

Equity Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, October 25th | 5:00 - 6:30 PM
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
110 West Canal Street, Suite 202
Winooski, VT 05404

Participants: Anne Nelson Stoner, Sarah Muskin, Charlie Baker, Bryan Davis, Annie Henderson (CCRPC Staff); Chris Shaw, Ben Bornstein (CCRPC Board Members); Mona Tolba (Interpreter); Ragab Mohamed, Jasim Mudaffar, Faried Munarsyah, Omar Derzi, Elaine Haney, Bruce Wilson, Lydia Diamond, Jacki Murphy (EAC Members); Kashka Orlow (Community/Prospective EAC Member)

1. Welcome, Announcements & Agenda

AN welcomed everyone and asked that everyone wear a nametag due to the large group size. Participants raised hands based on affiliation (CCRPC Staff, Board Members, and EAC Members). AN reminded everyone to pause throughout the conversation so that Mona could interpret, and shared that everyone is welcome to chime in, though she is going to prioritize hearing from EAC members since this is their space.

2. Check In & Agenda for today

AN revisited the Agenda, which includes (1) a summary of last month's meeting, (2) further discussion around developing a CCRPC Code of Conduct, and (3) looking ahead. If there's time, we would begin to discuss the ECOS Regional Plan.

3. Ground Rules

AN addressed the horror that has played and continues to play out in Israel and Palestine over the past few weeks. She addressed that emotions are high, and we have a variety of identities and views in the room. She asked that if we get into tough conversations, that we remember we cannot solve political debates, and will not use the space as such, asking we focus on the work in front of us. AN also recognized the beauty in having so many people together in a room and asked that we show up first and foremost with care for one another.

AN reviewed the EAC's ground rules:

- Work towards a clear mission, goals and objectives
- Continue to build trust and respect
- Respect and accept diversity in ability, culture, and perspective
- Engage in respectful dialogue
 - Respect may look different to different people
 - Assume positive intent and directly address harmful impacts when they occur
 - Welcome emotions into the conversation and forgive one another
 - Listen with care, without judgement, and with the purpose of understanding
- Keep personal stories and experiences shared confidential, unless explicit permission has been given
- Participation is voluntary

4. Summary of last month's meeting

AN revisited that at September's meeting we workshopped organizational values. These organizational values will set the stage for the rest of the code of conduct. AN directed attention to the sticky note on the wall with notes from EAC members. She also reflected additional feedback heard during that meeting, such as the need to ground these values in our work, the overuse of the word "Equity" and the reminder that equity is the outcome/goal, concern over these merely being "nice words" with no action and the need for staff, board, and committee training following the code of conduct adoption.

5. CCRPC Code of Conduct - Strategic & Cultural Vision of the Organization

AN shared she has taken all the EAC and Staff feedback around values and boiled them down to four: Integrity, Accountability, Inclusion (which evolved from collaboration), and Respect. Anne Nelson read through brief descriptions of each one and shared that each value will have a list of associated behavioral expectations (see slide deck for details). AN posed the question: How can we integrate these values and actions into CCRPC's staff, committee, and board culture? Kashka offered that when you bring a new code of conduct into a space, it can feel difficult for people to hold themselves to that standard at all times. She invited people to sit with it and show grace to themselves and others. We are all human beings, and we are here to lift each other up. AN shared that forgiveness and grace showed up in a lot of conversations, and currently lives under Respect. Elaine W. said a lot of what we are talking about we won't do/use until something happens that puts us to the test. Charlie suggested training is needed. AN shared that integrating reflection/feedback time into meetings is important. Jasim said we can write anything we want, but ultimately, it's about our actions. It's good to have this backbone.

AN moved forward to a list of additional expectations that will be outlined in the code of conduct, such as dress code, technology use (social media?), conflicts of interest, harassment and discrimination, etc. AN shared that CCRPC does not currently have social media accounts, though we do have a communication staff member. Elaine H. shared it might be a useful way for us to get information out about projects/opportunities for engagement. Lydia shared staff/everyone should minimize social media use while at work. Banning it is unrealistic.

