



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Friday, January 24, 2025

ATTENDANCE

Members: Max Perrey (Chair); Tomas Oliva (Vice Chair); Paul Akinjo; Brent Bartlett; Scott Bauer; Edward Belden; Paolo Beltran; Margaret Clark; David Cohen; Lisa Craig; Larissa De La Cruz; Matthew Downing; Chris Frelan; Debra Garnes; Guadalupe Gutierrez; Leslie Jordan; Sean Kelleher; Linda Launer; Joe Lillio; Elaine Litster; Maika Llorens Gulati; Julio Martinez; Daniel Martinez; Conna McCarthy; Deborah McGarrey; Peggy McQuaid; Melissa Morgan; Jennifer Nakamura; David Newman; Tomas Oliva; Max Perrey; Randall Putz; Karina Quintanilla; Alonso Ramirez; Candice Rankin-Mumby; Niroop Srivatsa; Matthew Summers; Igor Tregub; Kathleen Treseder; Kevin Wilk

Cal Cities Partners: Jordan Chriss; Haig Kartounian

Staff: Melissa Sparks-Kranz, Legislative Affairs Lobbyist
Zack Cefalu, Policy Analyst

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Perrey and Vice Chair Oliva welcomed the committee members and introduced themselves and Cal Cities staff. Committee member did introductions.

Cal Cities CEO Carolyn Coleman and Cal Cities President Lynne Kennedy both welcomed the committee and thanked them for their work. Both also mentioned the continued support Cal Cities has for the Los Angeles and all Southern CA cities impacted by the wildfires occurring this month.

II. Public Comment

Chair Perrey asked if there was any non-committee member wanting to make public comment. There were none.

III. General Briefing

In accordance with the customary practice of convening all policy committee members for a general briefing prior to the start of policy committee meetings, the Cal Cities advocacy team provided a [General Briefing Update](#), which includes the latest on legislative and budgetary matters affecting cities.

IV. Committee Orientation

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz reviewed the role and purpose of the policy committee as well as the parliamentary procedures the committee follows.

V. Cal Cities 2025 Advocacy Priorities

The committee was updated on the Cal Cities 2025 Advocacy Priorities. The Cal Cities 2025 Advocacy Priorities are available the [Cal Cities website](#).

VI. 2025-2026 Budget Update

Revenue and Taxation Lobbyist Ben Triffo presented an overview of the state's proposed budget and financial forecast. The budget is a balanced \$322 billion budget with a projected modest surplus of \$363 million and \$17 billion in reserves. The budget increased \$20 billion from the previous year.

Ms. Sparks-Kranz provided a budget overview related to environmental protection and natural resources, specifically centered around the funds available under the Climate Bond, Proposition 4.

The 2025-26 FY Budget proposes \$2.7 billion in funding for the first year of a 5-year expenditure plan to implement the \$10 billion Climate Bond, which is set to include:

- Safe drinking water, drought, and flood resilience,
- Dam infrastructure,
- Coastal resilience,
- Biodiversity and nature-based solutions,
- Clean energy,
- Wildfire and forest resilience,
- Outdoor access,
- Extreme heat mitigation

She also provided an overview of the [Cal Cities Guide to the Climate Bond](#) resource available to cities on the Cal Cities website that provides specific information around funding available to cities under each of the eight specific chapters within the Climate Bond.

VII. State Legislation and Regulatory Update

Ms. Sparks-Kranz reviewed the eight subject areas of focus within the Environmental Quality portfolio as an overview of the scope of the work in the portfolio. She reviewed both the legislative and regulatory advocacy highlights of the work done within the Environmental Quality portfolio in 2024.

She also explained that due to the budget deficit last year many beneficial bills Cal Cities was in support of were vetoed by the Governor. Cal Cities is hopeful for better outcomes in 2025.

Key legislative issues Cal Cities anticipates in 2025 include:

- Fire Hazard Severity Zone Local Responsibility Area Mapping updates
- Greenhouse gas reduction fund and the state's cap and trade program, which is currently set to expire in 2030
- AB 98 clean-up language
- Water management legislation, including related to water supply and wildfires

- Coastal legislation related to sea level rise
- Potential for a clean energy package

VIII. Adoption of 2025 Work Program

To inform the committee's work program, committee members were asked to respond to an online survey selecting their top priorities for the committee to focus on in the coming year.

