

Equity Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Wednesday, November 29th | 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, Darren Schibler, Annie Henderson (CCRPC Staff); Mona Tolba (Interpreter); Ragab Mohamed, Elaine Haney, Lydia Diamond, Mike O'Brien, Elaine Wang (EAC Members); Mame Assane Coly, Corali Cotrina, Jules Wetechi (Community/Prospective EAC Member)

Welcome, Announcements & Updates

Anne Nelson welcomed everyone and encouraged all to get food and settle in. Food came from Hajiya Nuriya Ibrahim, a Somali community member. Everyone briefly introduced themselves. Assane is a member of Winooski Parents & Students. Jules is involved in Burlington's Trusted Community Voices program and runs an African Variety Show on CCTV to promote health. He speaks French, Swahili, Lingala, and English. Anne Nelson asked how everyone's Thanksgiving was and checked in with how folks are feeling after the tragic shooting of the three students of Palestinian decent in Burlington.

Overview of Agenda

AN shared the agenda for the day including:

1. Membership Check Ins & Ground Rules
2. Revisit Last Meeting: Code of Conduct Update
3. Overview of CCRPC's Regional Plan – Darren Schibler & Sarah Muskin
4. Discuss & Workshop ECOS Regional Plan Public Engagement Plan
5. Looking Ahead

Membership Check Ins & Ground Rules

AN shared she has been reaching out to all EAC members to asking the following questions:

Would you like to continue being an Equity Advisory Committee member in 2024?

If so, does meeting the last Wednesday of each month from 5:00-6:30pm work for you?

If not, what other evenings work?

If you'd like to leave the Committee, would you mind sharing why? Are there any other thoughts or reflections you'd like to share with me?

She shared a list of feedback she's received, including: EAC members are ready for "real" action to be taken and more direct involvement in CCRPC projects (The policy work is important, but hard to understand); Ready for more community engagement; Some concern over not everyone feeling comfortable speaking up during meetings; Adding youth representatives on the EAC (AN will reach out to Winooski High School social justice class). AN suggested adding a ground rule: "Make space for everyone to participate." Mona shared she feels like everyone does feel comfortable speaking up. AN responded it might be feedback that is more related to her facilitating style and less to other EAC members.

Code of Conduct Update

Anne Nelson shared that she is still working on drafting a code of conduct. It has been slowed down due to meeting and trying to work with Burlington's Restorative Justice center. She shared she will be attending a meeting tomorrow centered around integrating restorative justice principles into HR policies. AN asked if EAC members would be interested in participating in a training hosted by the restorative justice center around conflict resolution facilitation? EAC members said yes.

Overview of CCRPC ECOS Regional Plan

Darren and Sarah (CCRPC Staff) provided an overview of CCRPC's ECOS Regional Plan (see the Slide Deck for more detail). Points include:

- The ECOS Regional Plan is a document that protects Chittenden County's resources and guides its development. ECOS stands for Environment, Community, Opportunity, and Sustainability. AN passed around a printed version of the current draft ECOS Plan. EAC members commented on how long and dense it is (I.e. no one will read it).
- A regional plan must be consistent with state planning goals. The State of Vermont mandates that CCRPC's regional plan must:
 - Include widespread input from citizens (Elaine asked if we could change this language to resident since not everyone is a citizen).
 - Set goals to meet community needs, relying heavily on data and maps.
 - Consider social and economic benefits and consequences of policies
 - Defines substantial regional impact in development review.
- Regional Plans are important for three main reasons: (1) to address topics that have impact on the local level, (2) to ensure coordination between municipalities and state agencies, and (3) are required to secure funding (for CCRPC, municipalities, and partners) to implement the goals of the plan.
- Some topics that must be covered in a regional plan include Land use, conservation, energy, transportation, utilities & facilities, housing, economic development, flood resilience, water quality, and areas of cultural & environmental significance.
- The ECOS Plan is organized into 20 chapters (such as working lands, energy, housing, health, etc.), each of which has an associated goal, actions, and indicators.
- There are additional CCRPC plans that support the ECOS Plan, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and the Enhanced Energy Plan.
- CCRPC staff members' work is dictated by priorities in the ECOS Plan. In order to receive funding and implement projects, the projects must be in line with the ECOS Plan. Additionally, each municipality has a city or a town plan, and their plan must also align with the goals in the ECOS Plan.

Mona expressed concern over the housing chapter and asked what CCRPC is doing about housing. She noted that so much housing is poor quality, and often too small for New American families, which tend to be larger. She knows of 16 people living in a two-bedroom apartment (often infested with bedbugs). An action around inspections and education around housing rights needs to be added to the housing

chapter. Darren shared that CCRPC is one-step removed from the actual building and maintenance of housing. CCRPC has influence over land use regulations that dictate what can and cannot be built on a certain plot of land. AN responded that these concerns speak to the significance of updating this plan with community informed knowledge to ensure our actions are in line with community priorities. Lydia shared she is not a fan of the term “affordable” when describing housing. All housing should be affordable. Mona shared that our housing goal of building 1,000 new homes in Chittenden County with 25% affordable is not enough. AN added that especially if over 30% of Chittenden County residents spend over a third of their income on housing. EAC members discussed that, in order to do engagement around this plan, we will need to make the plan accessible and digestible.

