

Climate Impact Advisory Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes



Date: February 4th, 2021
Location: Zoom

QUORUM	Y
Members Present	
Kaylee Galloway	X
William Bethel	X
Phil Thompson	X
Ellyn Murphy	X
Ginny Broadhurst	X
Katherine Kissinger	X
David Kershner	X
Imran Sheikh	X
Sue Gunn	X
Stevan Harrell	X
Eddy Ury	
STAFF Chris Elder	X

1. Call to Order

- Meeting started at 5:30pm

2. Review and approval of minutes from January Meeting

Sue Motioned,
Dave Seconded,
Motion Passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment

Kelsie Blanthorn, Resident of Bellingham, commented that she was interested in learning more about the Climate Action Plan

Carryn Van de Griend, The local government affairs representative for Puget Sound Energy (PSE) the electric utility in Whatcom County

Atul Deshmane, PUD. Atul welcomed the new members of the committee and talked about a recent PUD meeting where they talked about some of the actions that were recommended by the city of Bellingham's Climate Action Task force that also applied to the County and also discussed the different pathways for exploring municipalization.

Mark Buford, Head of the Northwest Clean Air Agency, and resident of Lummi Island

4. Introduction of new CIAC members – William Bethel, Ginny Broadhurst, Imran Sheikh, Eddy Ury

William is a soil scientist and predictive ecosystem mapper. He has done most of his work relating to his Master's Degree at Simon Fraser University doing ecosystem level, and climate level research from a soil perspective. He describes himself as having a more general knowledge with a little bit of a specialization in soils. He's been living in Bellingham for about 6 years, other than a three-month gap while studying abroad in Chile. He is excited to be here and help out.

Ginny works up at Western Washington University as the director of the Salish Sea Institute, her career has been working on a variety of conservation and protection programs for Puget Sound and the greater Salish Sea. She is working on a report on the state of the Salish Sea, and climate is a big lens the report is being developed through.

Imran is a professor at Western in the Department of Environmental Sciences and the Institute of Energy Studies. His main interests are in decarbonizing the building sector? He has a PhD from UC Berkeley on decarbonization of residential space and water heating in California. Based on his experience he suggested helping out with the electricity in buildings chapter.

5. Presentation of Climate Science to Council Natural Resources Committee – Chris Elder

Chris started out by giving a quick background for some of the new members. This committee started in 2017, in 2019 we received funding from the council to hire a consultant to help move the climate action planning process forward. They helped us develop three team deliverables. One was the climate science summary. The summary of observed trends and projected impacts helped us develop the 2017 greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and they also developed four assessment factsheets. They also developed a template for us. Should we choose to perform vulnerability assessments on other key priority areas across the County. Chris suggested as we're ramping up to try and present a final climate action plan to council in June, to have the recognition that it is in our best interest to start engaging Council sooner just to help walk them through this. Since this is a broad sweep of climate science that we have included.

Chris started by presenting the Science Summary to Council. Presenting largely just the executive summary and some of the graphics since they only had 45 minutes.

Chris said there were not many questions, and he thought ultimately council was glad to receive it. Ellyn introduced our timeline. next month we're going to introduce the greenhouse gas emission inventory and will present those vulnerability assessments. This will set the stage for us to move into actual climate action plan presentation and finalization.

Chris shared a link for the Climate Science Summary in the zoom chat

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/53837/Whatcom-County-Climate-Science-Summary-2020>

Ellyn mentioned the dropbox that we have been using to compile drafts of the chapters for the Climate Action Plan. It also has Chris' Presentation. As more presentations happen, they will be added to the dropbox as well.

Sue asked when is the time and date of Chris' next presentation?

Ellyn: “I can tell you; it is February 23rd for the Public Works Committee.” *(note: post meeting we were told to continue presentations to the Natural Resources Committee)* We are presenting Cascadia’s GHG Assessment report. Ellyn will update the outline/schedule and send it out.

