

CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
August 25, 2020
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Via WebEx

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT:

Chairperson Steve Krug	Marc Mondor
Greg Czarnecki (for Cindy Dunn)	Luke Brubaker
Representative Stephen McCarter	Lindsay Baxter
Robert Graff	Jaret Gibbons
Glendon King (for Representative Metcalfe)	Kimberly Kipin-McDonald
Alissa Burger	Gary Merritt
Joe Sherrick (for Gladys Brown Dutrieuille)	Zachery Smith
Adam Walters (for Dennis Davin)	James Felmlee
Patrick Henderson	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Ryan Bizzarro, Zakia Elliott, Terry Bossert

PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) STAFF:

Kerry Campbell, Lindsay Byron, Heidi Kunka, Dave Althoff, Allen Landis, Libby Dodson, Darek Jagiela, Sarah Pinter, Amanda Eyer, Meredith Dibert, Colton Brown, Michelle Ferguson

INVITED GUESTS:

Cassandra Bhat, Seth Blumsack, Deb Harris, Tommy Hendrickson

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Robert Barkanic, Ellis Foley, Curtis Schreffler, Mark Connolly, Travis Gery, Kristen Kavanagh, Josie Gaskey, Cy Whitson, John Carroll, Peter Carney, Carol Armstrong, David Callahan, Janet Krevenas, Allan Smiths, Roxanne Lenhart, Kristian Macoskey, Tom Batrone, John Bell, Sam Lehr, Madeline Kennedy, Tamara Pepper, Andrew Rohrbaugh

MEETING:

The August 25, 2020 meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC) was called to order at 10:06 a.m. by Chairperson Steve Krug. With 16 of 20 seated members present at the start of the meeting, a quorum was established.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the June 30, 2020 CCAC meeting were presented to the committee for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Graff and seconded by Representative McCarter. Mr. Graff noted at the top of page 3 in the section about the GreenGov Council that it should not say “44% of statewide electricity” but rather “44% of electricity procured by the Commonwealth.” The motion to approve the minutes carried by a voice vote and passed.

MEETING SUMMARY: (This narrative provides a summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting. It is not a transcript of the proceedings.)

Elections

Elections took place for the committee with nominations for Chairperson following the resignation of Mark Hammond. Mr. Krug suggested the committee send a letter of appreciation to Mr. Hammond to acknowledge his service. Mr. Graff agreed & said the Secretary's signature on the letter would be appropriate. Mr. Althoff said that DEP would take that suggestion under consideration. According to Robert's Rules Vice Chairperson, Mr. Krug, will serve as Chairman for the remainder of the resigning Chairperson's term, which ends December 4, 2020. It was noted that only appointed members are eligible for Vice-Chair. Mr. Mondor was nominated for Vice-Chair by Mr. Sherrick, and it was seconded by Mr. Mondor. Ms. Baxter nominated Representative McCarter, and Mr. Graff seconded. Representative McCarter mentioned he is leaving his elected office this November, but his CCAC term extends until March 2022. Ms. Byron collected votes via Skype Chat. She tallied the votes while Mr. Krug continued with the meeting agenda.

After the new business was discussed at the end of the meeting, Ms. Byron summarized the voting results as follows: Representative McCarter received five votes, and Mr. Mondor received eleven. Thus, Mr. Mondor will serve as the new Vice-Chair until August 25, 2022.

Public Comment(s)

Roxanne Lenhart provided public comment on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Ms. Lenhart stated that DEP needs to find other strategies to combat climate change than joining RGGI. She also noted how she doesn't feel that clean energy is the solution either. Any legislation or program that penalizes fossil fuels, such as RGGI, is not a good strategy, according to Ms. Lenhart.

