

Diversity Advisory Council Meeting Notes

May 17, 2022

Attending from the council:

Susan Badger-Jones, special projects consultant
Terrance Harris, Oregon State University
Indika Sugathadasa, PDX HIVE
Kheoshi Owens, Empress Rules
Cheryl L. Roberts, African American Alliance for Homeownership
Rebecca Descombs, Native American Youth and Family Center
Dolores Martinez, EUVALCREE

Attending from Energy Trust:

Tyrone Henry	Emily Estrada
Huong Tran	Sloan Schang
Michael Colgrove	Caryn Appler
Tracy Scott	Hannah Cruz
Greg Stokes	Alex Novie
Elaine Dado	Lenora Deslandes
Elizabeth Fox	Susan Jowaiszas
Jay Ward	Quinn Cherf
Megan Greenauer	Debbie Menashe
Steve Lacey	MacKenzie Kurtzner
Sue Fletcher	Amanda Thompson
Mana Haeri	Jeni Hall
Jackie Goss	Betsy Kauffman
Ashley Bartels	Amanda Zuniga
Kirstin Pinit	Taylor Ford
Shelly Carlton	Kesean Coleman
Bayoan Ware	Albert Stanfield
Wendy Gibson	

Others attending:

LaNicia Duke, Black Rural Network	Alder Miller, CLEARResult
Ruchi Sadhir, Oregon Department of Energy	Jenny Sorich, CLEARResult
Ezell Watson, Oregon Public Utility Commission	Brooke Landon, CLEARResult
Lindsey Diercksen, LD Consulting	Josh Weissert, Energy 350
	Chris Smith, Energy 350

1. Welcome and Group Reflection

Huong Tran, Energy Trust's diversity, equity and inclusion specialist, 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/>.

Huong Tran opened the meeting with a land acknowledgment and encouraged others to learn what native land they are on and support Native communities.

Huong Tran acknowledged May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and Mental Health Awareness Month and May 5 was Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day. Council members reflected on the shooting this past weekend in Buffalo, New York, in which a white gunman targeted the Black community and killed 10 Black people. They discussed how it affected their perception of safety and what it will take to end white supremacy and the violence that comes with it.

2. 2022 Legislative Session

Topic summary

Jay Ward, Energy Trust's senior manager for stakeholder relations and policy services, gave a presentation on Oregon's 2022 legislative session. The short session was focused largely on non-energy issues, including homelessness, economic inequities and impacts of the pandemic. One exception was Senate Bill 1536, which expands access to cooling equipment for renters. Under the law, Energy Trust will receive \$2 million through the Oregon Department of Energy to support landlords in creating and operate cooling spaces for tenants during extreme heat events. Another exception was Senate Bill 1518, which establishes a resilient, efficient buildings task force to evaluate policies related to building codes and building decarbonization.

Jay Ward noted rulemaking for energy-related legislation that passed in 2021 is ongoing.

Discussion

Council members said cooling access needs to be proactive and offered to help with Energy Trust's outreach (Kheoshi Owens). Staff said the team working on this is prioritizing people of color and people who are elderly and/or disabled (Tracy Scott). Staff offered to share the outreach strategy with council members. Staff also noted the Portland Energy Community Benefits Fund is also working on providing cooling equipment to vulnerable communities in Portland (Megan Greenauer).

Members asked if Senate Bill 1518 allowed local jurisdictions to establish so-called reach codes (Susan Badger-Jones). Staff said that was cut from the final legislation.

Next steps

None.

3. Introducing LaNicia Duke

Tyrone Henry, Energy Trust's diversity, equity and inclusion lead, introduced LaNicia Duke of the Black Rural Network, who will be joining the council soon. Duke lives on the Oregon coast and advocates for the Black community there in other rural parts of Oregon. Black Rural Network will host its first conference this coming weekend to connect Black people in rural communities. Duke said she looks forward to bringing her perspective of rural communities to the council.

Discussion

None.

Next steps

None.

