

# Climate Resilience and Sustainability Board - Special Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 22, 2025

City Council Briefing Center

Meeting called to order at 3:16 PM by Brian Henning

**Public Comment:** Citizens are invited to address the Climate Resilience and Sustainability Board on any topic not on the agenda. 3 Minutes each.

- *None*

## **Attendance:**

- Board Members Present: Brian Henning, Amanda Parrish, Kerry Brooks, Claire Cooney, Kevin Fagan, Elyse Hochstadt, Larry Luton, Kit Parker, Hala Zahalqa
- Board Members Not Present: Kathryn Alexander, Ryan Arnold, Happy Avery, Bob Lutz, Lea Molina
- *Quorum Present:* Yes
- Staff Members Present: Jon Snyder, Tirrell Black, Emily King, Maren Murphy, Logan Callen, Nicole White, Chris Averyt

**Minutes:** Minutes from 5/8/2025 approved unanimously.

## **Briefing Session:**

- **Chair Report** - Brian Henning
  - Brian mentioned that he will not be in attendance at the June meeting. Amanda Parrish will lead the meeting in his absence.
  - He also encouraged board members to look at materials being produced by the County planning process. The County is going through the process of including a climate element as well. These are the first documents we have at the County level for climate planning.
- **Secretary Report** - Jon Snyder
  - Jon reported that for next month's meeting, we are looking at doing a tour for the second part of the meeting. We are planning to do a tour of the CSO tank right behind the downtown library. The first half of the meeting will be a regular meeting.
  - Jon also let everyone know that he will not be at the June meeting.

**Current Agenda:** The current agenda was approved.

## **Informational, Discussion and/or Action Items:**

- Climate Planning Technical Update #3 – Final CRVA
  - Presentation provided by: BERK Consulting & Maren Murphy
  - Questions asked and answered.
  - Discussion ensued.
- Community Change Grant Resolution
  - Presentation provided by staff member: Jon Snyder
  - Questions asked and answered.
  - Discussion ensued.
    - Gonzaga and City Joint Statement and Letter attached to the end of the minutes.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:27 PM.

The next regularly scheduled Climate Resilience and Sustainability Board Meeting is on Thursday, June 12, 2025.

## Gonzaga University and City of Spokane Urge Reinstatement of Climate Resilience Funding Ahead of Extreme Summer Heat

Erin Hut, Communications Director, [ehut@spokanecity.org](mailto:ehut@spokanecity.org) & Senior Director of Strategic Communications, Gonzaga University, [aitkenj@gonzaga.edu](mailto:aitkenj@gonzaga.edu)

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Friday, May 16, 2025 at 10 a.m.

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Gonzaga University and the City of Spokane are calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to rescind the agency's May 2 notice to terminate a \$19.9 million federal grant awarded to support local climate resilience, public health, and workforce development. As the Inland Northwest enters its heat and wildfire season, termination of the Community Change Grant jeopardizes vulnerable community members and undermines efforts to prepare for increasingly severe climate-related events.

The grant, awarded through the Climate and Environmental Justice Community Change program, funds critical community-based initiatives in Spokane and the Inland Northwest. These include the installation of high-efficiency HVAC and air filtration systems in 300 low-income homes, the development of five Community Resilience Hubs to serve as safe spaces during extreme weather, the re-granting of \$2.6 million to local nonprofits and faith-based organizations, and job training programs in clean energy and energy efficiency.

More than 94% of the grant is allocated for direct services and community infrastructure — resources designed to protect lives, reduce energy costs, support small businesses, and build long-term resilience. With Spokane facing rising temperatures and increased wildfire smoke exposure, the loss of this funding poses immediate risks to public health and safety.

"We are concerned not only about the process by which this decision was made, but even more so about its very real consequences for the people we serve," said Dr. Thayne McCulloh, president of Gonzaga University. "Our mission is to educate and serve. This grant enables our community to learn how to deal with dangerous climate conditions and help the thousands of community members who lack the ability to protect themselves from the extreme heat and wildfire smoke that is all too common in the Inland Northwest today."