ICF Presentation on 2021 Climate Impacts Assessment

The ICF team, along with one of their subcontractors, introduced themselves, including Ms. Harris, Ms. Bhat, and Mr. Hendrickson from ICF, as well as Mr. Blumsack from Penn State University. It was explained that Ms. Bhat would be leading the impacts assessment, along with support from Mr. Blumsack. Hamel Environmental Consulting would be assisting with equity issues and Climate Action Plan (CAP) implementation.

Ms. Harris explained several changes in overall scope for the Impacts Assessment (IA) and CAP, as well as the timeline. She stated there would be more of a focus on health, equity, and economics in their work product and that the IA and CAP would be linked better than prior reports due to a risk assessment approach. The CAP will also be more digestible for the public. Ms. Harris noted that ICF would participate in six CCAC meetings and that written feedback can be provided by members before and after each session. All interactions with ICF should go through Ms. Byron. Mr. Krug asked for clarifications on the timeline, to which Ms. Byron explained that DEP will collect CCAC comments on the final report after ICF's contract ends in June 2021. Mr. Graff asked for clarification on when CCAC members can provide feedback on meetings. Ms. Byron stated she would like feedback on the materials provided prior to this meeting by September 1st.

The IA presentation was provided by Ms. Bhat. She explained the three focus areas of the IA: update the document to reflect the latest climate science, utilize a risk-based approach as a means to sift through the severity of impacts and inform priorities for adaptation, and make the report actionable. Ms. Bhat described the risk-based approach as follows: identify impacts by hazard, rate the likelihood of each hazard, rate the consequences, and evaluate the risks by hazard. As for further detail, step 1 is establish the context by drafting rating scales that assess the likelihood and consequence of hazards described in former IAs, step 2 is identify impacts and risks from prior IAs and prioritize for further analysis, step 3 is analyze the risk by using likelihood and consequence rating scales to generate relative risk ratings, and step 4 is evaluate the risk by converting likelihood and consequence ratings into an overall risk rating. It was explained that risk equals the likelihood multiplied by the consequences, ranging from insignificant to catastrophic.

Several CCAC members had questions or comments. Mr. Krug asked if the impacts assessment informs the adaptation measures, to which Ms. Bhat said yes. He also inquired whether the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and business as usual (BAU) informs the CAP, and Ms. Harris answered yes. Mr. Graff commented that infrastructure issues need to be addressed in the IA, to which Ms. Bhat restated that Act 70 dictates the sectors, but more can and will be added. Ms. Byron also agreed that DEP is not limited by the Act. A comment was made by Mr. Henderson in regard to how we do not need to re-evaluate risk every few years. He cautioned that impacts and risk are not the same and that an evaluation of impacts means considering risks versus opportunity. Thus, there is no need to be negative in the assessment. He suggested making it a more neutral evaluation. Ms. Bhat noted that the assessment must build on prior IAs, and so negative and positive impacts will be assessed. She assured him that opportunities must be understood, so they can be capitalized on. Mr. Graff also offered his opinion on Mr. Henderson's comment. He noted how sometimes the opportunities are part of the adaptation. For instance, if people can't go skiing, then they can do a different activity at that location. If one crop can no longer be grown, then we grow an alternate one. Mr. Merritt noted that water resources is shown on slide 10, but DEP needs to gather input from other applicable advisory committees on this topic, such as the Statewide Water Resources Committee. Ms. Byron explained that DEP's Energy Programs Office does work with their colleagues and other bureaus. Mr. Landis reassured that DEP works with other advisory committees and state agencies. Finally, Mr. Graff asked DEP/ICF to consider impacts beyond 2100.

