

# Climate Impact Advisory Committee



DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Date: February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

Location: Zoom

QUORUM	Y
<b>Members Present</b>	
William Bethel	x
Ginny Broadhurst	x
-vacancy-	
Sue Gunn	x
Steve Harrell	x
David Kershner	x
Katherine Kissinger	x
Ellyn Murphy	x
Imran Sheikh	x
Phil Thompson	x
Eddy Ury	x
STAFF Chris Elder	x

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

2) Review and approve agenda

3) Review and approval of minutes from January Meeting

**Dave** Motioned to approve the minutes  
**Sue** Seconded  
 Motion passed

## 4) Public Comment

- Public in attendance
- Mark Buford**, NW Clean Air Agency
  - Jayne Freudenberger**
  - Alex Ramel**, State Legislator
  - Judy Hopkinson**
  - Adrienne Hegedus**, Port of Bellingham
  - Lorene Lewis**
  - Sheri Lambert**
  - Kurt Baumgarten**, Port of Bellingham
  - Katheryn Allen**

**Ysabelle Kempe**, Bellingham Herald  
**Charles Bailey**  
**Sheri Lambert**  
**Karen Dalenius**  
**Satpal Sidhu**, County Executive  
**Gary Stoyka**, County Staff  
**Atul Deshmane**, PUD  
**Todd Donovan**, County Council  
**Ali Jensen**, Health dept.  
**Dennis McLerran**  
**Royce Buckingham**  
**Jim Davis**  
**Ray Kamada**  
**Markus Virta**, President, Solar Installers of Washington  
**Sonja Lyons**  
**Carol & David Smith**  
**David Hostetler**  
**Elsie Heinrick**

## 5) Vision, Role, and Timeline for Hiring the Climate Action Manager – Executive Sidhu

- Things have been delayed because of flooding
- Executive would like input from the CIAC and public in regards to hiring criteria. Proposes a 5-person committee to decide who to hire for the Climate Manager
- Grants: 26 million from CARES. County and cities were able to come to consensus to spend the grant money. The county is looking to hire someone for a grant writer/ researcher position
- Council approved director of strategic initiatives, Hiring hasn't happened yet
- no comments on the CAP, but would like to use it as a policy building framework
- Would like to eventually make a county wide joint policy board for climate similar to the lake Whatcom board

**Ellyn** asked if the Climate Action Manager position will be listed in February, and mentioned that CIAC had submitted recommendations to the County on the roles and responsibilities of the Climate Action Manager.

**Satpal**: Can't say for sure if the job will be posted by the end of February as there are 80 vacant positions in the county right now. He said that Natural Resources will be a good place for the office. At senior management level and direct Exec. office supervision.

**Sue** Wanted to restate that we are available to help with anything to help move this initiative along. From writing job descriptions to researching or writing grants.

**Atul** mentioned that many federal and state initiatives have a focus on resilience and he wanted to bring up adaptation and that resilience can be achieved through county wide cooperation. He likes Executive Satpal's vision of working county wide on these objectives

**Phil** asked if the Climate Action Manager (CAM) and Office of Climate Action (OCA) would be funded by grants

**Satpal** said the CAM is a regular staff position funded by County budget; the programs will be funded by grants

**Ellyn** how do you view the role and interaction of the CAM with the director of strategic initiatives

**Satpal** the director of strategic initiatives is going to be a staff member of the executive's office and will serve as an extension of the Executive's office. This structure will be in place until the Climate office is able to stand on its own and grow a bit more.

**Ellyn** mentioned that the county website is difficult to navigate and she hopes the public will be able to locate the OCA.

## 6) Petrogas Emissions, Status and Response – Councilman Todd Donovan and Mark Buford (NW Clean Air Agency)

- One of 7 clean air agencies in WA.
- Petrogas is a butane and propane terminal. Stored in liquid form in tanks.
- Facility has been in the county for decades. First permit issued 1976
- 2015-2016 new majority owner, wanted to replace compressors, use more propane than butane.
- New compressor permit issued 2016
- 2021 emissions were underreported since 2015, discounting vented methane and trace amounts of propane from pipelines.
- Installed temporary cap to help control emissions
- SEPA allows for more scrutiny in terms of emissions
- 3,000 tons / year Methane from the vent

**Alex Ramel** asked about what happens to the propane that escapes from the vent

**Mark Buford:** VOC (volatile organic compounds) can break down with Nitrogen into ozone

**Atul:** Climate change factor for propane is 4 opposed to Methane which is 28

**Sue** asked about the change in ownership and whether that could be attributed to the increase in emissions

**Mark** the increase did correlate around the time of the ownership change but there isn't any evidence to directly tie the increase in emissions

**Eddy** asked for clarification of if the increase of emissions related to the compressor project. Or was it something that wasn't disclosed?

**Mark** said that the compressor was one of multiple projects being completed at the time and that some of the other projects were either permitted improperly or not permitted at all but they are still in talks with the Petrogas lawyers

**Eddy** was wondering if there was information as to how long the excess emissions have been emitting above permit levels

**Mark** said that 2015 was around the time the increase started. And that they are focusing on the increases resulting from equipment changes.

**Eddy** asked how the discrepancy was reported.

**Mark** said they self-reported to the EPA

**Atul** asked for clarification on some of the numbers.

**Mark** said he wasn't sure of the specific numbers

**Todd Donovan** is the county rep for the NWCAA. The county received word of the violation in October. The county is looking into whether their permit was for a project that would increase rail traffic. And it's unclear if they will be able to prove they were acting within a previously approved permit. There are potentially SEPA violations at play here.

