

Diversity Advisory Council Meeting Notes

February 16, 2021

Attending from the council:

Susan Badger-Jones, special projects consultant
Charity Fain, Community Energy Project
Dolores Martinez, EUVALCREE
Indika Sugathadasa, PDX HIVE
Shane Davis, City of Portland
Cheryl Roberts, African American Alliance for Homeownership
Sherry Tran, Bend small business owner
Rebecca Descombes, Native American Youth and Family Center
Kheoshi Owens, Empress Rules
Oswaldo Bernal, OBL Media

Attending from Energy Trust:

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| Michael Colgrove | Wendy Gibson |
| Emily Findley | Julianne Thacher |
| Cheryle Easton | Amber Cole |
| Elizabeth Fox | Kathleen Belkhat |
| Wendy Bredemeyer | Jessica Kramer |
| Alex Novie | Adam Bartini |
| Tyrone Henry | Caryn Appler |
| Debbie Goldberg Menashe | Sue Fletcher |
| Ryan Crews | Shelly Carlton |
| Jeni Hall | Thad Roth |
| Hannah Cruz | Abby Spegman |
| Juliana Hairston | MacKenzie Kurtzner |
| Kenji Spielman | Susan Jowaiszas |
| Jay Olson | Kirstin Pinit |
| Phil Degens | |
| Amanda Potter | |

Others attending:

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| Mark Kendall, Energy Trust board | Ezell Watson, Oregon Public Utility Commission |
| Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility Commission | Jessica Arnold, Cascade Energy |
| Tamara Falls, Portland General Electric | Nicole Wroblewski, TRC |
| Ruchi Sadhir, Oregon Department of Energy | Ulrike Mengelberg, Cascade Energy |
| Corinne Alfonsi-Frechette | Dave Backen, Backen Consulting |
| Aaron Frechette, Cascade Energy | Jenny Sorich, CLEAResult |
| Frederick Randall II, Small Business Utility Advocates | Timothy Telfer, CLEAResult |
| Jessica Arnold, Cascade Energy | Whitney Miller, CLEAResult |
| | Tina Brooks |

1. Welcome, Group Reflection and Introducing New Council Member

Tyrone Henry, Energy Trust's diversity, equity and inclusion lead, convened the meeting at 9:05 a.m. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available at Energy Trust's website at <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/diversity-advisory-council-meetings/>.

Tyrone Henry led a reflection on a quote from Dr. May Jameson, the first African American female astronaut: "Never be limited by other people's limited imaginations." The council discussed themes of perseverance in light of Black History Month and examples of productivity and positivity by Black individuals in the face of limitations and oppression. Some members shared personal experience of facing skepticism about their ability based on race and gender.

Tyrone Henry introduced the newest member of the Diversity Advisory Council, Rebecca Descombes, who works at the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) as a health and environment policy coordinator and was trained by late Diversity Advisory Council member Kaeti Namba. She shared that she is of Alaskan Native heritage and currently lives in Hillsboro. Her previous career was in oil and gas, and she expressed excitement at continuing to work in the energy industry.

2. Residential Project Update

Topic summary

Ryan Crews provided an update on ongoing projects and community-based offers in the residential sector. He covered customer-specific incentive tiers, community partner funding and enhanced programs with contractors.

Discussion

Council members showed interest in the offers and requested a copy of the presentation. Some members indicated low or no awareness of these offers, highlighting the need for better outreach to Black neighborhoods to increase awareness. The council recommended many neighborhoods would especially benefit from home assessment options and more transparency regarding project costs relative to incentive amounts and bill savings (Kheoshi Owens).

Council members shared information about residential energy offerings through their organizations, such as fixed-price offers, income-qualified services and home energy audits (Charity Fain, Cheryl Roberts).

Next steps

Continue delivering and developing offers through 2021.

3. Update on Standard Track Request for Proposals

Topic summary

Amanda Potter presented an update on the request for proposals for the Production Efficiency standard track. The program is requesting to delay the request for proposals by one year to re-examine the program structure. The program plans to release a larger standard and custom request for proposals in 2022 that will include a variety of subcontracting opportunities.

Discussion

No discussion.

Next steps

Provide another update in September.

4. Council Input on Program Design Proposal

Topic summary

On behalf of program teams, Kirstin Pinit introduced a proposal to get initial feedback on ways to better collaborate with Diversity Advisory Council members. There is not currently a defined process to do this, and as a result, their input often is not received in time to meaningfully influence a new offer or strategy. Kirstin Pinit described an ideal state where council members provide feedback early and form a robust long-term partnership that is not confined to discussions at monthly meetings. She proposed different ways this could happen, including having council members self-select engagement on topics of interest and work directly with program staff. Jessica Kramer, senior program manager for business lighting, shared an example from the business lighting initiative to illustrate the type of feedback that is desired.

