

Minutes
Joint Municipal Action Committee
March 11, 2016

PRESENT

Erik Hanberg, Chair, Metro Parks Tacoma
Anders Ibsen, Vice-Chair, City of Tacoma
Catherin Ushka, Tacoma Public Schools
Robert Thoms, City of Tacoma
Tim Reid, Metro Parks Tacoma
Connie Ladenburg, Pierce County
Mark Lauzier, Assistant City Manger

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Erik Hanberg called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

The attendees introduced themselves. Also in attendance were guests: Randy Lewis, City of Tacoma; Anita Gallagher, City of Tacoma; Hunter George, Metro Parks Tacoma; Jennifer Bowman, Metro Parks Tacoma; Evette Mason, Port of Tacoma; Tiffany Speir, Pierce County; Mark Williams, Pierce County; and Tom Luce, Northwest Innovation Works

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Catherine Ushka moved to approve the agenda as presented. Connie Ladenburg seconded the motion. The chair declared the motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Catherine Ushka moved to approve the minutes of February 12, 2016. Connie Ladenburg seconded the motion. The chair declared the motion passed.

METHANOL PLANT

Tom Luce representing Northwest Innovation Works spent a few minutes highlighting the background of the proposed project. Mr. Luce noted that Northwest Innovation Works signed a lease with the Port of Tacoma in May of 2014, and has been seeking to develop a methanol plant for that site. During the scoping process opposition raised concerns which has caused the project to be paused while questions are answered, concerns are addressed and information is provided.

Mr. Luce commented that methanol is wood alcohol that is not considered explosive but is flammable, water soluble, and biodegradable. Under the current scope methanol would be produced and shipped to China to replace the use of coal used to produce olefin products produced in China. He commented that this supports Paris Climate Change Agreement adopted in December of 2015. Mr. Luce followed by stating that the use of methanol rather than coal will play a significant role in the reduction of carbon emissions.

Benefits to region resulting from building this plant highlighted by Mr. Luce include 1,000 local construction jobs, 250 jobs once the plant is built and operational. He added that it will also bring a significant source of revenue to the region.

The floor was then opened for questions by the committee. Mr. Luce was asked about projected water usage of the plant. He commented that 14.4 million gallons per day was projected use but further design indicates 10 million gallons are achievable. Tacoma Public Utilities has indicated that this would not impact residential customers. Mr. Luce noted that gray water is an option to be explored as well, but more technical work needs to be done to see if that is a viable option.

Councilmember Thoms spoke of his concern for the increase of size in the plant; being the largest in the world. He further commented that the change in project scope was not communicated well and has caused confusion in the community. Mr. Luce responded that the increase in size of the project has been promoted since October via the Northwest Innovation Works website and meetings since October thru December. A third party report has indicated that the concerns that have surfaced regarding blast zone danger, the report indicates that there is no danger to those outside of the plant.

Councilmember Thoms also commented on his concerns about relations with China. Mr. Luce responded that the relationship with China is extremely important and that this project is a local project that has global effects. Councilmember Thoms also asked about just producing the natural gas at the plant and having it shipped to China then converting to methanol. Mr. Luce commented that keeping the jobs here in the region remains an important driver.

Councilmember Ibsen inquired about the environmental impact. Mr. Luce stated that the draft Environmental Impact Statement is out and available, he continued to comment that the project would not be moving forward if air emissions were going to put the Port of Tacoma back into non-attainment.

Councilmember Ibsen also asked about earthquake and lahar issues. Mr. Luce stated that safety is paramount for the project. Vast geotechnical study and assessment is being done to be sure that earthquake concerns are addressed.

Commissioner Hanberg inquired about the infrastructure around the plant needing to support its operation. Mr. Luce commented that a natural gas pipeline will be needed and is a piece of the proposal but is also on pause for now. The map and route of the pipeline is available on the Northwest Innovation Works website. Commissioner Hanberg also voiced his concern over future water shortages. Mr. Luce stated 80% of the water used for the methanol production will be cooled and returned to the watershed, 6% is actually consumed by the reformation process.

Councilmember Ladenburg asked for more information about the liability in the event of an accident at the plant. Mr. Luce replied that Northwest Innovation Works is liable. He further commented that 18 permits are needed prior to moving forward ensuring that the strictest environmental and safety issues have been addressed. Permit list can be found on the website.

Councilmember Thoms suggested adding language to the contract that addresses utility rate concerns. Commissioner Reid stated that he is concerned about utility usage in the distant future as well.

Councilmember Thoms suggested being more clear when communicating with the community about the value of the economic impact this plant could have on the region.

SETTING OF NEXT MEETING AGENDA

April 15 – Vision 2040 (City of Tacoma)

FUTURE MEETING DATES

May 13 – Quarterly Meeting - Point Defiance Planning and SAMI Partnership (Metro Parks)

June 10 - Regular Meeting

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Community Revitalization (Robert Thoms)
Homelessness and Enforcement (Robert Thoms)
Presentation on Youth Summit (Kurt Miller)
South Sound 911/Emergency Management
Invite CEO of Pierce Transit
Continue Mental Health Conversation
Youth Mental Health Issues: Trafficking, Housing/Shelters, Gangs, etc.
Economic Development Growth and Impacts
Discuss and List Combined Legislative Goals
Trades, Apprenticeship, Regional Partnerships (Tacoma School District, Bates Technical College and City of Tacoma)
Affordable Housing Policies (Anders Ibsen)

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Friday, April 15, 2016 at 8:00 a.m. in Conference Room 248 at the Municipal Building. Meeting minutes are to be taken by Tacoma Public Schools.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.