**Ellyn** asked if the county is in need of more technical staff to enforce code compliance

**Todd** said that there isn't currently the capacity to do that themselves. But it could potentially be contracted out.

**Steve** asked if there was anything that we as a committee should do about this matter or was this just an informational update.

**Todd** said that when we get to the point of deciding what kind of expertise we would need to pursue, the committee could play a role in that.

**Mark** said that the NW Clean Air Agency has clear steps to moving forward and will likely intersect with county staff and if they were to request a new permit that NWCAA would require a SEPA determination before any other permits were approved.

**Sue** asked if the allegations are found to be true if rolling back operations to pre-permitting levels would be the course of action

**Todd** said that the planning department determines enforcement.

## 7) Climate Bills Currently in State Legislature – Rep Alex Ramel

- Last Friday the house passed Rep. **Alicia Rule**'s bill to provide emergency relief funds to small businesses when faced with Natural Disasters.
- Policy bill cutoff date has passed.
- HB 1099 requires local gov. To plan for climate adaptation, and larger gov. To plan for climate mitigation.
- HB 1767 targeted electrification will bring the utilities into the work of fuel switching
- HB 1770 focused on updating energy codes. Allowing for local governments to develop more advanced codes for residential structures.
- SB 5722 building performance. Targeted split incentive program.
- HB 1753 Fixing tribal consultation with the CCA (Climate Commitment Act)
- HB 1682 EITEs balancing the reduction of emissions while also incentivizing them to stay
- HB 1814 **Rep. Sharon Shewmake** Community solar bill allows for tenants, low income, or people who don't live in ideal areas to still participate in solar energy
- HB 1948 Manufacturing tax credits to incentivize green labor in Washington
- *Budget priorities:* working with the federal infrastructure bill to weatherize low-income homes. Intalco facility and reopening the facility while making it, 100m to support EV's, transportation package

**Steve** asked for more detail on the EITE bill.

**Alex:** Under the CCA the allowances of emissions allowed is reduced slowly every few years and would give free allowances for EITEs until 2030, but if they reduce their emissions, they will be able to use those allowances in the market. The cap on emissions will stay the same. And it gives them 15 years to demonstrate that they have reduced emissions as much as they can then it can determine more permanent allowances.

**Markus** asked if 1814 could have a path through the finance committee, it is necessary to implement the budget.

**Alex** says he believes it has a path but needs to be out of finance next week and will follow up on that.

**Alex:** said that if anyone is interested, we can participate in legislative meetings and voice our concerns since they are all over zoom

## 8) Wind Energy Code Subcommittee Update – Eddy

**Eddy** said that the progress has been slow going on the committee.

- Looking to other counties that have had success with solar
- Will be planning to meet as subcommittee this month.

## 9) Communication and Social Media Campaign Update - Katie and Steve

**Steve** has a few more op eds in the works. One will be in the Whatcom Watch on if the floods were caused by climate change. How much has human activity influenced the floods.

**Ellyn** confirmed it was out already

**Steve** has been working on the twitter account. @ClimateWhatcom. Steve welcomed suggestions on things to tweet out.

**Katie** has set up an Instagram at the same name as the twitter account

**Steve** mentioned that he has been live tweeting the meeting and plans to make a twitter thread about the bills discussed tonight

## 10) Potential Next Steps in CAP Implementation - Ellyn

- **Ellyn** has been following various plans efforts that could impact Whatcom's emission reduction goals, such as the PSE Clean Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP). This will eventually be the duty of the Climate Action Manager
- She presented a draft letter on PSE's CEIP that could be sent to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). The WUTC has asked for comment on PSE's CEIP.

**Ellyn** said the intent is to recommend that the County Executive or County Council submit this comment letter or an edited version of it to the WUTC. Comments are due to the WUTC March 2<sup>nd</sup>. The scope of our committee is to advise the County Executive and Council.

**Steve** asked about if the council would be willing to add their names to the letter.

**Ellyn** said that the letter hasn't been sent to council yet, but it has been sent to Executive Sidhu,

**Eddy** said that he would support sending the letter with just our names

**Ellyn** said that these comments on the PSE CEIP will have more impact if sent by the County Executive or Council. Technically, we can only make recommendations to the executive and council, so we cannot send the comment letter to the WUTC from our advisory committee. If necessary, we can sign the comment letter as individuals, but not as representatives of the Whatcom County government.

**Dave** asked if we could formally request the Executive to comment on the UTC.

**Ellyn** said that since we won't have another meeting before this needs to be submitted that she motioned that the CIAC work with the Executives office with the intent of finalizing a comment letter that the executive or council is willing to send to the WUTC.

**Eddy** said he would like to make that a motion.

**Dave** seconded the motion.

**Phil** added that the CIAC members should have the opportunity to review the final version before it is sent.

**Ellyn** said that the key comment areas in the letter would not change. Any editing will focus on word-smithing not changing technical issues. Motion passed.

## 11) Old/New Business

**Sue** mentioned that there is only one meeting minutes on the county website and asked if we could get the meeting minutes up there

**Katie** said that she will send all of her saved meeting minutes to Chris so that he can put them on the website.

**Steve** asked about the vacancy process

**Ellyn** said that it is listed and so we can get the word out for applicants

**Kaylee** mentioned that she is attending meetings as an unofficial County Council Liaison. She said that as the new chair of the Natural resources standing committee. She is proposing changing the name of this standing committee to incorporate climate action

## 12) Adjourn

End 7:46pm

**Next meeting scheduled for March 3, 2022**

Recorded By: Katherine Kissinger, contact [kissinger.katherine@gmail.com](mailto:kissinger.katherine@gmail.com) for edits to the draft.

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