Staff provided an overview of the survey responses and proposed work program and allowed for discussion. The committee agreed the work program captured high priority issues throughout the state.

The committee unanimously adopted the following items for the 2025 work program:

- Climate Change and Resiliency
- Energy and Utilities
- Disaster/Emergency Preparedness and Response

Policy committee members engaged in a discussion around setting the committee's priorities for the upcoming year. Many members expressed a desire to include a focus on clean alternative energy as well as evaluating the state's grid infrastructure reliability and affordability. The committee unanimously adopted the 2025 Work Plan.

IX. Keynote Speaker: CA Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

Natalie Kuffel, Deputy Director of Planning & Climate Policy at the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, and Sean Kennedy, Deputy Director for Energy Investments at the Strategic Growth Council provided presentations to the committee.

Ms. Kuffel presented on the role and priorities of the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation since its transition from the Office of Planning and Research and identified the following as key priorities:

- Fire recovery in Los Angeles, Ventura, and San Diego Counties
- Increased regional outreach and coordinated engagement to ensure the collection of local feedback
 - The Office will be in Los Angeles and San Diego at the end of March and at these meetings they plan to include capacity building, increasing resource access, and notification of state level policy changes
- Coming up with tools to integrate climate planning and how best to utilize the best available climate science tools, such as the Vulnerable Community Assessment Guidelines
- Reforms to the CEQA guidelines, especially how these can be improved through the use of best available technology
 - Such as the current use of software to analyze previous environmental documents that date back to 1990 in order to

analyze trends that will inform the creation of potential new environmental impact guidelines

Sean Kennedy presented on the role, history, and priorities of the Strategic Growth Council (SGC).

SGC History and Work:

- SGC was formed as an interagency council in 2008 and was aligned with efforts for SB 375 to support local governments
- The council by nature is intersectional in its approach to ensure sustainable economic growth
- The SGC distributed \$1 billion in grants annually on climate resilience and economic development, affordable housing
- Since climate change has grown in scope and response since 2008, the council has to evolve and expand approach from regional planning. The SGC expanded their work to include technical assistance and capacity building

SGC Priorities for 2025:

- Successful distribution of Proposition 4 funding of the \$2.7 billion distributed this year
- Affordable Housing and Climate Inequity
- Improving Funding Access
- Conducting work on In-Fill development to analyze how to lower the cost of in-fill development in California
- Building strategic partnerships among local/regional governments

X. Los Angeles Wildfires Update

Public Safety Lobbyist Jolena Voorhis provided an update on the status of the LA wildfires. At the time of the meeting the present status of the fires are:

- The Palisades fire is currently 77% contained, the Eaton fire is currently 95% contained, and the Hughes fire is currently at 56% containment.
- The Border 2 Fire in San Diego County is currently at 10% containment.

Ms. Voorhis explained the active role Cal Cities has in monitoring the fires and disseminating information to our cities.

Cal Cities has taken the following actions:

- Attended Daily Briefing calls with Cal-OES monitoring the status of all active wildfires and the recovery efforts
- Published a Cal Cities newsletter providing a comprehensive list of LA County wildfire resources
- Established peer to peer assistance and support among City Managers and Fire Chiefs Departments
- Cal Cities continues to closely monitor the Department of Insurance fire insurance efforts and have created a Fire Insurance Working Group within Cal Cities

She also provided an overview of the ongoing efforts in the Special Legislative Session and potential upcoming legislation in response to the wildfires. Jolena specifically noted the approval of \$2.5 billion to assist recovery and suppression efforts for LA County fires, signaling this is projected to be the first package of many. Fire response and fire insurance legislative efforts will be continually worked on all year.

XI. Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Proposal

The committee heard the proposed Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program, which is part of the update of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan. This plan, which was last updated in 2006, requires the SWRCB to develop water quality objectives for the beneficial uses of the water from the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta).

After a short presentation to review the analysis staff prepared on this item, members of the committee engaged in a discussion on trying to find the balance between increasing reliable water supply for cities who depend on the Bay-Delta and preserving the ecological health of the Bay-Delta. Members largely agreed on the need for more information about the proposal and the science that shaped its creation. A motion was made to postpone the proposal until more information can be provided. This motion passed unanimously.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03pm by the Chair.

Next Meeting: Friday, March 28th, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Marriott Burbank Airport Hotel, 2500 N. Hollywood Way, Burbank