

Climate Action Plan
Environmental Justice Working Group Meeting #4
December 20, 2012
Waite House

Attendees: Shalini Gupta, Isaac Martín, Sam Grant, Lea Foushee, John Terrazas, Juan Linares, Subbu Sastry, Steve Payne, Jim Ford, Tony Hainault, Robin Garwood, Loren Olson, Brendon Slotterback, Gayle Prest, Anders Imboden.

The meeting began at 1:10 p.m. with introductions. Shalini Gupta welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. She proposed going through the draft EJ recommendations document section by section, which the group agreed to.

Introduction

Shalini summarized the introductory section of the document and highlighted the process recommendations. Brendon Slotterback commented that while all these materials will be included in the Climate Action Plan in some form—dependent in part on the Steering Committee’s final recommendation to the City Council—some of the process recommendations are things that may go beyond the scope of the Climate Action Plan.

Tony Hainault asked where the attachments could be reviewed. EJ Working Group agendas and group members are listed on the City’s project website; the emails are not on the website.

Jim Ford commented that there should be a continued EJ advisory role in some capacity throughout the Climate Action process.

Implementation Goals

Robin Garwood commented that the middle of the first goal seems to disagree with the main point, adding that climate action should be taken as quickly as possible. Sam Grant responded that a technocratic approach puts the burden of climate change on the most vulnerable populations, and that the City should move as urgently as possible with the wisdom needed to protect the most vulnerable communities. Shalini said that the short term is important, but that many vulnerable communities are not included in the short term strategies (the low-hanging fruit). There is agreement that short term action is necessary and urgent. Brendon also pointed out that the Steering Committee has had this same difficult conversation.

Shalini suggested that the group not spend much time at this meeting explaining the document. That step can occur at the Steering Committee level. She suggested that this meeting be used to flesh out the EJ community’s work. Robin raised a concern that the Steering Committee would then be burdened with a task that could be very time consuming and potentially problematic. Shalini replied that this is due to the EJ group starting in August and due to the way the EJ community approaches this issue. Brendon added that if the EJ group needs to meet in January, it can be done.

The group agreed to flag concerns and to see how many goals and strategies need to be addressed. This will help the group understand how much time is necessary to address everyone's points.

On the second goal, Brendon commented that there is already a co-benefit strategy (the third goal), but also noted that the MPCA says that most particulate pollution comes from mobile diesel sources, which are a very small part of the carbon footprint. This causes some tension. Gayle added that this is a GHG reduction plan and not an adaptation one; this may be an issue throughout the document. Shalini replied that while carbon reduction is key, there are other considerations that must be made when prioritizing implementation. There was some additional discussion about whether this goal, and particulate matter specifically, should be pulled out in the document.

On the third goal, some discussion around the third goal involved the elimination of language about tradeoffs, as through an EJ lens this could be problematic. Also highlighted was some phrasing (specifically the "renewable/efficiency investments" wording, which could be changed to "climate action strategies" or something similarly inclusive).

Tony said that the language about tradeoffs gets at one of the main challenges in climate action, which is financing.

On the fourth goal, Gayle Prest raised concerns about the use of the term "green infrastructure," which is often construed as relating to stormwater.

Lea Foushee thought that it would be more useful for staff to submit comments in writing, rather than vocally in this meeting. Subbu Sastry thought that the comments from City staff are useful. Shalini suggested beginning any discussion with EJ Working Group members' comments, and then allowing staff to comment if desired.

Isaac Martín noted that low-income groups and people of color can be left behind in investments around green infrastructure, and that this strategy is good for getting at that issue. Gayle reiterated her concern about the "green infrastructure" language.

Sam said that it's valuable to highlight issues about language disconnects. He also said that it's important to honor the work done by the other working groups, but that the EJ Working Group wanted to bring in their expertise, sensibilities, and concerns, doing as much as they could in the context of this process.

On the second goal four (which will be renumbered and formatted by the City), Isaac Martín helped elaborate on the intent of the language. Further discussion centered on how the plan is implemented and revisited, including the two year revision language, which staff think is too frequent to be practicable.

Brendon also raised concern about the term "compliance mechanism." His worry involved the specificity of the language and the practical implications (i.e., the state has most of the power to regulate and enforce on air pollution issues). He is similarly concerned about the language about

convening an environmental justice advisory committee. This is an issue that may warrant further discussion.

On the final goal, Gayle said that safety will be the City's top priority, most likely, and that the wording about low-income and communities of color should be considered in that context.

Buildings & Energy

Subbu commented that he liked the inclusion of the language about "across all neighborhoods." Brendon raised a concern about data collection and implementation. Loren Olson asked for clarification about the meaning of the "across all neighborhoods." Shalini clarified that the intention was to have energy efficiency improvements of 15 percent (residential) in each neighborhood, not just across the city on average. Sam said that it would be a challenging goal, and shared some experience from his own work. He also said that the EJ community could be a partner in accomplishing this.

Regarding goal four, Gayle commented that the City has a goal of 1.5 percent annual efficiency improvement in its own buildings.