6. CIAC Update with Executive Sidhu – Ellyn Murphy

Meeting with Executive Sidhu and Jed Holmes on Feb 4th - Ellyn told Executive Sidhu that we could use some text editing and template help; in response Executive Sidhu requested a one-page description and sounded like he was willing to see if he could find some money for us to do that.

Ellyn CIAC is developing a list of county staff to review different sections of the Climate Action Plan. We are trying to avoid strategies and actions that may have already been done at the County level or actions that may be prevented by current law. In some cases, actions call for the County to influence other levels of government, agencies, or private companies. For example, Exe. Sidhu would consider supporting state legislation that would facilitate the County’s climate efforts. CIAC can send him or Jed Holmes recommendations to support specific legislation and they will consider taking action. Even though the County may not have direct control on some of these things, we do have influence.

During the state legislative session, CIAC should monitor current bills and make recommendations to the County Executive. For example, there was a hearing on 1084, introduced by Alex Ramel. It promotes electrification of buildings and would decrease the subsidies that are provided for natural gas space or water heating. Seth Fleetwood, the mayor of Bellingham testified at the hearing in favor of the bill.

We also talked about new clean energy projects for Cherry Point. Executive Sidhu said he would really like to see the Council move ahead on the Cherry Point Amendment so that we could start pushing on some of these other issues that could create new job opportunities.

The recent PUD-1 meeting on Municipalization mentioned earlier was also discussed in the meeting with Executive Sidhu. There are some concerns voiced by the community regarding local control and choice of electricity mix. Commissioner Deshmane is putting together a plan for the PUD to fund a study: the PUD will likely seek some co-funding from City of Bellingham and maybe even the County. The PUD discussed scheduling a workshop in early March on this this topic.

Chris added that what we are trying do is to get the administration to engage this process before it hits Council. Taking our draft strategies and actions to allow the staff to review. If we can present our early drafts to Executive Sidhu as well to try to get some leadership on how he envisions what we're developing, and suggestions in implementing it. We’re trying to keep Executive Sidhu engaged in this process so that he can build some ownership around it and also considers his own approach for what implementation allows.

Steve asked two questions. one about what the Cherry Point Amendment is and what it covers. The second question asked Chris, if he thinks that the plan to draft plan should go to executive before it goes to the council?

Chris clarified that was what he was proposing. Adding that the legislative policy conversation is also prudent. Chris also mentioned that there is a climate leadership team that he’s been working with, which is the directors of Public Works and Planning and Facilities. Trying to give the administration the opportunity to embrace this and develop some ownership of it before we present our first draft

to counsel is going to be a smart remove just to support that adoption and implementation of the overall plan.

Ellyn said Executive Sidhu would like to have a couple hours to sit down with the committee and go over the draft climate action plan before it goes to Council.

Dave asked a question to Ellyn. “It looks like the 2007 Climate action plan actually was delivered by the County Executive to the council? It's under his name so I don't know if that was done post council or pre council, but it kind of suggests that it was pre going to council?”

Ellyn said “I don't think so, I think that's pretty standard that the County Executive puts their stamp on an approved document, and writes a forward. That's my impression. Chris, what do you think?”

Chris “I think I disagree with that. I wasn't there back in 2007, but my rough understanding was that there were some pressures at that time to develop a greenhouse gas reduction plan. I'm not sure whether there was state level legislation that was pushing it, but ultimately the administration took that approach and actually hired the analyst to work on that first plan's development. So that was derived from the administration and presented to Council. I think the Executive wanted to take some ownership on that.”

Ellyn: Councilmember Donovan suggested that we should present the draft plan to the Council as a whole, and that would require couple hours.

Kaylee Asked about doing small group meetings with council members to go over the Climate Action Plan rather than having our first interaction being public an in front of the Council of the as a whole.

Ellyn said that sounded like a great idea to brief the individual Council members.

7. State Legislation Update – Kaylee Galloway

Kaylee: The purpose of the presentation is to provide an update on the current legislative session, introduce a [bill tracker](#) with relevant climate policy, and to share how members of the committee can engage including how to testify on a bill. The intent of this presentation is to be objective and merely informational, because as a legislative staffer I am ethically prohibited from lobbying the state legislature.