Discussion

Council members expressed overall support for this idea because they have a diverse range of experience and backgrounds to leverage. The council requested information on how members would be compensated for this additional expertise.

Next steps

Continue to explore the business lighting example and follow up with more information by email. Council members are invited to continue exploring the idea and offer input after learning more, and the topic will be revisited during the next meeting. Tyrone Henry will work with staff to determine compensation.

The council took a five-minute break at 10:13 a.m.

5. Legislative Update

Topic summary

Energy Trust staff provided an update on bills of interest to organization, explaining that being a resource to policymakers and implementers is part of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Staff reviewed timing for the legislative session and shared that of 2,100 bills, about 100 are related to energy and being monitored. Of particular interest is HB 3141, which concerns Energy Trust's funding through the public purpose charge and for which staff is actively providing information. Staff reviewed a selection of bills that address environmental justice, energy equity and wildfire recovery.

Discussion

Members asked about Energy Trust's stance on lobbying. Staff members are able to provide relevant information and testimony on request; Energy Trust is prohibited from lobbying pursuant to its grant agreement with the Oregon Public Utility Commission. The council asked if Energy Trust could testify to the potential energy benefits that could result from SB 619, a bill that would provide reparations for Black Oregonians (Kheoshi Owens). Staff could do so if requested by a supporter of the bill, and that would likely involve looking at the impact of Black program participants having additional funds or increased homeownership.

Ezell Watson of the Oregon Public Utility Commission added his perspective on SB 619, providing context about energy burden and how it affects the Black community. He stated the bill should be on everyone's radar because many bills that aim to help people of color require capital for them to receive the full benefit. Energy Trust is in the unique position of being in contact with underserved communities and recommended the organization act as a subject matter expert to support bills like these with information. He expressed support for engagement

in legislative activities and that staff look at more bills to track that relate to data analysis and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Next steps

Staff will continue monitoring bills and provide information on request.

6. Introducing New Oregon Public Utility Commission Diversity Program Manager

Topic summary

Ezell Watson introduced himself as the new diversity, equity and inclusion program manager for the Oregon Public Utility Commission. He will lead the commission's efforts to integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into its operations.

Discussion

Council members enthusiastically welcomed Ezell Watson. The group discussed the need for capital to further diversity goals and ability for underserved customers to receive benefit. Ezell Watson stated this will require challenging the way leadership thinks, especially regarding finding resources. He stressed the need for urgency and swift action in supporting legislation that can make a real difference in the lives of Black Oregonians.

Next steps

Ezell Watson will continue to coordinate with Energy Trust and the Diversity Advisory Council.

7. Discussion Topics for CAC/RAC/DAC Joint Meeting and Discussion of Possible Virtual Retreat

Topic summary

Tyrone Henry invited topic ideas for a joint meeting of the three advisory councils in April. Members will be invited to give input on Energy Trust priorities for 2022 and the priorities for their respective organizations.

Discussion

Council members requested additional information to inform their participation in this meeting, including a summary of progress on diversity, equity and inclusion two-year operations plan and five-year strategic plan.

The council cautioned against the tendency to get bogged down in process (Charity Fain), stating if we continually assume people must pay upfront costs to access incentives, there will always be customers left behind. Members said the assumption that low-income customers and customers of color fall into the same bucket is inherently false, and we should be mindful of that distinction (Kheoshi Owens).

Frederick Randall of Small Business Utility Advocates, a nonprofit working on behalf of small businesses in Oregon, recommended making data about Black businesses available for consideration at the joint meeting. Small businesses are continuing to struggle and there is a need to consider the continuing impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous and people of color business owners in 2022.

Next steps

Council members are invited to follow up with discussion topic ideas for consideration. Staff will provide the additional context information in advance of the joint meeting.

8. Announcements

Tamara Falls from Portland General Electric made the group aware of an upcoming community meeting that will invite community input on the utility's distribution system planning and provided her contact information for council members interested in participating. There will also be an information workshop available for participants to learn more about this topic, which PGE is partnering with Community Energy Project to host.

Mark Kendall gave an update on the Energy Trust board's recent Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Ad-hoc Committee meeting. Council members are helping the board address internal diversity needs. The group aims to get the board actively engaged in ongoing opportunities. The ad-hoc committee will hire a consultant to work directly with the board, which will free up more of Tyrone Henry's time. The council asked for an update on how the board's makeup has changed so far, and Mark Kendall stated there has not been any recent open recruitment, but in the last 20 months new members of color have joined. The board Nominating Committee also has targets and objectives around recruitment.

Cheryl Roberts announced an upcoming event from the African American Alliance for Homeownership, where Black homeowners can learn about opportunities to have a heat pump water heater installed at no cost.

Tyrone Henry shared a few upcoming event opportunities, including a Portland Business Development Group meeting, a Say Hey event and the next event in Energy Trust's Diversity Day series.

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m. The next council meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2021, to be held on Zoom.