Workshop ECOS Public Engagement Plan

AN shared that CCRPC will be doing public engagement to update the ECOS Plan starting in the new year. We are updating the plan, not creating a new one (which was done in 2012). We are operating on a tight timeline and limited resources. CCRPC staff will be preparing for engagement through the end of January, engagement will happen from February through April, and feedback will be integrated May through September. The goals for community engagement include informing and educating the community about the ECOS Plan, gathering input from underrepresented communities on the goals and actions in the plan, and making connections and building trust within the community. The first step is to conduct a situation assessment, where CCRPC staff will develop a comprehensive stakeholder list using the [Miro Network Map](#), research and review relevant public engagement efforts within the community to minimize participant fatigue, determine what gaps remain to inform priorities for engagement, and then determine the best ways to reach and engage with priority populations. She shared that the ECOS Plan will be divided into four “themes” for engagement.

AN asked how CCRPC should prioritize stakeholders for each of these “themes” since, given the timeline, engaging all marginalized groups in Chittenden County is unrealistic. Mike shared that this question seems antithetical to what we are trying to do, which is engage and include everyone. Elaine H. suggested that instead of prioritizing groups, we prioritize methods, but open them up to everyone. Mike shared that public meetings at the O'Brien Center have been successful in the past. Mona responded that the refugee community does not show up to such events, and engagement is more than just providing the space, it involves directly reaching out to the refugee community. We need to go where people are already gathering. Elaine shared that showing up to sports games can be a successful method. Mona said those who cannot afford sports are not at these events and suggested showing up to other community gathering spaces. There are guiding principles for community engagement we should be following, such as ensuring participants are adequately compensated for information they share. Targeted focus groups may be effective. Surveys can also be effective, as long as we compensate people for filling out the survey. AN asked about the tension around needing to show up in community gathering spaces and not wanting to co-opt the space for “political” purposes or bring “work” into a gathering space. Mona shared there are spaces where outsiders are not welcome, and others where they are. Elaine added that putting flyers around town with a QR code can be successful, especially within community spaces like King Street Laundry in Burlington. Mona shared the Vermont Language Justice Project is a useful network and way of spreading information. Assane jumped in and shared that people love to gather when there is music, food, and community building first. So, in our engagement can we ensure to provide time and space for folks to celebrate and connect before “getting into work.”

Music, drums, food, etc. will bring people together. Not everyone will engage via technology, but they have good ideas. You just need to connect with them first. Mike added we can use Jules' CCTV show to get the word out. Some organizations and spaces suggested were: AALV, The Family Room, Winooski Rotary Park, Roosevelt Park in ONE, ISVT. Jules added that for focus groups, make sure we target them based on language, since some countries speak multiple languages and dialects. Vermont Interfaith Action was suggested, especially since they are currently active in housing conversations, and JUMP. Faith leaders are a great way to get information out into the community.

Anne Nelson asked how the EAC would like to be involved in this engagement process. EAC members agreed that they would like to be updated during our monthly meetings and then reached out to each individually as needed for support, connections, or ideas. Mona does not like the idea of hiring a consultant to do the work since it is so expensive, and the money leaves the community. It's better to keep the money local and pay community members. AN suggested hiring a local community organization as a consultant.

Looking Ahead

AN asked EAC members if they would be interested in serving on any other committees within CCRPC. There are some open seats.

1. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is looking for a representative with an environmental justice lens. Mike shared this is a highly technical committee. Corali shared she would be interested in serving on this committee. AN said she would follow up with more information.
2. The city of South Burlington is going to begin developing an Active (Walk & Bike) Transportation Plan for the city. CCRPC is supporting this project. There is an open seat on the Project Advisory Committee that meets three times over the year for an hour each to oversee the project. AN asked Mona and Lydia, given they live in South Burlington, if they know anyone who might be interested in this opportunity.
3. Lastly, CCRPC has a UPWP Committee that oversees which projects we fund for the upcoming year. It would be great to get 1-2 EAC members to serve on this committee.

There will be NO DECEMBER MEETING. We will meet again in January for a focus group around climate action. Feedback gathered during this meeting will go to the State of Vermont's Climate Action Office and inform the Climate Action Plan. AN encouraged all EAC members to invite 2-3 additional community members to attend this meeting. There will be an EPA Environmental Justice Representative from Boston present, and hopefully a staff member from the CAO.

After January, we will move back to virtual meetings for the winter, until the weather warms up again.

Anne Nelson thanked everyone for coming and encouraged all to take extra food home.

Notes from Meeting with Ragab, separately:

- We've been meeting for a year working on internal work, but we are ready to see more action.
- Only 25% affordable housing is too low.

- Use various outreach methods for engagement.
- Move away from the term stakeholder.