



Conference/Seminar Summary

City of Watsonville
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To: The Honorable Mayor & City Council
Council Meeting Date: 4/11/2023

City Council Member: Vanessa Quiroz- Carter
Conference/Seminar: CivicWell Policymakers Conference
Location: Asilomar Hotel and Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, CA
Dates of Travel: 3/16/23 to 3/19/23

Please provide a brief report on the conference, seminar, or meeting you attended.

I attended the CivicWell Policymakers Conference from March 16th to March 19th, 2023. On March 16th, I attended the opening remarks and welcome from the conference hosts and some guest speakers, including Alex Casey from the Turner Center for Housing at UC Berkeley. Mr. Casey spoke extensively about inclusionary zoning and statistical modeling. In summation, he spoke on his work with the City of Arcata in changing from single family homes to 4plex homes, which enables building up rather than out and having parking on the ground floor to meet parking requirements. Changing these constraints actually makes the development costs cheaper and allows for more housing density. On March 17th the session had 3 separate panels. The first panel was "Effectively influencing State Climate Policy from a local level". This panel asked participants to envision a future where labor and environmental advocates were on the same side. This panel discussed Senate bill 511, which directs air resources board to prep inventories of greenhouse gas emissions for use for cities and counties in preparation of Climate Action Plans (with standardizing these plans across the board). This panel also discussed moving towards all electric vehicles, with all non public safety vehicles EVs. This panel also discussed how wildfires are creating an emissions problem, and how as a state we are in danger of missing our 2030 climate targets because the pace for renewable generation growth is slowing. The next panel on the 17th was the panel for "Building Decarbonization: What local governments can do". In this panel, we learned that electrification

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potential is 10% for new buildings, 5% for municipal buildings and 90% for existing buildings, which are also the most challenging to retrofit. Local governments can make the permitting process online so it can be streamlined and faster and can use their existing partnerships to help bring things to code and identify places to upgrade. The last panel on the 17th was “Challenges and promises of offshore wind”. This panel stressed the need to triple solar and wind build rates and floated the idea of floating offshore wind mills 20 miles off the coast of California. Possible sites would be Humboldt and Long Beach, but more sites would be needed to meet wind numbers. On March 18th there were 4 different panels. The first panel was “Solar Battery Storage and Grid reliability” which focused on the overloading of electric grids causing blackouts and ways to reduce that. This panel advocated for more electric cars charging during nonpeak hours and microgrid programs to help with electricity equity. The next panel was “Remote workforce: environment and equity implications”. This panel discussed the impact of travel during the heights of the pandemic where many people were working from home. Curiously, one would expect to see CO2 emissions drop during this period, but that was not the case. The air quality with traffic related emissions actually got worse and was the highest during the lockdown; this was seen across the globe as workers from home actually had more time to drive and run errands. This panel encouraged continued teleconferencing whenever possible to lower CO2 emissions and help the air quality. The next panel was “Status of Women and Girls” and it was by far the most sobering. Due to the pandemic, where women dominated sectors were out of a job, the time to close the wage gap is now 37 years. Women will feel the income losses for 2-3 generations. This panel pushed for remote work, teleconferencing and the dire need for childcare access and disability benefits. The third panel was a report from the “California Transportation Commission, which discussed struggling transit after the pandemic. Transit reform is needed, along with bike and pedestrian safety infrastructure. More relief to help achieve pre-pandemic levels of transit is needed from the federal and state governments. The last presentation was from Tarana wireless on the need for equitable internet access, especially in rural areas. The conference concluded on the 19th with an optional breakfast; I did not attend because I was not staying at the grounds and was commuting.

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