



2021 ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

Board Objective

The objective of the Environmental Board is to protect, preserve and enhance the natural environment and take action on climate change to reduce its impacts by advising the Mayor, City Council and City departments on the City's plans, policies, regulations and programs related to environmental stewardship.

Meetings

The Board meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month, and some months more often for joint meetings with other Boards and Commissions. Since January of 2021, there have been 17 Board meetings. Throughout the year, the Board has provided feedback on the Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Ordinance, the Capital Improvement Plan, the Stormwater and Surface Water Master Plan, the Title 18 Land Use Code Update and the Climate Action Plan (CAP), among other City plans and policies.

Please see Appendix A for a list of all meeting dates and agenda topics.

Board Duties and Accomplishments

[Section 18.03.540](#) of the Issaquah Municipal Code identified eight duties and responsibilities for the Environmental Board. For each of these duties, the Board has identified the accomplishments from 2021:

1. Provide feedback on City plans, regulations, and codes that impact the natural environment to ensure alignment with community vision, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Shoreline Management Program;
 - b. Storm and Surface Water Master Plan;
 - c. Relevant portions of IMC Titles 13, 16 and 18;
 - d. Capital Improvement Plan;
 - e. Transportation Improvement Program.

The Board provided extensive feedback on City plans, regulations and codes throughout the year. The Board considered the Storm and Surface Water Master Plan at two meetings on March 24 and December 8. Relevant portions of Title 18 that impact the natural environment were presented to the Board at six meetings throughout the year. The Board attended the Special City Council meeting

on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and provided feedback at an additional Environmental Board meeting. The 2022-2027 CIP also included the Transportation Improvement Program.

2. Establish formal Board-written statements or reports to document the Board's recommendations on items they review and accompany these items throughout various approval processes. The recommendations of the Board shall be given substantial weight by the decision-maker.

The Board created a formal recommendation report and provided two formal recommendations to the City Council. The recommendation for the EV Charging Ordinance was included in the [April 5 City Council meeting packet](#) and the recommendation for the Issaquah Climate Action Plan was included in the December 6 City Council meeting packet.

3. Review research and best practices to advise on environmental policies and code for the City.

In addition to research being presented on the signature topics of the EV Charging Ordinance, the CAP and Title 18 review, the Board reviewed research and best practices in the areas of City programs and practices for environmental stewardship and greenhouse gas reduction, stormwater management, recycling and composting, regulatory compliance with environmental standards, and solid waste hauling and management.

4. Advise on the implementation of a natural environment checklist to be completed by staff for all public and private projects (as identified in IMC 18.10.410(F)) and that will be included with project documents to inform decision-making processes. The checklist will be reviewed by the Board after five (5) uses and annually thereafter to provide feedback to Community Planning and Development on its use and to help identify and inform policy issues in the Issaquah Municipal Code that may adversely impact the environment.

The Board reviewed the checklist and provided advice on its implementation at the August 11 meeting.

5. Advise on planning and prioritization of actions related to climate change and resiliency.

There were six meetings where the CAP was on the agenda and the Board was instrumental in the development of the Plan. The Plan and the prioritization of actions contained in that plan will allow the City to make important steps to address climate change and resiliency.

6. Develop recommendations on programs, services, practices and priorities relating to environmental sustainability and protection.

Besides the formal recommendations for the EV Charging Ordinance and the CAP, the Board provided recommendations to City staff and consultants on greenhouse gas reduction, stormwater management, recycling and composting, regulatory compliance with environmental standards, and solid waste hauling and management.

7. Provide an annual report to the Mayor and City Council on work plan activities and measurable achievement toward environmental goals and objectives. The Board will provide a self-analysis of their work and effectiveness to be presented to City Council by December 31, 2021, and annually thereafter.

This report fulfills the annual report requirement. In the subsequent section, a survey of Board members provides the self-analysis of the Board's work and effectiveness.

8. Carry out other duties as may be prescribed by City ordinance, or as directed by the Mayor or City Council.

The Board completed its annual work plan prepared by the Mayor and the Administration but was not tasked with any other duties that have been previously described.

Board Survey and Self-Analysis

To help facilitate the "self-analysis of their work and effectiveness," the Board created and completed a brief survey. The questions and responses are found below:

1. The objective of the Environmental Board is to protect, preserve and enhance the natural environment and take action on climate change to reduce its impacts by advising the Mayor, City Council and City departments on the City's plans, policies, regulations and programs related to environmental stewardship.

On a scale of 1 (Poorly) to 5 (Very well), please rate how well the Environmental Board's achieved its objective.

