending on what replacement bag is being used will determine whether or not there is an additional cost burden which the City wishes to be sensitive to. They are also considering how to accelerate the use of cloth bags by creating cottage industries at different locations; similar to how people are making masks. Another suggestion is schools selling reusable bags for fundraisers. The fee would also be used for educational purposes and cleanup. The goal is to send a positive message that this can benefit the community by supporting others. Committee Member Ibarbo believes it’s a good policy and supports the ban. He asks that it be standard throughout the state so that retailers don’t have different system in each city; the $0.10 is standard in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

Committee Member Bencomo commented that she thought there were still some issues with the ordinance and didn’t realize it would be brought to the Council. Ms. LaRocque stated that it will be a work session with the Council to broaden the feedback and awareness. There was a lot of time spent pre-COVID with this and now they wish to gain more information from the stores who will be impacted as well as residents. Staff will present the opinions gathered in order to finalize the bag ban ordinance and have a time to phase it in. Ms. LaRocque will send the Board a summary of the draft ordinances and the remaining decision points which need to be made as well as how they are going about it.

Committee Member Vasquez suggested having a calendar to get a better sense of what other outreach is needed and post work session if the ordinance will come back to the PRC for further discussion before it gets drafted and goes to the Council for adoption. There was discussion of delays due to cost increases for both consumers and retailers during uncertain financial times. There could be a sunset clause to begin in 2022 but best to have the ordinance passed as soon as it can. Committee Member Vasquez would like to see a timeline to get the ordinance in front of Council as well as a discussion on when it would take effect. Lisa LaRocque commented that in November or December a co-op gave a presentation regarding the ordinance on where they were and the decision points still there. Ms. LaRocque inferred that they would put the ordinance in a work session in April and then move forward with an adoption in May or June with the idea that it would be enacted in 2022. This would inform
the community of the phase in and allow the City to do appropriate advertising and promotion.

VI. Future Discussion/Task Listing: Andy Hume confirmed that Mike Bartholomew will be available in April to provide an update on transit service. The discussions for the next month will include Transit Service and an update on the Land Use Zoning Code. Mr. Hume showed a table of the Land Use Zoning Codes and suggested using it as an update table so that staff can work with various departments where the leads are selected. Then staff can provide the PRC with updates in the table format rather than in a verbal format each month. He asked for the PRC’s feedback as they move forward. The May meeting will include the El Paseo Corridor update.

Mr. Hume asked if anyone on the PRC had any deliverables based on the discussions today or upcoming. Committee Member Bencomo asked what the transit service discussion involves; questions asked a couple months ago regarding fare free service, service expansion, and the short reach transit plan. This PRC has many long term projects being worked on which take a great deal of time. Staff will continue to come back and gather input on the projects as they evolve. Committee Member Bencomo suggested having a discussion on how to make fare free transit happen in the long term.

a. Transit Service:

b. Land Use Zoning Code Revisions:

c. El Paseo Corridor District Development Ad Hoc Committee:

VII. Next Meeting - April 6, 2021.

VIII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45a.m.

[Signature]

Chairman Sorg

Approved: ____________________