

Diversity Advisory Council Meeting Notes

February 15, 2022

Attending from the council:

Dolores Martinez, EUVALCREE
Indika Sugathadasa, PDX HIVE
Cheryl Roberts, African American Alliance for Homeownership
Huong Tran, Bend small business owner
Susan Badger-Jones, special projects consultant
Rebecca Descombes, Native American Youth and Family Center
Oswaldo Bernal, OBL Media
Kheoshi Owens, Empress Rules
Terrance Harris, Oregon State University
Shane Davis, City of Portland

Attending from Energy Trust:

Elaine Dado	Kenji Spielman
Elizabeth Fox	Khyati Shah
Alex Novie	Kirstin Pinit
Amanda Potter	Lenora Deslandes
Amanda Thompson	Lizzie Rubado
Amanda Zuniga	MacKenzie Kurtzner
Amber Cole	Mana Haeri
Ashley Bartels	Marshall Johnson
Bayoan Ware	Matt Getchell
Betsy Kauffman	Melanie Bissonnette
Cameron Starr	Mia Deonate
Caryn Appler	Mike Colgrove
Cheryle Easton	Ryan Cook
Dan Rubado	Sarah Castor
Dave McClelland	Shelly Carlton
Dave Moldal	Sletsy Dlamini
Emily Estrada	Sue Fletcher
Emma Clark	Susan Jowaiszas
Greg Stokes	Thad Roth
Hannah Cruz	Tom Beverly
Jeni Hall	Tracy Scott
Jessica Kramer	Tyrone Henry
Julianne Thacher	
Karen Chase	
Kate Wellington	
Kathleen Belkhatat	

Others attending:

Mark Kendall, Energy Trust board	Knowledge Murphy, Multnomah County
Lindsey Diercksen, LD Consulting	Victoria Lara, LD Consulting
Alder Miller, CLEAResult	Kwasi Boateng, Burch Energy
Chris Smith, Energy 350	Quinn Parker, Encolor Consulting
Greg Delgado, Causa Oregon	Shelly Beaulieu, Dragonfly Consulting

Ruchi Sadhir, State of Oregon
Johnathan Budner, Franklin Energy
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric
Jenny Sorich, CLEAResult

Brook Landon, CLEAResult
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility
Commission

1. Welcome, Agenda Review and Group Reflection

Tyrone Henry, Energy Trust diversity, equity and inclusion lead, convened the meeting at 9:00 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 started the meeting by reflecting on the contributions of black inventors, also mentioning Selma Burke, who sculpted the image of Franklyn Roosevelt used on the dime but didn't receive credit for her work.

2. Review goals, objectives and metrics in the 2022 DEI Plan

Topic summary

Michael Colgrove and Tracy Scott discussed the 2022 DEI Plan. Energy Trust gathered input from the Diversity Advisory Council; Renewable Energy Advisory Council; Conservation Advisory Council; board ad hoc diversity, equity and inclusion committee; Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber; Oregon Native American Chamber and Existing Buildings community liaisons. Appendix A of the plan details specific input received. The plan doesn't currently present specific tactics as it focuses on the organizations with which Energy Trust wishes to engage. Major goals of the plan are to increase representation and readiness; shift and share leadership and power; increase community capacity; increase investment in BIPOC, low-income and rural communities; increase transparency and accountability; and deepen engagement in BIPOC, low-income and rural communities.

Discussion

Council members discussed their experiences contracting or trying to contract with Energy Trust, including high effort required to secure contracts with the organization and receiving small contracts with few work orders given. If they don't achieve a high enough return on investment, the effort is not considered to be as valued (Oswaldo Bernal, Huong Tran). Members noted that dignity should be built into the plan (Kheoshi Owens, Huong Tran, Greg Delgado). Members stated that many companies meet supplier diversity contract goals but have to subcontract with minority and women-owned businesses to do so. They should meet the requirements on their own, instead of having to subcontract (Rebecca Descombes). Members pointed out that Energy Trust often uses the terms 'marginalized' or 'underserved' but needs to add 'by who' - in this case 'by Energy Trust'. The council stated that Energy Trust also seeks to share leadership and power externally but should also focus on increasing diversity in internal staff and leadership (Victoria Lara). Other attendees pointed out that requests for proposals are structured in a way that can make them inaccessible to minority firms – such as with insurance requirements (Lindsey Dierksen).

Members discussed budget authority, stating that white people have the final say in Energy Trust budget decisions. Staff explained that the budget is built from the ground up based on utility integrated resource plan goals. Energy Trust puts out requests for proposals and firms competitively bid on contracts. They must show that a portion of their costs focus on diverse staff or partners. There is a due diligence process and input is received from groups like the Diversity Advisory Council. Members added that Energy Trust should set aside a large fund for

contracts with people of color because white-owned businesses have received the majority of funding since 2002 (Kheoshi Owens). Members also discussed grants from white-led organizations and how they can be performative (Huong Tran). Staff pointed out that there's a need to look deeper when giving grants to organizations that have almost no minority staff or board members but claim to be focused on diversity.

Members noted Energy Trust needs to consider and meet the local capacity of communities ranging from rural to Latino. Communities across the state are not homogenous and needs are different between places like Hermiston and Ontario, for example (Greg Delgado). Members questioned why contracts need to be a competition, stating that competition is a white construct (Kheoshi Owens).