Average of Board responses: 4

Additional comments:

- While the Environmental Board has provided input in order to "protect, preserve, and enhance the natural environment," it has not been clear that the provided feedback has actually translated into tangible reduction of impacts by climate change.
- I think the members of the Board are passionate and involved in the conversations we have had and they truly want to be involved but... some of the presentations have not allowed for a robust conversation and make it difficult to get into the details to get questions answered. Consider allowing more time at future meetings if a topic may be controversial.
- As a new board, we worked to understand the City's current status on activities related to the natural environment and took action on several items including the climate action plan, EV ordinance, provided feedback on the Title 18 update and several other programs.
- I think the Board and the City departments are still learning exactly how to work together but overall feel that it was a productive year.
- I think it has functioned fairly well but feel the scope of the material reviewed each meeting was too large to give it thorough consideration.
- We had the opportunity to weigh in on many important topics.
- I think the topics we have covered are very important, but so much of what we have discussed is in planning stages and the actual impact won't be seen for several years. I also think the Board is just starting to get to know each other and learn who on the

Board has certain expertise and perspectives that make their voices important to hear on certain issues.

- We helped shape and push the Climate Action Plan.
2. On a scale of 1 (Low satisfaction) to 5 (High satisfaction), please rate your satisfaction with the content, discussions, and presentations given in Board meetings.

Average of Board responses: 3.6

Additional comments:

- The content and presentations are well made and provide a good overview of the topics. However, the timing of such presentations could be improved. Sometimes, it seems far too much information is crammed into one night's meeting; this reduces the quality of the discussion and is taxing on both public spectators and board members.
- I find the format of the meetings to be difficult at times in that all of us must type into the text box that we have a question or comment then address each one. It makes the conversation difficult.
- Many of the presentations have been excellent and the board actively discussed the actions and provided feedback to the Board.
- There were quite a few instances where the proper context & tailored content of materials could have been improved in what was presented by staff.
- Meetings have been well-run, with the main problem being running late due to the scope of the material under review.
- I find it difficult to comment using the chat to indicate I have a comment. I hope we can have actual in-person meetings soon.
- Overall, I have been satisfied, though some topics are so broad and complex (land use code updates and climate action plan for example) that it has sometime seemed rushed. While these are both such important topics, I have appreciated some for the more discrete topics like EV ordinance and waste management. I also appreciated when specific topics (e.g. tree canopy) are focused on instead of trying to solicit general feedback on large plans (e.g. CAP).
I also was not a huge fan of the joint meetings with the PPC. I get the point of the efficiency of bringing the groups together on related topics like land use code, but I feel like the Board was secondary on that meeting when my understanding was we were supposed to give more technical recommendations to the PPC on critical areas and the like. That meeting was dominated by 2-3 voices that were supposed to be asking questions, but mostly turned those questions into comments (another part of the process during these meetings that can be a little frustrating). I will say for my mental capacity in the evening after pretty long days of work, a 2-hour meeting and agenda should be as long as we go.
- The meetings feel toothless and too unstructured/not streamlined. We need to have focused impact. We spend a lot of time talking where city departments want our approval; I don't think every group needs to come past our attention. I think this will be easier now with the CAP.

3. What topics do you want to see more or less of coming before the Board?

Board responses:

- I would like to see more time spent reviewing existing City policies.
- Parks Plan
- Continued work on Title 18, including tree canopy goals and tree retention
- Other activities related to the natural environment
- I would like to continue to engage on Title 18 topics outside of the Natural Environment topics and hope we are involved in implementation of the CAP.
- Parks, open spaces, trails, bike paths, multi-modal transportation are all topics dear to me. I think that multi-modal transportation is a key factor effecting the environmental quality of Issaquah in the future.
- I would like to see discussion of the importance of recognizing wildlife corridors and some provisions to protect these corridors with adequate buffers and passages.
- More Climate Change, Water issues, Carbon Sequestration, Healthy soils, Waste and Recycle, Salmon, Forest Fire Safety, Forest Health and Resilience
- I have appreciated the stormwater plan updates a lot, but a more direct avenue to discuss how the City can do more to protect and restore aquatic resources is really important to me as well. Prioritizing key land acquisitions and projects that improve fish habitat and reduce flooding are at the top of my priority list!
- I think the Board could take a proactive role, being appointed to represent or drive certain initiatives, rather than to just offer feedback on them. For example, some being the “recycling advocate”, or the “healthy water spokesperson” and helping push community members to reach those goals.

4. On a scale of 1 (Not supportive) to 5 (Very supportive), do you think the City staff are adequately supporting the Environmental Board?