Session Overview

We're in Week 4 of the 105-day legislative session. Every odd year is a budget year, which is a longer session. Every even year is a 60-day policy and supplemental budget year. Due to the pandemic, this is the first ever fully remote legislative session, so we are absolutely navigating unprecedented territory. All of our meetings, committee meetings, Floor votes, caucus meetings, are all electronic. All staff are working from home. The only exception is if you're watching TVW, you'll see the rostrum staff so that will be the speaker, speaker pro tempore and support staff who are all there in Olympia. We were told that our priorities coming into this legislative session, were going to be focused on COVID-19 response, economic recovery, the rise of civil rights and justice in the form of public safety reform, as well as climate and environment, all through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion. So, this year, more than ever before, every bill is being considered with an equity lens and factoring in what the impacts for frontline communities are and how to correct historical

wrongs. Climate change being on the list, means that a lot of our legislators are being very active in promoting climate legislation.

Explanation of the Bill tracker and the legislative process: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/>

Starting with House Bills and then Senate Bills, the Bill number is listed with a short description. This is a way to track the legislative process. In order for a bill to become a law, it has to go through Policy Committee first. That entails a public hearing and an executive session. Once it gets passed out of Policy Committee, if it has a fiscal note, it goes to a Fiscal Committee. There are three fiscal committees, Appropriations, Capital Budget, and Transportation. Depending upon where the bill falls, it will go to one of those three committees. Once it passes the fiscal committee, it'll go to rules and needs to be pulled for rules in order to make it on the floor. From there it can be considered for floor passage and then it's rinse and repeat for the Senate side.

Phil Thompson in Zoom chat: “Also, HB 1091 is about Low Carbon Fuel Standard; maybe Kaylee will mention.”

In the bill tracker, there are a few bills that are particularly relevant to our work updating the climate action plan. First, the Healthy Homes and Clean Buildings Act (1084), which is sponsored by Rep. Alex Ramel was one of the three governor request bills coming out of the governor's climate package. This bill relates to our **building and electricity** chapter.

Moving on to a couple of **transportation** bills. There is HB 1091, the low carbon fuel standard which **Phil** mentioned earlier. This also was one of the governor requests bills. There is the zero emission, transportation, and the electrification of transportation Bill. There is also Rep. Sharon Shewmake's electric bicycle bill.

There are two **land use** bills that I wanted to flag for folks here. The first is HB 1099, sponsored by Rep. Davina Duerr, which focuses on incorporating climate change into GMA reform and the other is HB 1117, sponsored by Rep. Debra Lekanoff, which incorporates salmon recovery and net ecological gain into GMA. These are both attempting to make changes to the way in which counties do their comprehensive planning. Both of these Bills were from last year but have undergone a tremendous amount of evolution over the interim and have gotten some good momentum in the House.

A couple more Bills to discuss include HB 1216, sponsored by Rep. Bill Ramos, around urban and community **forestry**. This has some **land use**, and some working land components, just to point out the synergies between the state bills and our different climate action plan chapters. Senator Rebecca Saldaña introduced SB 5141, the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act, which aims to incorporate the recommendations from the Governor's Environmental Justice task force. The Environmental Justice Task Force [website](#) includes a health disparities map, a number of recommendations of formal definitions including one for environmental justice. Environmental justice should be incorporated throughout our entire climate action plan, but also from a policy perspective.

