

Climate Impact Advisory Committee



FINAL Meeting Minutes

Date: July 28, 2022

Location: Hybrid Meeting: In-person location at Civic Center, 322 N. Commercial, Bellingham – come to main door at 5:30PM for access. Remote access via Zoom (details below) strongly encouraged due in-person capacity limitations

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

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

2) CIAC First Year Priorities

a) short update from Priority Leads – Ray, Imran, Dave, Ellyn, Sue

Priority 3: Imran. “Adopt new financial tools and incentives that will accelerate electrification of existing buildings and the installation of DERs for climate resilience.”

- The group is focusing on county owned properties and evaluating them for potential electrification updates.
- Including microgrids and resiliency centers in the current PUD RFP.
- Continuing research on resiliency options, DERs and microgrids.
- Working with WWU on a community solar mapping tool.
- Connecting with municipalities, and utilities concerning programs and funding.

Ellyn asked said the City of Bellingham has an RFP for a microgrid downtown and Seth Vidanya offered to include the County buildings downtown into the microgrid. In terms of resiliency centers, Ellyn suggested looking at including places like Senior Centers as potential candidates.

Charles said that there is an RFP being drafted concerning the Lummi Island Ferry and making it more resilient.

Phil asked about how much coordination we will have with the city of Bellingham?

Eddy said that he has been communicating with the COB and there will be 45 new EV charging sites on city property. 10 of which are solar charging stations.

Priority 4: Phil. “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.”

- EV charging stations on county property for both fleet vehicles and public access. This would require finding contacts within county staff and looking into real estate inventory and exploring ownership options for public stations.
- Develop code/ ordinance changes. Look into existing/ upcoming legislature. These changes could overlap with other priorities.
- Communicate with PSE concerning charging program development, grid capabilities and desirable locations.

Steve asked about usage of public charging stations.

Phil said he hasn't heard of any studies on usage rates.

Ellyn said that as EVs become more common public use will be more common.

Secretary note: I would use a public one because as a renter the inability to charge at home or work has been a big barrier to me getting an EV. My current car is 20 years old, and I would love to replace it with an EV. Additionally, I recently had some friends take an EV on a road trip to New Mexico and they only

used publicly available charging stations along the way. They spent about \$300 on fuel for the entire trip as opposed to the \$1000+ estimate for if they had rented a gas-powered car. -**Katie**

Eddy brought up an example from Boulder CO where business owners throughout the city have installed free level 2 EV chargers at their places of business and that potentially could be a good model for us.

Dave said that right now 80-90% of charging is done at home, but things will likely change in the future.

Phil said that he has reached out to Kaylee about resolutions and if we should be combining priorities into a resolution or have separate ones.

*Priority 5: **William**.* Update on priorities to come at a later date.

*Priority 6: **Ellyn**.* "Incorporate climate change risk into county planning"

- Working on drafting revision to the comp plan.
- Provided support to passage of resolution at County council meeting.

*Priority 7: **Sue**.* "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."

- Improve mitigation projects by creating a Conservation Corp in Whatcom County. Collaborating with community organizations and the Parks department to adopt and restore county lands.
- Educate CIAC on old growth forests and the benefits they provide for our environment.

Eddy said that **William's** idea seems like an extension of the work NSEA does.

William said that was kind of the idea. Especially since there are a lot of lands throughout the county that are not served by NSEA or Washington Conservation Corp crews.

Chris said that the County does sponsor conservation crews, and that **John Thompson** is the lead for that project.

Ellyn Suggested that **William** contact **John Thompson** and find out more about the county sponsored crews to report back at the next meeting.

*Priority 8: **Steve**.* "ensure a stable land base for agricultural economy and promote renewable energy in ag areas that can reduce emissions from farms and provide farmers with new income."

- Discussed with **Rep. Shewmake** about getting funds for a Rural Energy Advisor position for the Whatcom Conservation District. This would help farmers and other rural landowners have a trustworthy source to go to when they receive offers from utilities wanting to build projects on their land.

*Priority 9: **Steve*** volunteered to draft a letter of support from CIAC for expanding Budget for County Easement Program.

*Priority 10: **Steve**.* Climate dashboard design, discussed and presented at last meeting, July 21st.

- Steve will be meeting with a web professional soon to find out more about budget for the design.

Priority 2: Eddy. Energy storage technologies

- Cherry point is an ideal location. Waste heat can be utilized.
- Researching options currently

3) Presentation on Legacy Forests – Sue Gunn

- Old growth forests (ours are ~80 years old) are highly effective at sequestering and storing carbon, protect salmon by keeping water temps cool, and enhancing stream flow. Provide a large amount of habitat space for sensitive species. More fire resistant and better at storing/absorbing carbon than plantation forests. Protects against erosion, landslides and other effects of flooding. Preserve genetic biodiversity
- DNR managed forests are subjected to clear cut logging and the Department does not focus management on protecting against climate change but rather for monetary interest for their beneficiaries.
- Clear cutting creates a host of ecological problems for forests including but not limited to; destroying habitats, interfering with the water cycle, reduces water quality, decreased air quality, degrade soils.
- Studies show that timber harvesting is contributing to reduced stream flow in the winter.
- Studies have also shown that trees ability to sequester carbon increases as trees age and accumulate more mass
- 80-85% of stored carbon is returned to the atmosphere throughout the timber harvesting and manufacturing process.
- In 2020 a lawsuit against the Commissioner of public lands was filed with the goal of getting the DNR to manage forests for the benefit of all people, not just certain beneficiaries.
- 04/08/2022, DNR Carbon Reserve program to protect 10,000 acres of forest in Western WA.
- 04/22/2022, President Biden signs executive order to strengthen forests against wildfires and climate change impacts.
- 07/13/2022, Superintendent Reykdal sends a letter of recommendation to the Common School Trust Revenue Partners to encourage the separation of school construction from the timber industry, instead have construction costs come from the state. This would allow the revenue from the timber industries to directly benefit the communities that do this work, rural communities.
- Organization Center for Responsible Forestry (CRF) fights to permanently conserve forests to mitigate climate change.
- There are 6,640 acres of unprotected legacy forests in Whatcom County.
- Jefferson and Thurston Counties are considering actions to protect their legacy forests.
- Potential actions Whatcom County could take include; protecting legacy forests under the DNR carbon reserve program, transfer legacy forests to the county co-managed with the tribes, trust land transfer funds to conserve legacy forests, moratorium.

Charles asked what role we can have as members of the CIAC?

Sue said that we could make a recommendation to the council and to discuss what recommendation would be the best for the county to pursue. Additionally educating the community about the value

Charles asked if sue is working with anyone

Sue said that she is working with the CRF

Dave asked about the idea that clear cutting is an unauthorized use of water, due to the high impact of disturbance it has on the water cycle.

Sue said that came from the former Natural resource manager for the Nooksack tribe.

Eddy asked about having a full discussion about these action steps that **Sue** presented.

Ellyn said that we need to make sure we clearly represent the carbon uptake rate, amount of carbon uptake, and storage rates. She also suggested talking to DNR about their management strategies vs the US Forest service.

Sue said that in her research the US Forest service was that they did a better job of managing their forests than the DNR.

5) Adjourn

Next meeting scheduled for **August 18, 2022**

Recorded by **Katherine Kissinger**

Staff contact, **Chris Elder**