Average of Board responses: 4.6

Additional comments:

- Staff has worked hard to make the Board successful and provide information in a timely and complete manner.
- I think we generally received good support from our liaison, and from other staff members.

5. On a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent), please rate your experience as a member of the Environmental Board.

Average of Board responses: 4.1

Additional comments:

- I enjoy serving on the Board, and feel my input is respected and accepted.
- So far, I have enjoyed being on the Environmental Board. It would be nice if the meetings were a little earlier or not run quite as late, but I think that is something that we will discuss.
- The board is a well-rounded group that are working together to provide input and feedback to the City on some tough issues.

- I'm grateful to be on the board and for what our city is doing to take these issues seriously.
- Overall, I have had a good experience. The main frustrations have been in large scope of the material covered in a meeting, running late and hurried conclusions
- Lower-ranked response was mainly due to the meetings being virtual.
- I feel like we are getting to have a big influence on important topics. I am learning a lot and appreciate the opportunity!
- Participation has felt more symbolic than productive. The meetings are too frequent, and too long/unfocused, given that we still have little influence or "teeth" to impact things.

6. What can we do to improve the success of the Environmental Board?

Board responses:

- We can distribute content across meetings more efficiently, and revisit old city policies.
- Be very distinct in your ask at the beginning of presentations. (Informational, decision, etc....) and be willing to step in and try to steer the Board back into direction if you see them going sideways.
- Improve the interface between the Board and the City Council. We aren't sure if our feedback gets to the Council or is lost along the way.
- A key area I hope our new staff liaison focuses on is ensuring that materials that are being presented to the Board have the right context, level of grain, and as much guidance provided for their review to ensure we make good use of our preparation time, and time in meetings. A common staff report template, direct questions at the beginning of staff reports and recommended pages to focus on in the packet could help with Board preparation.
I think our team could use more practice with the process around taking action. We might even consider smaller actions for practice prior to our next major action to help streamline the process, and/or very explicit reminders of how the process works well in advance of any future actions. I also hope that our board gets back in the habit of submitting thoughtful motions prior to the meeting like we saw with the EV ordinance.
- Better planning for the scope of each meeting so we don't run out of time, run late, force hurried conclusions, etc.
- I think it would be good if board members felt more comfortable talking. I am wondering if the structure is making folks afraid to weigh in for fear of messing up or breaking the strict rules.
- I have made a few comments above, but unless the topics are pretty straightforward, I think we should try to keep to one focus topic per meeting. It can be really tough to transition from an hour plus on the CAP, then try to go into stormwater planning. I feel like we are often left rushing through that first hour just to get to the next topic, which then feels rushed since we are often behind schedule. I would also love to do our best to keep to 2-hour meetings (which generally has been the case minus 1-2 times).
I also look forward to actually taking action on more items. I think we really just voted on EV and recommendations for approving the CAP this year. I know there was a lot of base information the Board needed to learn, but I am hopeful in 2022 we have more "say" on issues.

- I think the parliamentary process is a bad fit. We are an advisory board, it would be nice to remove some of the obstacles of formality, so we have more time to informally discuss things, not just “motion” to motion to motion. These are complex topics, we need time to talk more freely together, and our is expertise mixed.

Appendix A: Meeting Schedule and Agenda Topics

Meeting #	Meeting Date	Agenda Topics
1	1/13/21	Board Overview & Workplan
2	1/27/21	EV Charging Ordinance
3	2/10/21	Board Rules & Regulations, Environmental Awards
4	3/10/21	EV Charging Ordinance, City's climate progress
5	3/24/21	Storm and Surface Water Master Plan, Stormwater Management Program Plan
	4/19/21	Capital Improvement Plan (Optional Joint meeting with City Council)
6	4/28/21	Capital Improvement Plan, Environmental Awards
7	5/12/21	Climate Action Plan, WA Climate Legislation update
8	6/9/21	Recycling & Composting: Business Outreach and Assistance Report, Environmental Regulatory Compliance Program Overview
9	7/14/21	Climate Action Plan
10	7/22/21	Title 18 Land Use Code Updates: Environmental Policies
11	7/28/21	Community Convening on Climate
12	8/11/21	Review Environmental Neighborhood Meeting Checklist, Overview of Title 18 Goals and Outcomes
13	8/26/21	Title 18 Land Use Code Updates: Environmental Policies
14	9/21/21	Climate Action Plan, Solid Waste Hauling and Processing Contract
15	10/13/21	Title 18 Land Use Code Updates: Landscape, Trees, Open Space, and Community Spaces
16	11/10/21	Climate Action Plan
17	12/8/21	Storm and Surface Water Master Plan, Annual Report