City staff also raised some concern about data availability in breaking industrial use out from commercial.

At this point, the group had a discussion about how to spend the remaining time. Most group members were OK with allowing City staff to proceed with some feedback. Lea disagreed, adding that there is typically not enough time to effectively voice their concerns. As a majority consented to this approach, the group continued.

Tony commented that the "across all neighborhoods" language may be better fitting as an implementation principle, rather than specifically including it here. Shalini said the intention was to ensure that every neighborhood in Minneapolis gets the same level of investment, or that there is not a large disparity in investment. Sam added that it is useful to remind readers about this principle throughout the document, so that it does not get left out when it comes to implementation.

Loren suggested incorporating strategies like Cross-Cutting 3 may be more effective incorporated into a greenhouse gas reduction strategy rather than standing alone.

The group discussed some specific strategies in Buildings & Energy, clarifying their meanings and wording.

Jim added that the group ought to consider the challenges of finances and money in implementing these goals, and how important that reality is. Sam commented that one thing that we have surplus of is social capital, which can make otherwise expensive tasks much more affordable or cost effective. This will be key to being successful in addressing climate and other environmental issues.

Regarding Cross Cutting 9, Brendon asked that the language be more explicit about what's really desired – allowing all neighborhoods to have access. And on Cross Cutting 10, he suggested language that does not exclude any businesses.

Residential Buildings

Robin brought up a point that the discussion of carve-outs could be worded more specifically or practically to address the City's role in affecting change in these areas. The same can be addressed to the fourth strategy.

Commercial Buildings

Brendon asked to clarify the fourth strategy a bit, to understand how the group thinks the City should approach the issue of day shift cleaning.

At 1:45, Shalini stopped to discuss how to proceed with soliciting feedback from the City. Lea suggested that Brendon send out some written comments. Upon further discussion, the group decided to continue the meeting.

Transportation & Land Use

There was some discussion about the order and form of the goals. Brendon clarified that the goals' order is not intended to be priority.

Planning and Land Use

Brendon asked for further elaboration on the first strategy. There was some discussion about whether strategies or things like a “greening the footprint” plan apply to all neighborhoods, or just those that are lower-income or disadvantaged.

Some discussion also took place about the tree canopy discussion, and how to encourage equitable access to tree canopy, versus equally distributing the tree canopy.

Brendon suggested pulling economic development strategies out and organizing them in a way that keeps them together.

Active Transportation

The group discussed how to incorporate the EJ comments on transit in a way that better organizes the first two strategies.

Brendon asked about how anti-displacement fits with a Complete Streets policy. Subbu clarified that this refers to gentrification that can follow many investments (an example being the Midtown Greenway). After some discussion, some group members thought that this concern could be split out from the Complete Streets strategy into its own goal or strategy.

Other Strategies

The group discussed how to best address LED streetlights. One concern that Robin noted is that new City-installed street lights are paid for by a special assessment on the adjacent property owners.

Waste & Recycling

Reducing Waste

Brendon noted that with Reducing Waste 3, the City does not have the regulatory ability to reduce the amount of waste being sent to HERC. Tony commented that the HERC is a Countywide facility funded by taxpayers, and spoke about Hennepin County's efforts to reduce waste and increase recycling. He asked for clarification about what is intended by the strategy.

Some discussion took place around the issues surrounding waste-to-energy vs. landfilling, and the tradeoffs involved. Shalini indicated the strategy would be refined a bit.

The group discussed Reducing Waste 4, and the challenges associated with collecting CFLs. Tony said that Hennepin County would like to work with the group and the community more on this issue. He also plugged the County's waste education grant program.

Increasing Recycling

In response to a comment by Gayle, Shalini commented that the SEIU was interested in effective source-separation that was fair to labor. Brendon suggested that this could be included in Increasing Recycling 4 (commercial recycling ordinance).

Brendon also advocated for more closely tying some of the added Increasing Recycling strategies to the emissions reduction strategies already in the draft document. Tony added that some fleets are moving to compressed natural gas as a fuel.

Loren added that we don't know how composting will be handled in the future, so while the added comments and concepts are important, they should relate to the key strategies in place.

Additional Issues

Drought

Lea spoke about the addition of some language about drought. Our response to drought can have far-reaching impacts. Lea provided the example of drawing down water that impacts wild rice harvesting and has an impact on Chippewa communities. She also highlighted responses to drought in 1988. She said that she did not see any Climate Action Plan language about these issues.

Brendon replied that these issues will be a top priority for the next step of the City's larger climate agenda, which will be surrounding adaptation and resiliency.

Lea noted that some of the energy strategies relate to this – for example, how we use water for energy production.

Tree Canopy

The document includes data and discussion on tree canopy issues, and inequities in tree canopy coverage. The group discussed existing efforts and acknowledged the importance of this issue.

Incorporation of Draft EJ Strategies

Brendon began a discussion of how to incorporate these recommendations. The next Steering Committee meeting will likely be spent mostly on addressing these recommendations.