

Climate Impact Advisory Committee



FINAL Meeting Minutes

Date: May 5, 2022

Location: Zoom

QUORUM	Y
Members Present	
Charles Bailey	x
William Bethel	x
Sue Gunn	x
Steve Harrel	x
Ray Kamada	x
David Kershner	x
Katherine Kissinger	x
Ellyn Murphy	x
Imran Sheikh	x
Phil Thompson	x
Eddy Ury	
STAFF Chris Elder	x

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

2) Review agenda

3) Review and approval of minutes from April Meeting

Sue motioned to approve minutes and **William** seconded.

4) Public Comment

Public in attendance:

Jack Wellman, PSE

Adrienne Hegedus, Port of Bellingham

Jack mentioned our comments and the Executive's comments on the CEIP, they are in the process of creating a timeline for the plan's approval and implementation. There is a UTC meeting on Monday to set a schedule for the hearing on PSE's CEIP.

5) Update on Climate-Related Issues Before the Council – **Kaylee Galloway**

Kaylee along with **Councilmember Frazey** is working on recommendations for the upcoming 2025 Comprehensive plan update. There will also be a buildable lands report coming out this summer and they are currently seeking community feedback.

Forestry management is another big project the council is working on concerning lake Whatcom and our drinking water supply.

The Executive office is including the Climate Action Manager in the upcoming budget.

Charles asked if **Kaylee** could send the latest draft proposal for the Comp. Plan. He also asked about the Climate Action Manager position given our updated job description. He asked if Kaylee knew the timeline for that position.

Kaylee said that she wasn't able to get an answer yet on the timeline for the climate manager.

Charles asked if our committee could do anything else to help speed up the process

Kaylee said that voicing our support is always helpful

Chris said that communicating the urgency of the matter to the Exec's office

Phil asked about the PSE UTC meeting and noticed that it said it was a prehearing conference so it sounded like it wouldn't be about discussing the actual plan.

Kaylee said that there were other items concerning state grants for state facilities to improve energy efficiency that PSE was looking into. **Kaylee** said that the WTA was looking to purchase new diesel buses

and she is trying to find out what is going on and is thinking of drafting a proposal to them to reinforce our values and the goals of the CAP.

6) CIAC Advisory Role to the Executive and Council

a) CNG Franchise Update – Chris Quinn & Andrew Hester

Mr. Quinn is an attorney for the County Exec and the Public Works department.

Input from individuals on the CIAC was given to public works in regard to the upcoming Franchise agreement update. Some of the main suggestions included:

- term of the agreement
- stronger language regarding the removal of facilities
- insurance coverage
- charging a franchise fee to Cascade
- dig once language, concerning maintenance.

As soon as we are able to endorse the franchise agreement negotiations, the sooner it can move to the committee

Ellyn suggested making the term 8 years to align with the timeline of the emissions reduction targets, e.g., contract would expire in 2030.

Mr. Quinn mentioned that Phil or Eddy have suggested an even shorter timeline around 5 years.

Sue suggested starting with 5 and negotiating up to 8.

Ellyn asked about the energy efficient incentives in point 5.3 grantee shall not offer incentives to customers for installing gas.

Mr. Quinn said that is something that may not be legally relevant but he will explore that possibility.

Sue said that she supports the 5.3 addition if it is legal. She also suggested in 7.3 changing the wording to automatically amended.

Mr. Quinn said that this clause actually protects the county as is

Imran asked about 9.10 and if there is a threshold for reporting leakages.

Mr. Quinn said that **Eddy** proposed this language so it is not intended to include a threshold for leakage. But it is possible that CNG will argue for a threshold. And that information regarding leaks would be publicly available

Sue asked what the timeline is for reporting leaks.

Mr. Quinn said that is covered by the law so it is not included in the proposal. But he didn't know what the actual timeline is off the top of his head.

Imran asked what their leakage rate is. Comparing their purchased and sold gas and if there is any missing gas between those numbers.

Phil said that calculation is probably done at the UTC level so they can inflate their prices to cover the cost of any lost gas.

Imran said that he was wondering if there was a more accessible way to access that information

Phil said that we could try calling the UTC.

Ellyn said that an annual estimate might be helpful to include in the report. **Ellyn** asked if adding in language to have them report their losses would be useful in the amendment

Sue asked what would be done with that number and what actions would be taken in response to it.

Phil said that there would probably be some safety people who would respond to the leaked gas.

Imran said that the amount leaked even if around 2% would have a significant impact on the greenhouse effect.

Phil said that number would be able to be easily provided by CNG

Mr. Quinn said that **Eddy** added language concerning the franchise fees. Which are passed on to customers to be a flat rate. In section 18, a proposed annual fee of \$25,000.

Ellyn asked what that goes towards,

Mr. Quinn said that a determination still has to be made on where this funding goes

Ellyn said that if the Fee was raised to \$50,000, then it could cover the cost of the proposed data analyst position.

Sue said that sounded like a great idea

Ellyn said that she wanted to make sure that low-income folks weren't disproportionately affected. And that **Eddy** had previously said that the \$25,000 fee came down to 1 cent per month per customer.

Kaylee gave a thumbs up to the idea.

Phil said that the purpose of the money would be included in this document

Sue asked who is getting the \$25,000 now.

Phil said that this is a new proposal that hasn't been allocated for anything yet.