Council members expressed concern about the perceived progress, stating that after two years we are discussing goals but not seeing the accomplishments in real time. White counterparts receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in contracts while minority and women-owned firms only see small contracts and work orders. Members pointed out that there's a plethora of talent in the room, but the investment isn't seen. Talk is continual, then programs are rolled out that tend to look similar to the last (Cheryl Roberts). Members also pointed out that Energy Trust is a big organization to turn, and it takes time to do so. Early on, there was a nimble approach where a couple of phone calls could address a new opportunity and there is a need to set aside funding to do so again (Susan Badger-Jones).

Council members and staff discussed the need to internalize diversity, equity and inclusion goals, and a staff member stated that these discussions should also happen internally. More people of color are needed in key positions where decisions are made. Staff commented that utilities and municipalities have teams working on diversity, where Energy Trust currently has one person serving as diversity lead. There is a need to cultivate the diverse staff Energy Trust already has and foster participation. Staff noted Energy Trust has an affinity group, but it could benefit from additional direction.

Staff asked for recommendations in the areas discussed so more can be done, including how to diversify staff without the ability to hire several new staff and what a recommended model could look like. Staff noted that there's flexibility in procurement and asked if it has to be competitive if someone is qualified.

Members asked what professional development is provided to Energy Trust staff, stating that they are not in favor of losing staff to recruit more diverse staff members. Instead, Energy Trust staff should be given the tools they need to institutionalize diversity goals, so everyone meets them as part of their jobs and can be held accountable to them. A member asked what Energy Trust is willing to give up and what it hopes to gain in return (Kheoshi Owens). Staff noted it may mean less efficiencies - when a position is open, if a diverse candidate doesn't fill it, it may remain open longer at the cost of work being done, or the work may be split among other staff. Members also suggested more meaningful hiring questions that would demonstrate candidates' commitments and experience toward diversity goals (Huong Tran).

Attendees expressed appreciation for the intensity and honesty of the council's engagement and the opportunities to learn, along with the progress made so far, commenting that it's important to press on faster (Mark Kendall). Council members suggested using Energy Trust's influence on other organizations to help with permitting delays and navigating industry roadblocks (Indika Sugathadasa).

Next steps

Staff will share updates on the diversity plan on an ongoing basis.

3. New Renewable Energy program requirements*Topic summary*

Betsy Kauffman provided an overview of new requirements under House Bill 3141 that 25% of Energy Trust's renewable energy budget go toward low- to moderate-income customers. The target group is defined as people earning no more than 120% of Oregon's median income. Energy Trust and the Oregon Public Utility Commission are currently defining what will count and not count toward this goal, along with what's in a gray area. Items that would count toward the 25% metric include Solar Within Reach projects, direct costs for low- and moderate-income programs, and allocated staff time. Items that are undecided include affordable multifamily buildings, low-income-focused community solar projects and projects for governments that serve low-income citizens.

There will be a stakeholder input process this spring to create longer-term guidelines. The Oregon Public Utility Commission is drawing up guidelines in phases, so there is information to work with now.

Discussion

Members asked how prepared Energy Trust is to meet this goal (Susan Badger-Jones). Staff explained that Energy Trust will need to work out what counts and doesn't count. Some areas will directly shift. Solar Within Reach, by itself, may satisfy the goal or come close (Betsy Kauffman).

A member pointed out that recent community engagements with Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities showed that being evicted is a big concern, because solar and other investments turn affordable housing into something more expensive. A council member asked what will prevent owners from evicting people or raising rent (Kheoshi Owens). Members added that they created a loan product with prosper Portland that will reduce the points on the loan if owners are accountable. Members suggested that they would like to see Energy Trust work with other organizations for wraparound services to help people get out of affordable housing, like programs to help people monitor their energy efficiency and receive direct incentives if they reduce energy usage (Kheoshi Owens).

Members stated that they applaud Energy Trust's partnership with Habitat for Humanity, but Community Solar isn't on the priority list. It's an investment in the landlords, adding value to a home that they rent out. It doesn't directly help the BIPOC community (Cheryl Roberts). Members pointed out that it's not easy to get solar because of deferred maintenance needing to happen first including new electrical panels, structural inspections, roof repairs and other investments. A council member stated that the question is around how much tenants are saving, realistically, and they are not building wealth (Cheryl Roberts). Staff replied that many low-income customers are renters and Energy Trust has engaged in many discussions about how to use funds to better serve them (Betsy Kauffman). Other attendees suggested that there can be engagement with landlords who use Energy Trust incentives to not raise the rent based on investments involving Energy Trust (Mark Kendall). A member replied that it has been tried in the past but there is no accountability. No one is watching the landlords and holding them to the agreement (Cheryl Roberts).

A member mentioned working with Tyrone Poole on an application that connects people to apartments for which they are eligible, saving application fees. There is also a solution for home

ownership. Energy Trust should be creative in how it invests money. A down payment is the biggest obstacle for most people (Kheoshi Owens).

Next steps

None

4. Announcements

Empress Rules has three cohorts coming up. One focuses on eliminating whiteness and includes personal, institutional homework to identify whiteness elements and take steps to remove them, as well as develop a process moving forward. The second is a project manager workshop to create excellent supervisors. The third is facilitation using an equity lens. All of them can be found on www.empressrules.net.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Ad-Hoc Committee will meet with Energy Trust's board in two weeks. The topic will be moving forward and accelerating the rate at which the board develops its own cultural competency and diversity.

The Pacific Islander & Native American/Alaskan Native communities are hosting a COVID-19 vaccination and testing event at NAYA Family Center on Thursday, February 24 from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. There will be food boxes and hot meals handed out, along with personal protective equipment and resources.

5. Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m. The next council meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.