The other two big climate bills this year are around carbon pricing. There are currently two models that are being considered. One is SB 5126, the Washington Climate Commitment Act, which is the third of three of the governor's climate request bills that is being sponsored by Senator Reuvan Carlyle, who's the chair of the Environment, Energy and Technology Committee in the Senate. This is essentially a cap-and-trade model based on California. This cap and invest model does generate

revenue to be invested in climate related projects. The other major carbon pricing bill is Washington STRONG which is being sponsored by Senator Liz Lovelett (SB 5373), Rep. Debra Lekanoff (HB 1513), and Rep. Sharon Shewmake. This proposal has been developed in consultation with Carbon Washington. This is a carbon tax and special tax obligation bond. So essentially this bill would set a moderate, economy wide price on carbon. With establishing a \$25 per ton with a 5% escalator per year carbon tax, it generates about \$16 billion over the course of the 10-year green bond that would be invested directly into projects and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some examples include things like green transportation and infrastructure. Rep. Shewmake has been working on getting broadband included in that. Additionally, it would include climate resiliency and forestry, and things like wildfire mitigation. Either of these proposals would be creating a new source of revenue dedicated to climate measures.

All bills can be viewed on the state legislative website at leg.wa.gov. You can track committees by day, and bills. So, if you have a bill number, you can type it in and it'll come up with a description of the bill, who sponsored it, progress on the bill, anytime a bill gets a hearing there will be a bill report, which includes a bill summary, background information, and summaries of testimony. If you don't know a bill number, but you know who sponsored the bill, you can search bills by sponsor. The second piece to note is that since session is remote, participating virtually can be more accessible. There are a few different ways you can comment on a bill, one which sends legislative staff an email or you can testify during committee, registered your stance, and submit written testimony up to 24 hours after the start of the hearing. This gives folks a chance to be a part of the hearing and process their thoughts, then submit their opinion for the record.

Phil Asked about the sense of the prospects of these bills.

Kaylee replied saying there seems to be a strong appetite for a carbon price. In part because it's long overdue, but the other part is we are in need of a revenue generator given our economic situation with COVID. Kaylee said she didn't have a good sense of which of the two carbon pricing mechanisms will be favored. Kaylee suggested that with the governor and the chairs of each, the House and Senate Environment committees support for the cap-and-trade model, it is an uphill battle for the Washington Strong proposal. Also, Kaylee mentioned that since comprehensive plans and GMAs are not updated very often and that cycle is coming up in the next year or two that there seems to be a lot of talk about considering climate change and salmon recovery in GMA planning because it's time sensitive and if we don't get it done now, it could be another decade before anything could change. Additionally, there seems to also be an appetite for the environmental justice work. Although, the biggest concern is any bill with a big fiscal note is going to be difficult to pass this year because revenues were down with COVID, which put a strain on the budget.

Sue asked about fiscal situation of the environmental Justice bill, since it sound like that would be costly.

Kaylee said that a fiscal note for the environmental justice bill was requested on January 15th and a number has not been released for it yet. Fiscal notes depending upon the complexity of a bill can take a long time to process. It has to go through OFM and to the agency with jurisdiction. Sometimes agencies can provide an estimate; however, with more complex bills, like for example the fiscal note on a cap-and-trade mechanism is going to be very complex because of the complex administrative infrastructure to setup a cap-and-trade model. So fiscal notes for something like that

might be large and more difficult to determine because you don't really know how much it's going to cost to set it up administratively until you get into it.

Steve asked as these bills move through the legislature, if we be considering referring to them in the final draft of the of the climate plan?

Phil said that he has referred to a couple of them already, even though they're still prospective and gives the caveat in the section that it's prospective.

Ellyn said that if something comes forward and passes before, we get the final draft out we should include it. If it supports a strategy in your section, definitely mention it.

Sue suggested rather than citing the specific bill, to mention more of the concept the bill encompasses. That way the document remains relevant even if that bill does not end up becoming a law.

Kaylee mentioned to think about comprehensive planning with a climate and salmon recovery lens in the Land Use section since that is in direct synergy with current state policy being considered. This is a way to reference bills in consideration without naming them specifically. If the bill is passed then that suggestion is already going to be a requirement, so it becomes duplicative, but if it doesn't pass then it just means we're trying to put Whatcom County ahead of the curve.

Hunter Hassig in Zoom chat: “Kaylee. In your understanding, is it either or with SB 5126 and SB 5373?”

Kaylee “Yeah, it would be either or.”