ICF Presentation on 2021 Climate Action Plan

Mr. Hendrickson gave a presentation on the 2021 CAP. He said the report will address mitigation, adaptation, emerging technologies, economic benefits, as well as the co-benefits of health and equity. Governor Wolf's Executive Order 2019-01 will also be used as an overarching goal, for achieving reductions. Mr. Hendrickson explained the five key steps in developing the CAP: (1) update the BAU scenario, (2a) identify GHG reduction strategies (2b) and adaptation strategies, (3a) develop flexible adaptation pathways (3b) analyze GHG reductions (3c) characterize enabling technologies, (4a) evaluate costs/benefits of adaptation strategies (4b) evaluate costs/benefits of mitigation strategies, and (5) implementation. DEP and ICF have already started working on step 2a via prior CAPs and other state's efforts, and he noted how CCAC members can give feedback on that list of GHG reduction strategies. Mr. Hendrickson described how step 2b focuses on determining where the greatest risks are located in the state. As for step 3a, he explained how flexible adaptation pathways account for uncertainties of climate impacts and enables pivoting between strategies. He further described how identifying a suite of adaptation actions provides flexibility in selections as conditions change. Some of the enabling technologies being considered for step 3c are hydrogen, energy storage, carbon offsets, carbon sequestration, and land/forest carbon sequestration. Mr. Hendrickson noted that

microeconomics, macroeconomics, and health/equity co-benefits would all be considered in step 4b. As for step 5, the focus would be determining who the key actors are, the timeline for implementation, and identifying barriers, as well as funding sources.

Comments and questions were posed by CCAC members. Mr. Graff noted the CAP should address what has led to GHG reductions throughout Pennsylvania's history and how the words "GHG reduction" should be used in the final work products as opposed to "mitigation." For step 2a, he feels that policy priorities should be offered in the context of whether the target audience cares about health or the economy. Mr. Henderson commented that the Executive Order goals are not legally binding. Act 70, on the other hand, is legally binding. He then inquired if DEP/ICF would be looking at the Commonwealth as an island, since the Executive Order is only concerned about Pennsylvania. Ultimately, he is concerned about leakage and whether DEP will consider displaced emissions outside of PA borders. Ms. Byron responded that DEP is not prohibited by the Act to use the goals set forth in the Executive Order, especially since the Act does not provide any GHG reduction targets. Ms. Harris addressed Mr. Henderson's leakage question by stating that ICF/DEP will only look inside of Pennsylvania borders for the purpose of the CAP, since that is where there is control over policies and actions. Representative McCarter cautioned that the legislature will put off what they can, so he suggested using interim goals in addition to the 2025 and 2050 ones set forth in the Executive Order. Mr. Mondor stated that he doesn't mind references to the goals in the Executive Order, but he wanted to stress that human health impacts are also an economic indicator and are thus interrelated.

Ms. Harris closed out her presentation by restating that ICF/DEP are looking for feedback on the GHG reduction strategies and stressed that it is very important to respond with comments now before the process moves forward. Per Representative McCarter's request, Ms. Byron will resend all materials that DEP/ICF are requesting feedback on.

New Business

Mr. Mondor mentioned that he read an article recently about fugitive methane emissions from abandoned natural gas wells in the Commonwealth. He explained the wells become abandoned when shale gas companies leave the region and the burden of capping those wells is not fully enforced. He noted that bonds are not enough to plug the wells. Mr. Mondor suggests that DEP Oil & Gas staff present on this topic at the next CCAC meeting. Mr. Henderson countered that he is aware of no wells that have been abandoned by unconventional shale gas companies, and he agreed that DEP Oil & Gas staff should present at a future meeting. Mr. Walters concurred with Mr. Henderson's statement that the unconventional shale gas companies are not causing this problem and agreed that DEP Oil & Gas staff should present for the CCAC. He noted that PA Department of Community and Economic Development has an advisory committee for conventional gas in the Commonwealth.

Next Steps

Mr. Graff inquired about further clarifications on the IA timeline and when they can provide feedback. The ICF/DEP team responded that all materials will be provided two weeks ahead of each CCAC meeting. The feedback deadline after each meeting will be determined based on the volume of materials sent. Ms. Byron stated that the initial draft of the IA and CAP will be provided before the next meeting, which will be held on October 27th.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Graff and seconded by Mr. Mondor. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:31 PM.