

Equity Advisory Committee

Wednesday, February 28th, 2024

5:00-6:30 PM | ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82213942290?pwd=VnRrUFFCcjBmcGN6enFtSmhZeG1yUT09>

Participants: Anne Nelson Stoner, Sarah Muskin, Bryan Davis (CCRPC Staff); Mona Tolba (Interpreter & EAC Member); Elaine Wang, Urmila Chhetri, Clayton Clark, Kashka Orlow, Omar Derzi, Lydia Diamond, Jasim Madafar, Ragab Mohamed, Melissa Heitkamp, Zoraya Hightower, Jules Wetechi (EAC Members)

1. **Welcome:** AN began the meeting at 5:10 and reviewed the agenda.
2. **Introductions for New Members:** The group went around and did introductions, sharing names, pronouns, why they are a member of the EAC or, if new, why they are excited to join, and their favorite animal.
3. **Debrief January Climate Action Focus Group:** AN thanked the group for attending the January meeting and bringing guests. She shared that 50 people attended and we received a lot of great feedback. AN shared who has received the feedback and what documents/work the information will inform, including (1) The Vermont Climate Action Plan, (2) CCRPC's Regional Plan, (3) Energy planning throughout the state. AN then shared some feedback she received after the meeting and asked if anyone else had takeaways or things they would do differently for the next time?

Elaine shared her group felt good and there was a balance of time for Nepali interpretation with everyone contributing. She noted we were not fully prepared for interpretation, and were lucky Indra was there. Urmila shared that the event went well and would like for their to be follow up events like this one to keep the momentum going. For example, can we share another event date and time with folks before they leave so they know when to come back? Lydia enjoyed the large group, though mentioned it was a bit loud. She suggested we meet as a larger group quarterly to not lose the momentum.

4. **2024 Strategic Planning:** AN reviewed what the EAC has accomplished, or worked on, over the past year. Accomplishments include: establishing regular EAC meeting times, ground rules, and working priorities; developing an equity statement, organizational values, a code of conduct, and a draft equity action plan; and, developing a network map on Miro, exploring how to use CCRPC funds to support community partnerships, planning for engagement for the regional plan update, and hosting the climate action focus group. AN asked if anyone had questions or reflections on the past year. Kashka said great job. Ragab asked what happened to the funding project: Are we still giving funds out to partner organizations? AN explained that she is still working on this idea but ran into some roadblocks with how federal funds can be used. She is meeting with Winooski Parents & Students this week to discuss a partnership with funding.

AN then reviewed priorities for the upcoming year, which include finished the code of conduct and implementing it withing CCRPC culture, finishing and operationalizing the Equity Action Plan, conducting community engagement for the Regional Plan update and updating the plan,

updating CCRPC's Public Participation Plan & Stipend Policy, and getting the EAC more involved in specific CCRPC projects.

Zoraya asked what AN means when she hopes the EAC will be able to support with more outreach. AN clarified that she leans on EAC members individually, outside of meetings, to help connect with other community leaders, organize events, and focus groups for engagement. Urmila asked for clarification on priorities for the upcoming year and shared a need in her community for more mental health, substance use, and housing services. Jasim asked why the state is continuing to accept more refugees when we do not have the services to support them, like housing and transportation. Elaine explained that she participates in the quarterly UCSRI meetings and said part of the problem is the flawed funding structure of these organizations, where they receive more funding the more people they take in, resulting in a lack of funds to support those who are already here. The organization knows the system is broken but no one has an answer.

5. **CCRPC's ECOS Regional Plan Outreach & Engagement:** AN used this conversation as a segway into what role CCRPC plays in the issues we are discussing. She shared information about the ECOS Regional Plan (the 2-pager with a summary of all the goals in the plan), what it is and how CCRPC can use it to influence the priorities of municipalities in Chittenden County, other Regional Planning Commissions, and partner organizations. Mona asked how the plan is implemented/how CCRPC and its partners are held accountable to what is in the plan? AN said this is a great question and shared that the plan, alone, is not enforceable. However, CCRPC must review all municipal plans to align with the Regional Plan. So, if we update the way we do this, we do some power and influence over content that ends up in municipal plans. It also determines where we focus our attention (what projects we take on for the year). Sarah added that the Regional Plan is more like a carrot than a stick in that it is not enforceable, but it does carry influence and sway.

AN shared the list of events and focus groups CCRPC is organizing. She shared photos from some outreach they've already done at King Street Laundry and ISVT, and asked if anyone had additional ideas for events or focus groups on any of the chapters in the plan. Jules shared in the chat that he could help share information with the French, Swahili, and Lingala speaking communities. Kashka offered support with the King Street Center. Urmila offered to help get youth involved as she works with youth programming through AALV along with Samuel Dingba.

6. **Future Meetings:** Lastly, AN shared that April is Fair Housing Month and the EAC meeting in April will be focused on housing. She shared information about the April 1st Keynote Speaker event hosted by the Human Rights Commission and CVOEO, and asked whether any EAC members would like a free copy of the book, *Just Action*, and whether they would like to join the book group leading up to the event. The following EAC members requested a copy of the book: Ragab, Lydia, Omar, Urmila, Kashka, Jasim, Clayton.
7. AN, Sarah, Kashka, and Urmila hung around for a few extra minutes to discuss ideas. AN asked if Urmila works with young kids and offered up some of the housing art kits from CVOEO. AN

shared that it might be beneficial, thinking about how to give the ECOS Plan teeth, or greater influence, to have EAC members go around the municipalities to share feedback we've received through outreach and engagement.