

Climate Impact Advisory Committee



DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Date: January 19, 2023

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 to in-person capacity limitations

- 1) **Call to Order/Roll Call**
- 2) **Review and approval of minutes from November Meeting**

We have two groups of minutes to review and approve, both August and December. **Dave** noted a typo in the December minutes. The reference to the September minutes should read “August.” Correction noted.

William moved to accept the August minutes. **Dave** seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ellyn then turned to review and approval of the December minutes. She acknowledged Charles for the great job taking notes for the minutes.

Dave pointed out an incomplete sentence on Page 4 in the reference to the Carbon Project that could be shortened. **Ellyn** said that partial sentence could be crossed out.

The committee doesn’t currently have a secretary to take the minutes and **Ellyn** asked for a volunteer. **Dave** volunteered to take the minutes and send a couple of misspellings in the December minutes draft. **Ray** moved to approve the minutes. **Dave** seconded. Motion carried unanimously and minutes were approved.

- 3) **Public comment**

Others present: Suneeta (Coach Suni) Eisenberg Regina Jeffries (members-elect), Gary Stoyka (Public Works), Andrew Calise Betsy Gross, Dave Hostetler (public) Jack Wellman, Carryn Vande Griend, Jeff Tripp (PSE) William Henderson (Maul, Foster, Alongi Consultant to PSE) Jack Belcher (Bellingham Herald) **Ellyn** invited comments from the public. No comments from the public.

QUORUM	Y
Members Present	
Charles Bailey	x
William Bethel	x
Derek Gremban	x
Steve Harrell	x
Ray Kamada	x
David Kershner	x
Vacant	
Ellyn Murphy	x
Imran Sheikh	x
Phil Thompson	x
Eddy Ury	x
County Council Rep: Kaylee Galloway	x
County Staff: Chris Elder	x

4) Introduction of New CIAC Members

Before **Ellyn** introduced the new members of CIAC, she wanted to thank Dave for his service and said he would be missed. Dave has been with the CIAC since it was formed in 2017.

Ellyn noted that the two new members, who will officially join the committee at the February meeting, are **Regina Jeffries** and **Suneeta Eisenberg**. She then invited Regina to say a few words.

Regina spoke about being an assistant professor at Western, teaching in the Law, Diversity and Justice Program there. Regina's background is in law and complex governance frameworks. Regina is working with the Salish Institute and the Border Policy Research Institute. Regina is involved in a research project around climate change and environmental issues in Whatcom County that includes emergency response to Nooksack River flooding and transboundary issues. Regina is excited to be part of the committee, eager to learn from everyone, to have the opportunity to participate, and is grateful for the volunteer service of the committee members.

Ellyn commented that it is great to have new opinions and new perspectives, and that she was looking forward to working with the new members.

5) CIAC Chair and Secretary

Ellyn was told that it is customary to vote on a chair every January. She said she was happy to continue serving but would be fine with mentoring a new Chair until the end of the year.

Ray re-nominated Ellyn in the Chat. **Derek** seconded that. **Steve** "thirded" Ellyn's nomination to continue serving as Chair.

With no volunteers for Chair, **Ellyn** said she would appreciate any suggestions on how she could do a better job and noted that we also need a new Secretary. It would be helpful to get the minutes out a little faster because people forget discussions by the end of a month. She asked for volunteers. No one volunteered.

Dave suggested that Ellyn check with Charles. **Ellyn** will table this until the next meeting. If no member volunteers, the committee could just rotate responsibility, if that is acceptable.

6) Update on Climate-Related Issues Before the Council & Administration

Councilmember and Council liaison **Kaylee** Galloway noted that the Council had its first meeting of the year last week. Council voted to send a letter to the DNR on the Carbon Project. She said that the draft letter elicited robust community engagement from differing perspectives and the letter was a middle ground to everyone's equal happiness and discontent.

There are two climate-related items on the agenda for the upcoming Council meeting. The first is a resolution regarding water rights adjudication put forth by Councilmember Donovan. Senator Sharon Shewmake and Ria Berns with the Department of Ecology will be coming to the meeting to give an overview of the adjudication and the status in Whatcom County. Culverts are the second hot topic because federal grant money is going to become available shortly. Kaylee noted that she is working with folks at the County and the tribes to see about submitting an application for funding, noting that culvert removal is a once in a lifetime investment in salmon recovery. She said she would like to go over her 2023 policy priorities at the next meeting, if time allows. Those priorities include policy changes that will further implementation of the Climate Action Plan. She then invited questions.