Sue asked about the environmental justice plan, specifically in reference to greenhouse gases, particularly in relation to point source emissions from the stacks at the refineries. Specifically, if there have been any health studies around these major industries in our state? And if health studies are a part of this environmental justice bill?

Kaylee said that the closest thing she knows to being a resource with that kind of information is that the Environmental Justice Task Force has a health disparity map on their [website](#).

Sue said that in talking with people in the environmental justice sector, it has been suggested that we ask for a study to be commissioned by the Department of Health. Primarily focusing on the neighborhoods in proximity to the refineries. Sue asked if the bill encompassed baseline data about health.

Kaylee said she wasn't aware of the full scope of the bill but recommended a few people to reach out to that might know more. David Mendoza with the Nature Conservancy and Deric Gruen from Front and Centered. Both of which are organizations out of Seattle and part of the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, a coalition with a focus on frontline communities, so they specialize in Environmental justice issues. Kaylee also mentioned that Front and Centered has endorsed Washington Strong and named the coalition director, Lauren Breynaert as a person to contact

Mark Buford in Zoom Chat: “Sue, there are resources I can point you to related to EJ in Whatcom co”

8. Status of Draft Climate Action Plan Chapters & Reviews

Ellyn discussed the outline of the Climate Action Plan. It was recently updated and will be sent out to everyone on the committee. In response to a question from Sue about why industry was placed first in the outline, Ellyn said that the sections were ordered by the level of GHG emissions. Industry was placed first since it has the highest amount of greenhouse gas emissions.

Industry

Sue gave an update on the industry chapter and said that she has been looking into solutions that come from an Environmental Justice perspective but thinks that Environmental Justice might be better suited to be its own chapter because there are Environmental Justice components for multiple sections of the report.

Steve Asked about the guiding principles set for the Climate Action Plan and if Environmental Justice is already included in that.

Ellyn said that while Environmental Justice is mentioned in that section, we don't have a lot of details on it in our plan. She mentioned that when there are health implications that are relevant to the other sections those should be mentioned throughout the report rather than as part of their own public health section.

Sue mentioned research that she reviewed on health information of communities near refineries. She thought a recommendation should be added to develop baseline data around our local refineries. Possibly pursuing help for funding via legislation.

Phil said that his focus in the transportation section is in decarbonizing the transportation sector and mentions health as being a co-benefit of decarbonization.

Electricity and Buildings

Ellyn Said that they have sent the Electricity and Buildings chapter out to 16 community members for review.

Transportation

Phil said that he and Alec have been updating their draft to include brief descriptions of their proposed actions in the appendix. Phil said a revision of their draft should be done by the end of February. And they are reaching out to the TTAG group to review a list of their strategies. And they have also been reaching out to people at the Whatcom Transit Authority.

Ellyn reminded everyone to keep a list of the stakeholders that we are sending out to review our drafts

Land Use

Kaylee said that there is a draft ready for review and she is working on adding some graphics, and is open to review and input from other committee members

Phil asked about the difference between sections vs chapters

Ellyn said that the individual writeups are the chapters and the larger groupings are the sections, but that is something that can be cleared up with a template and something the editor will further clarify

Water Resources

Draft was contributed by Treva. It is being reviewed by Ellyn and Chris

Agriculture and Forestry

Chris said that he is going to be working with adding Steve to help with the draft and he has been drawing from other plans that have been previously passed in the county. For Forestry the strategies are ready and that they need to be refined into a draft

Ecosystems

Katie the ecosystems chapter is in the works and has a solid foundation but also needs more details added.

Ginny in the Zoom Chat: offered to help review the Ecosystems chapter.

9. Section 4: Roadmap for County Implementation – Steve Harrell

Steve the overall recommendation is that the county should establish an Office of Climate Action to coordinate climate action in the County government and beyond.

This is critical for ensuring that our plans actually get implemented. **Steve** asked if this suggestion was brought up to Executive Sidhu in the meeting earlier this month?

Ellyn said No, I don't believe this suggestion has been brought up to his level yet.