Mr. Quinn said that there will be new language proposed for this section. the proposed new language is the same that they have agreed to in another jurisdiction already.

b) Joint Meeting. with CIAC & FAC – Ellyn & Chris

Ellyn said that in June she is thinking of inviting members from the FAC to join our regular monthly meeting. To go over the forestry chapter of the CAP and get their feedback on the proposed strategies and actions.

Kulshan Carbon trust will discuss their biochar pilot project at that meeting as well

Chris recommended that the forestry chapter gives us a good reason to reach out to the FAC to work together on implementation of the forestry chapter of our plan.

Steve suggested hosting a similar meeting with the agriculture committee at one of the future meetings

Sue has requested to do a briefing on the legacy forest issue and has sent in 2022 actions. she said that it was not included in the CAP because new developments have happened since our CAP was released. She asked if these issues could be processed and distributed to the Committee.

Ellyn said that the County doesn't have control over DNR land and that she could arrange a meeting with DNR to voice our recommendations.

Sue said that the county has passed a resolution to request that DNR protect Bessie in terms of old growth forest. She argued that it is worth it to voice our concerns to DNR about what areas to protect and that other counties who have done that have been successful. She suggested at a minimum writing a letter to council to have them propose DNR protection for legacy forests in the county. **Sue** said that about 26% of DNR forests in Whatcom County are legacy forests of 80 years old or older.

Chris offered to help Sue work on this. And that some private lands around 800 acres that are going to be for sale soon and Whatcom County is looking to protect that land which contains some old growth forests on it.

William asked to help in participating in brainstorming on the forestry issue as well

7) CIAC Planning Session for the remainder of 2022 (each CIAC member will have the opportunity to present which priority they want to work on and their initial thoughts on how they might proceed, for example, which strategies and/or actions will need to be implemented under that priority).

Priorities:

1. Advocate for a state-level legislation that encourages quick adoption and growth of renewable electricity generation with an emphasis on community solar and addresses our additional need for Transmission and Distribution.

Interested members: Phil Thompson, Ellyn Murphy, & Charles Bailey

2. Start a dialogue with *bp* management about how they intend to reduce their GHG emissions.

Interested members: Eddy Ury, Ray Kamada

3. Adopt new financial tools and incentives that will accelerate electrification of existing buildings and the installation of distributed energy resources for climate resilience.

Interested members: Imran Sheikh, Dave Kershner, Eddy Ury, & Charles Bailey

4. Install publicly accessible electric charging stations at all county government facilities and underserved locations. Require EV charging stations at apartment complexes and new commercial and industrial complexes.

Interested members: Katie Kissinger, Phil Thompson, & Dave Kershner

5. Implement the Regional Trails Plan as identified in the 2011 Bicycle Pedestrian Plan and the 2004 Chain of Trails Plan and any subsequent revisions thereto to expand the regional trail network for commuting recreation and emissions reduction.

Interested members: Katie Kissinger, William Bethel

6. Incorporate climate change risk into all aspects of the County Comprehensive plan, from infrastructure to land use to natural systems.

Interested Members: Ellyn Murphy

7. Prioritize restoration, function and protection of wetlands, riparian areas, headwaters, and other climate resilience areas to improve base flows in streams and rivers, to increase carbon sequestration and storage potential, and to build resilience to climate impacts.

Interested members: Sue Gunn

8. Ensure a stable land base for our agricultural economy and promote renewable energy in agricultural areas that can reduce emissions from farms and provide farmers with new income.

Interested members: Dave Kershner, Steve Harrel

9. Increase funding and capacity for the County Conservation Easement Program and develop a carbon credit market.

Interested members: Sue Gunn

10. Expand a County-hosted public database hub that includes georeferenced environmental measurements that are routinely collected by various organizations in the County.

Interested members: Ellyn Murphy, Charles Bailey, Chris Elder, Steve Harrel, & Dave Kershner

Discussion:

Phil in response to Eddy's discussion with bp and how they plan to reduce emissions, suggested asking BP how they will react to the Cap-and-Trade program.

Ellyn said that she could send out the document to everyone so they could make comments on people's proposed strategies and actions

Sue said that the bp conversation might want to be postponed until we can hire a climate manager and have them and the County Exec involved in the process.

Ellyn Suggested in terms of EV charging infrastructure, that **Katie** look into if the county has any pre-existing codes concerning EV charging stations. She also asked **Chris** if the county government buildings in downtown Bellingham are regulated by Bellingham city building codes or by County codes

Chris said that they are regulated by Bellingham development codes, but that the Council upholds the county standards. Any new renovations to county buildings have to meet the LEED silver standard.

Ellyn asked about building codes in the county that would include a 240-volt line in new garages to simplify conversion to electric vehicles?

Chris said that would fall under County codes.

Steve asked about a study on how often are the public chargers used? And whether we should try to focus efforts into subsidizing individual purchases and apartment complexes.

Phil said that the technology is so new that there isn't a lot of information on it. And that it was hard to even find a list of chargers in the county.

Steve said that if your car requires several hours to charge that the ideal places to have these chargers are at home or at work

Ellyn said that focusing on areas that are remote or underserved are ideal places to put these chargers

Dave said that he would like to volunteer to look for usage studies on EV Chargers.

8) Old/New Business

Ray and **William's** strategy writeups will be discussed at the next meeting.

Ellyn said that the next steps will be to combine the rest of the members strategies and form groups to further work on the implementation of the strategies.

9) Adjourn

Next meeting scheduled for **June 2, 2022**

Recorded by **Katherine Kissinger**

Staff contact, **Chris Elder**