Ellyn asked about when Councilmember Donovan's draft resolution regarding adjudication would be discussed. Kaylee said it would be at the Climate Action and Natural Resources Committee meeting.

Gary Stoyka then provided an update about the hiring of the Climate Action Manager. He said that Lauren Clemens had been hired to fill the position. Currently, she is assistant Sustainability Manager of the City of Bloomington, Indiana. She was one of two strong candidates and will start February 13th. Her first month or two will involve a lot of meet and greets with Council and partners at the City and Port.

Gary said the other update was the DNR carbon project letter, which Kaylee had covered.

Ellyn thanked Gary and said she wanted to express her gratitude for Chris Elder for all he has done to get the committee rolling and keep it on track.

Chris said he would continue to be working with the committee and Lauren for a while, given that he can't take five years of climate action knowledge and transfer it all in one week. He said he wanted to mention one other project the administration is working on, which is the acquisition of another roughly 143 acres in the South Fork, the vast majority of which is in the floodplain near the Stewart Mountain Community Forest. It will allow for roughly 130 acres of floodplain reconnection and mitigate some of the flood impacts in the town of Acme, and help promote salmon recovery. He is hoping Council will approve some funding for this project, given those benefits and that it is looking like the state legislature might make some of the funds reimbursable by the County.

7) Recap of Recommendation to the Council & Executive for 2023 Legislative Session

Ellyn provided a recap of the letter to the Council and Executive for the 2023 legislative sessions, noting that the subcommittee revised the letter in response to comments by Rep. Alex Ramel at the last meeting. Other than some additional wordsmithing, she said that the committee had seen this draft and she asked for additional suggestions or a motion to send the letter on behalf of the committee.

Phil moved to approve the letter and send it to the Executive and Council. **Dave** seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

8) Path Forward on Forest Carbon Program

Ellyn said she wanted to go over the Clear Path model for assessing carbon uptake and release from forests, to follow up on her presentation in August, because there still seemed to be a lot of confusion about the forest carbon terminology. The two other goals of her presentation were to help the committee members assess carbon flux for forest parcels under consideration for the DNR's carbon project and to talk about how CIAC can best collaborate with the Forest Advisory Committee.

Ellyn presented a series of slides (shared with committee members and to be posted on the CIAC website). She highlighted the qualifications of the ClearPath Forest Module Development Team. She noted that the key point about the ClearPath model is that it actually measures the net greenhouse gas flux, which is the difference between carbon uptake (which is primarily photosynthesis) and carbon emissions (which is both plant respiration and decay of material). So, it is more than the trees, it is all the "carbon pools" on a unit of forest land. It is the tons of carbon per acre per year stored or released. She gave an example comparing the carbon flux of Douglas fir (dominant) forests of different age classes. Because seedlings take up carbon at a faster rate than old growth forests per unit of leaf area, they have the highest rate of uptake, but have the lowest annual carbon storage due to their small mass. Seedlings have less overall leaf area than older forests. Douglas fir forests in the 20 to 100 years range store the most carbon annually; young Douglas fir forests in the 0-20-year age range store the least carbon annually;

and forests greater than 100 years are in between (higher annual carbon flux than seedlings, but lower than the 20-100 yr age range).

Ellyn noted that she asked DNR why they aren't picking more forests with an average age of 30-year-old trees if we want to tie the land up for 40 years in this carbon program, because that would just maximize the annual amount of carbon sequestration. She understands that a lot of other factors like water quality, wildlife habitat, and ecosystem services in general also come into play.

About 50% of the carbon in an acre of forest land is in the soil and the other 50 percent is above ground in the plant matter and decaying debris. 90% of the soil carbon is stable carbon, so it degrades slowly over hundreds of years. Sixty percent of the total carbon is "labile" carbon that degrades more quickly. Harvesting of trees results in release of a little over 30 percent of the total carbon within five years. Lumber and furniture products can tie up carbon for up to about 100 years, while paper production leads to carbon releases much more quickly.

Ellyn then pointed out that the carbon removal literature is all very consistent. If you find papers that counter the research that ClearPath is using to estimate carbon flux, she encouraged members to share that with her.