Steve said that this idea should be run by the Executive so that we can determine if we need to think of a new implementation strategy, because this is the main implementation recommendation

Steve reviewed the qualifications of what this position would require including knowledge and experience in government, climate science, and energy.

Responsibilities of this position include taking charge of implementing the recommendations in the CAP and coordinating with other departments within the county government internally as well as externally with other stakeholders and governments in Whatcom County such as Tribal Governments. They would be in charge of supervising a Climate Data Manager position and other various employees that would work in the proposed Office of Climate Action. They would also be a liaison between the county government and the CIAC. This position would directly report to the Deputy County Executive, and not located within a single department.

Steve mentioned that the Climate Manager position would coordinate with Tribal Governments and discussed referring to tribal governments, and whether or not "stakeholders" was an appropriate term. It was determined that they are above the position of a stakeholder since they are sovereign nations and have treaty rights.

Phil Thompson in Zoom Chat: how about "affected parties"?

Ginny Broadhurst in Zoom Chat: tribes are sovereign nations, best to acknowledge that we work on a govt-to-govt basis with them.

Chris said that there is a committee of climate directors within the county government staff and he will continue to meet with them monthly as we get closer to releasing our plan.

The position of a Climate Data Analyst would be essential to compiling and updating the counties data and monitoring climate efforts in other agencies.

Ellyn suggested training the data analyst to be able to use the ClearPath model for GHG assessments. They would also be responsible for updating a dashboard on the county website.

Steve mentioned that interns could be brought in to help out with work in the office when there are special projects to be done by the office. Internships could be arranged through the local colleges to receive college credit for the work done.

The timetable proposed for the implementation of this office is to establish the office in 2021 and include funding for the fiscal year 2022.

Ginny asked about the relationship between this office and the city of Bellingham.

Steve said descriptions of the proposed office's interactions with the surrounding cities will be included in the draft.

In discussing the need for public information and support Steve mentioned the need for a public media campaign for when the plan comes out. Steve also suggested hosting a town hall as a kick-off campaign for the Climate Action Plan when it is released. Once the Office of Climate Action is established, CIAC will continue to advise them. We would also consult with outside experts when needed. We would also be responsible for running an active media campaign and actively participate in climate education throughout the county.

Katie asked about what Steve had in mind for the media campaign and offered to help with running social media campaigns.

Steve said that he wanted to look into many different forms of media from social media to more traditional forms of journalism like writing articles for publication in local newspapers like the Bellingham Herald or Whatcom Watch.

Sue commented that we should develop a campaign for our Climate Action Plan and to communicate with the community about our plan.

Funding possibilities for the proposed office. Ideally this would be funded as part of the county budget. Steve said he is open to other funding ideas like grants, but doesn't know much about this subject area, so invited others to help with suggestions.

Ellyn: the new COVID relief bill did have funding related to climate change (we won't know what remains in the bill until it is passed), Ellyn also mentioned private grants like from the Gates foundation or Amazon.

Sue asked about Tribal grants

Ginny Broadhurst in the Zoom Chat: several tribes have taken strong lead on climate issues - Swinomish is great example

Steve said that they do if it is in their direct interest. And that he has a contact with the Lummi tribe and they would be willing to bring the plan to Tribal Leadership, not to necessarily ask for money but to include them in the conversation.

Phil asked about funding and the duties of the climate coordinator and that there are recommendations in the report that will require direct funding as well and that the coordinator

should factor that into their implementation strategy and make looking for sources of funding part of the job description for the climate coordinator.

Ellyn asked Chris if there are any comparable offices in the government that have a similar scope to something like we are proposing with this new office.

Chris said he would look into it

Ellyn suggested that we justify a new Office of Climate Action based on the responsibilities of this office – especially if we can point out that those responsibilities are not being performed within our county government.

Chris agreed that the focus of the proposal should be more on the responsibilities of the office.

9. **Adjourn**

- Meeting ended at 7:37 pm

Next meeting scheduled for March 4, 2020

Recorded By: Katherine Kissinger

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