4. Community Agreement for Council Meetings

Topic summary

Huong Tran introduced the idea of establishing a community agreement for council meetings to encourage difficult conversation in a safer space and asked for input from council members on what such an agreement would look like.

Discussion

Members said it was important to isolate race in conversations to understand differences in how people are treated based on their race (Kheoshi Owens). Ezell Watson from the Oregon Public Utility Commission noted the difference between feeling uncomfortable and feeling unsafe and suggested agreeing to be uncomfortable could be part of the agreement so as to encourage challenging conversations.

Tyrone Henry talked about his experience of making people uncomfortable at Energy Trust when speaking up as a Black man, the only one at Energy Trust when he started. Challenging people is a good thing and valuable for the organization.

Tran noted it is important to recognize unintended harm and that good intent is not good enough.

Next steps

Staff will consult council members in drafting and finalizing an agreement.

5. Budget Workshop Preview

Topic summary

Greg Stokes, Energy Trust's organization development manager, previewed a new approach to advisory council engagement in Energy Trust's budget process starting this year, based on feedback from council members. In April, staff engaged all three advisory councils in discussions to hear their perspectives on market trends, customer needs and emerging opportunities. Next, staff will hold an interactive planning workshop in July with council members to plan Energy Trust activities for the following year. The final step will be to present the final budget for review in the fall.

Discussion

None.

Next steps

The workshop is planned for July 26. Council members will get more information about the workshop before then via email.

6. Recruiting for Advisory Councils

Topic summary

Betsy Kauffman, Energy Trust's renewables sector lead, presented on recruiting efforts for Energy Trust's Renewable Energy Advisory Council and Conservation Advisory Council, which provide advice to the board of directors and staff on strategies, budgets and program design. In the past, recruiting has been informal, based on word of mouth and internal recommendations. Staff would like to change, inspired by recruiting for the Diversity Advisory Council, which Betsy Kauffman said is more formal, inclusive and robust. There are several openings on the Renewable Energy Advisory Council and Conservation Advisory Council. Staff has identified experience and perspective gaps on the councils to guide recruitment. Betsy Kauffman reviewed application questions and asked for members' feedback.

Discussion

Members said application questions need to center race and social equity and encouraged staff to explore paying council members based on their time commitment and not just through a flat stipend, since impactful work takes time (Kheoshi Owens). Members also encouraged staff to consider rural perspectives, not just non-Portland perspectives (Susan Badger-Jones). Ezell Watson from the Oregon Public Utility Commission asked if rural implies energy burdened or middle to low income. If not, there may be a need to clarify that in recruiting. He also noted the complexity of race and geography, suggesting the ideology of dominant culture tries to divide rural people and people of color. Rural Oregon is largely white, so the idea of anti-racism is often heard in rural areas as anti-white.

Next steps

None.

7. Members' Experience with Energy Trust Internal Projects

Topic summary

Huong Tran asked for members to share their experiences working on various organization projects. Michael Colgrove, Energy Trust's executive director, explained that because of lack of diversity within Energy Trust's staff, the organization asks Diversity Advisory Council members to participate in a variety of activities, such as serving on hiring panels, participating in contract bid processes and reviewing research studies.

Discussion

Members said they have seen staged or performative elements in contract applications and were grateful for the chance to challenge those (Terrance Harris). Participating can sometimes lead to vigorous and challenging conversations but it is a good opportunity to contribute and understand programs (Susan Badger-Jones).

Next steps

None.

8. Announcements

Council members and other attendees shared information on upcoming opportunities.

Kheoshi Owens said Empress Rules is holding a [series of workshops](#) on anti-Blackness and invited all council members to attend.

Terrance Harris said Oregon State University is hosting its first [State of Black Affairs Summit](#) on May 25, 2022, the anniversary of George Floyd's death.

Ruchi Sadhir said Oregon Department of Energy is considering two legislative concepts it might propose in 2023: extending a solar and storage rebate program with changes to increase participation, and supporting environmental justice communities in applying for state and federal funding to address lack of capacity. The department is [asking for feedback on these concepts on its website](#).

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next council meeting is scheduled for July 26, 2022.