CLEAN ENERGY SITING COUNCIL

Date: October 11, 2023
Co-lead attendees:
Ecology: Joenne McGerr, Diane Butorac
Commerce: Michael Furze, Brian Young, Nora Hawkins
Council member attendees: *DNR:* Jim Woodward, Natalie Waid; *EFSEC:* Sonia Bumpus, Stewart Henderson; *EJ Council:* Jonathan Chen; *GOIA:* Craig Bill; *GOV:* Becky Kelley; *ORIA:* Jim Thornton; *UTC:* Payton Swinford, *WDFW:* Ben Blank; *WSDA:* Gary Bahr; *WSDOT:* Gretchen Coker
Invited attendees: Millie Piazza and Courtney Cecale (Ecology Office of Equity and Environmental Justice)

ACTION ITEMS			
Responsible	**Action**	**Start Date**	**Due Date**
	None		

MEETING SUMMARY

Environmental justice presentation *(Jonathan Chen, EJ Council)*

Johnathan presented information on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Council focus, organization, and process. The EJ Council centers and amplifies community voices to provide community-informed guidance to agencies. The group noted that Michael Furze (COM), Ahmer Nizam (WSDOT), and Millie Piazza (ECY) are ex-offico members of the EJ Council and there is some cross-coordination with the Clean Energy Siting Council already.

EJ Council roles include providing a community forum for EJ issues, providing guidance to the Legislature, the governor, and Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act agencies, and holding agencies accountable to their duties under the HEAL Act. The EJ Council duties include implementing the Climate Commitment Act (CCA). One example of this is making recommendations to the Legislature on development and implementation of programs funded from CCA revenues. Johnathan provided an example of a recommendation to establish an environmental justice CCA mitigation fund which would fund mitigation actions. These would be in addition to the mitigation for project proposals.

Johnathan reviewed the EJ Council Community Engagement Guidelines. These include actions to prepare, engage, and gather community input and feedback. Key principles for community engagement include research about a community, allowing community members to self-identify, avoiding tokenism, recognizing strengths and assets, being proactive, valuing other's time, prioritizing unheard perspectives, transparency, and meeting people where they are.

To support effective coordination between the councils, Jonathan shared a timeline of how the EJ Council develops guidance or recommendations. EJ Council committees receive information two weeks in advance of their meeting and may need one to two months for deliberation. A committee presents an issue to the EJ Council, and this can take a month based on meeting schedules. The vote by the EJ Council may need to be addressed over two meetings to provide time to discuss and reach consensus. He asked the Clean Energy Siting Council to be mindful of this timeline when coordinating with the EJ Council or proposing a recommendation. He also noted that briefing documents should be one-page with information about the issue, identifies work already done, and when EJ Council input or response is needed to help prioritize.

Environmental justice discussion

The group discussed environmental justice being done by agencies and issues. Environmental justice assessments are currently being identified and conducted by HEAL agencies. They noted that training is needed for developers to understand requirements and do outreach to meet people where they are. The group considered how to identify measures of success for community engagement for the council. Community success is determined by the community.

The group discussed how to engage communities within regulatory frameworks agencies must follow by law. They considered how to move from informing to involving communities. The group noted that the HEAL Act is focused on vulnerable populations and is based on demographics while overburdened communities are defined by the geographic region where they are located. The group acknowledged other communities may be impacted, but they are not the focus of the HEAL Act.

<u>Items identified for further consideration as potential actions or recommendations include:</u>

- A potential recommendation could be to develop training for developers on HEAL Act and environmental justice in Washington.
    - Input from communities, developers, and consultants should be considered for this.
- A new clean energy project may have less impact compared to existing fossil fuel facilities for some areas but would still likely have impacts. From an EJ perspective, the addition of the "new thing" doesn't guarantee the diminishment of the impacts of the "old thing." The group discussed how to better provide information on this for communities to consider for their own use. Agencies must provide neutral, factual environmental reviews and it was noted that state regulations do not require analysis of benefits. Information could be provided in no action alternative analyses or in cumulative impact analyses. Complexities include different mechanisms and responsibilities related to existing facilities and proposed facilities which would need to be addressed in parallel in some way. Further discussion is needed on this.

Agency updates

Agencies provided information on hiring staff to support clean energy coordination. They provided updates on staff attending conferences and panels to provide information on clean energy coordination. The importance of transmission lines was raised in several forums.

- Commerce is finalizing work on a contract to develop a rural energy report and another for evaluating siting best practices in other states and developing recommendations for improving these processes in Washington. Representatives from other agencies are helping support this work.
- Ecology is conducting scoping for utility-scale onshore wind and solar energy programmatic environmental impact statements and hiring consultants to help develop the environmental reviews.
- EFSEC noted there are several solar and wind projects in various stages. The Cascade transmission line in pre-application stage for the EFSEC process.
- WSDA is participating in a climate smart livestock advisory committee and working on contracts for research on clean energy projects. They noted there are several anaerobic projects being discussed.
- UTC is planning an equity docket once the new equity director is onboard.
- WDFW will be contracting for development of solar and wind energy guidelines.