"This work has already begun in good faith under a legally binding agreement," said Spokane Mayor Lisa Brown. "The decision to terminate this grant puts lives at risk and undermines locally led solutions to climate and public health challenges. Make no mistake, recent history shows just how critical this funding is to ensure the health, safety, and economic stability of so many Spokane families."

Gonzaga and the City of Spokane believe the termination lacks legal justification and contradicts the terms of the cooperative agreement. Courts have already issued preliminary rulings against similar efforts to halt climate-related funding under the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, citing concerns about overreach and constitutional violations.

The goals of the program — improving energy efficiency, reducing public health risks, and expanding economic opportunity — align with bipartisan policy objectives and are rooted in data-driven, community-focused strategies.

“This is not about politics,” Brown said. “This is about people. It’s about protecting neighbors and investing in a healthier, safer future for Spokane.”

Gonzaga and the City call on its legislators representing the many community members impacted by the grant’s termination to intervene for their constituents by urging immediate reinstatement of the grant; affirming the importance of this funding for Spokane’s health, economy, and safety; and requesting a formal explanation from the EPA regarding the legal basis for the termination and the impact on other grants in Washington State.

The risks are real. Four years ago, 19 area residents died from the effects of extreme heat and smoke. Every day without funding -- without high efficiency air conditioning and filtration in homes, community cooling centers, and life-saving resources – places thousands of Spokane area families at unnecessary risk once again. Gonzaga University and the City of Spokane urge moving beyond a political agenda, immediately reinstating funding for the Community Change Grant, and completing this life-saving program for our residents now, and for years to come.



## Mayor Lisa Brown

April 7, 2025

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Baumgartner  
U.S. House of Representatives  
124 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

### **Subject: Letter of Support to Release EPA Community Change Grant Funding #02J85301**

Dear Senators Murray and Cantwell and Representative Baumgartner,

On behalf of our organizations and the broader Spokane community, we are writing to request your assistance with the timely release of our legally obligated EPA Community Change Grant funding.

We partnered on this Community Change Grant program to protect residents in Eastern Washington from the hazards of extreme heat and wildfire smoke. This critical \$19.9 million program will bring considerable benefits to our community – your constituents – across the Spokane region. Specific benefits of the program include:

- *Improving human health through the installation of higher efficiency heat pumps and HVAC systems benefitting low-income families.*
- *Strengthening community resilience through the creation of five Community Resilience Hubs in low-income communities to provide physical safety during natural disasters, increase community awareness of emergency preparedness and build resilience during extreme weather events and intense wildfire smoke.*
- *Improve air quality through the installation and improvement of HVAC systems in 300 homes and one community center.*
- *Increasing public awareness and preparedness through community resilience trainings.*
- *Certification and training of Gonzaga students to help build resilience.*

Unfortunately, our EPA grant account has been listed as “suspended” without any explanation. We are unable to draw down funds. We are highly concerned that the federal government may not honor its contracts, and we fear that our project has been caught up in a broader set of suspensions, despite the broad-based community support and clear set of actions to protect our residents and support critical investments in regional infrastructure and family financial health.

Losing or delaying this grant funding would cause harm to the communities that we serve and undermine many of the policy objectives that we know you share.

***A Better Way Starts Here***

808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. • Spokane, Washington 99201-3335  
Phone: 509.625.6250 FAX: 509.625.6563



## Mayor Lisa Brown

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would sincerely appreciate your assistance contacting the EPA in support of our grant so we can help the communities that we serve. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information.

We have attached some additional information on our project for background.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brown  
Mayor, City of Spokane

Thayne M. McCulloh  
President, Gonzaga University

Amber Johnson  
Chief Operating Officer, SNAP

***A Better Way Starts Here***

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