Ellyn said the committee needs more basic site information to really evaluate the DNR's carbon project. How many acres, the elevation, site aspect, species mix and age, and any other information that would impact productivity. Another critical variable is knowing if the forest is managed. She said managed forests typically accumulate more carbon annually than unmanaged forest. The forest type, the estimated percentage of major tree species, can be included in the formula for the removal factors. Forest damage from fire, insects, or animals can also affect carbon flux. Old growth forests play an important role in carbon storage but they play a smaller role in additional annual carbon storage.

Ellyn concluded by saying that DNR is providing insufficient information to really evaluate the proposed parcels to be selected for the Carbon Project and we need to know what criteria they are using. She proposed that the County might consider hiring a student at Western with knowledge in forestry to run the ClearPath forest carbon module for Whatcom County for the period 2010-2020, since we only have data for the baseline period (2000 – 2011). She noted that running the module is something a climate data analyst could learn to do as well.

William offered to start working on running the ClearPath forest carbon module. Ellyn asked if he had access to ClearPath. He said he could probably get it and said he would call Ellyn next week. Ellyn said she would recommend running the ClearPath module for 2010 to 2019 or 2020, depending on what the latest data set is.

Chris mentioned that Suneeta Eisenberg had arrived and could introduce herself. **Suneeta**, who goes by Coach Suni and she/her/hers, introduced herself and apologized for the start time mix up. She noted that she works at Skagit Valley College and Western as a passport coach for former foster youth. She is U.S. Department of Energy's Innovation Award winner for 2017 for the TC Legend-contracted home in the Birchwood-Alderwood Neighborhood. She and her husband are permaculture designers and practitioners and she is working with Skagit Valley on sustainability. Suni has also started a public-private partnership to create the Noisy Water Living and Learning Community Center, which would be a climate resilient non-profit education center.

9) PSE DER Product Development and Community Engagement

Ellyn invited **Carryn Vander Griend** to talk about PSE's distributed energy resources (DER) program. Carryn thanked the committee for giving PSE time on the agenda to do a quick presentation about PSE's upcoming DER programs. She said they would explain how the

community engagement process would work, who in Whatcom County has been engaged, and how we can learn how to design this program to better pair with community needs in order to alleviate barriers to solar and storage in Whatcom County and make sure everyone is benefiting from DERs. She then introduced **Jeff Tripp**, who is PSE's Manager of Strategic Initiatives, and noted that his part of the presentation would be followed by **Will Henderson**, with the environmental consulting firm of Maul Foster Alongi, who is managing the community engagement process. They took the committee through a PowerPoint presentation that will be posted on the CIAC webpage. They talked about the DERs PSE is focused on (solar, demand response, and batteries) and the community engagement process, including the timeline and which organizations in the County they are engaging with for feedback. They will be doing a survey of residential customers in April. The results will be part of PSE's fall 2023 UTC filing.

Steve, Dave, Imran, Ellyn, Charles, and Ray then posed a series of questions to PSE representatives. Topics included incentives for small-scale wind energy (like a single turbine on a farm), incentives for small-scale residential storage, smart meter deployment, programs that renters could participate in, virtual net metering to facilitate more participation in DER benefits by people from disadvantaged backgrounds, lessons PSE might have learned from the Snohomish PUD demand response study, why PSE didn't chose to use Virtual Peaker software, whether PSE had evaluated the potential for rooftop solar in Whatcom County or the potential for hot water heaters with smart meters to flatten the Duck Curve, PSE's position on excess net metering credits going to low income customers (like Oregon utilities are required to do), and PSE's position on net metering. Carryn mentioned that PSE has previously supported net metering, but could not comment on current legislation bills to extend net metering.

Ellyn then thanked the presenters and said she looked forward to more updates in the future.

10) **Old and New Business**

Ellyn asked Ray if he wanted to report on his meeting with BP. **Ray** was having audio issues so he turned it over to Derek, who also attended the meeting. **Derek** noted that the meeting was with BP employees who are reviewing the business case for a solar array installation at BP's Cherry Point property. Derek and Ray are looking at ways they can help make it more appealing to BP from a financial standpoint. Ray added that the people they met with had questions about how the Inflation Reduction Act and the potential impact of carbon taxes. Derek said they had another meeting scheduled for tomorrow and they would have more to say at next month's meeting.

Ellyn said she would put an update from Derek and Ray on the agenda for next month.

The committee then discussed the need for a new secretary, noting that Charles had been nominated in absentia. Charles said he was honored and that he would have to think about it.

Ellyn thanked Charles for the excellent job on the December minutes.

Ellyn adjourned the meeting at 7:22 pm