AN provided an overview of language around unacceptable behavior in the code of conduct, including harassment and discrimination. She read definitions of each. Bryan pointed out it is interesting that age protections are for those over 40. Elaine H agreed. AN suggested we change the language for our internal policy to include all ages. Ben asked if gender can be included in the definition of discrimination and should be accounted for in all CCRPC policies.

AN then moved to discussing a process for handling conflict, sharing that most conflict will not be characterized as harassment or discrimination, so we need a less formal process for repairing harm. AN introduced restorative justice (RJ) and shared the difference between traditional models and the RJ model. In RJ, a violation is a violation of people and relationships, not policy, and creates obligations, not guilt. It involves all stakeholders in the conflict. AN shared a proposed process and reminded everyone that this code of conduct will apply to board members, committee members, and staff members. While Staff are supposed to report to Charlie, who should EAC members report to?

Lydia likes that this process can lead to healing. She said that when someone discriminates against you, it can be so debilitating it can throw your life off course. Bruce added that the work we do is to help people be successful and for outcomes to be good, not punishment. Kashka suggested that there be a conflict-resolution advisor on the committee (could be an elected position for a term and trained). She

said this is helpful for several reasons, one of which being rarely is there a time when everyone needs to know all the details of a conflict. Omar liked the idea of voting for two representatives to take conflict-resolution courses. Bruce added that the victim should always have a support person with them, and that the offender should have a support person too. Ragab added that the EAC comes here to be an example for others, so it is hard for him to imagine us not living up to our values. He added that we are coming here with good intentions. Mona pointed out that restorative justice can be burdensome for the victim because sometimes second chances are not fair. Sometimes the harm is too great. Bruce responded that if it gets to that level, CCRPC will not deal with it (it will be dealt with by law enforcement). Elaine W. said that we are here to be a model for the community, so this is a good process for us to have. Chris asked about contractors and the public. Charlie said this could apply to contractors as well. AN asked if this could also be used for public meetings.

AN reviewed the current policies around participation in political activity. Charlie added that staff cannot run for partisan public office. Ragab shared that committee members should be allowed to attend anything as individuals, and only as a committee member if the whole committee agrees to support an event, etc. Ben and AN stated that there is a line somewhere—at some point, behavior outside of “work” can impact the workplace. Where is that line? Elaine H. shared we could never outline a policy that clearly found that line and suggested we could develop an ethics committee.

Charlie asked about the Community Justice Center and whether they might have capacity to work with us on these issues. Elaine suggested that they are dealing with borderline criminal activity. Mona added that they had added a new program for neighbors/tenant disputes and suggested it may be something to explore. Kashka pointed out that it is something that would likely/hopefully happen rarely, so the lift wouldn't be that big. Having a committee or a rep in place is more just about accountability and having processes and systems in place. Bruce shared that he is a VT human rights commissioner, Big Hartman can give a training [Staff and Commissioners | Human Rights Commission \(vermont.gov\)](#). Lydia pointed out that this is just one route. AN suggested it might be helpful to do conflict resolution practice.

AN asked how we ensure those with different views feel welcome here? AN said in theory its easy, in practice is really hard. Bruce said it's about asking questions about their goals and dreams and building relationships. You can't do it any other way. Bruce doesn't care if you are SURE you know someone, you need to ask the question. Then you will learn about them and they will feel welcome. Avoiding assumptions is the most important thing.

6. Looking Ahead

Chris took a minute to appreciate the committee for the work they put into the equity action statement. He is excited about seeing the work in action here. He seconded that the EAC is a model, and that CCRPC is a model. He wanted to share that this work is important to the board, and he appreciates the work. Bruce added that he is trying to represent EAC on the board based on his goals and life experiences. Jassim thanked everyone for hearing his voice.

AN shared that she will write up a draft code of conduct and send it out to everyone for review. This draft will also go out to CCRPC Staff, and eventually to the Executive Committee and to the Board. She shared that November's meeting will be focused on the ECOS Regional Plan, December's meeting is cancelled, and January's meeting will be a Climate Action focus group. Hopefully, in February, we will be reviewing the Equity Action Plan.