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## Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Equity & Environmental Justice – Adaptation Working Group MEETING MINUTES

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**Meeting Date:** 7/21/20

**Meeting Time:** 4-5:30

### Meeting Location

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://ctdeep.zoom.](https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/91120373008)

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### ATTENDANCE

Working Group Member	Title	Organization	Present
Rebecca French	Director of Resilience	DOH	X
Marianne Engelman-Lado	Cochair	E&EJ WG	X
James Albis	Senior Advisor	Commissioner's Office of DEEP	X
Laura Cahn	Chair	NH Environmental Advisory Council	X
Melinda Tuhus	Activist, Resident	Hamden	X
Orlando Velasco	Health Equity Director	DPH, Office of Health Equity	X
Laura Bozzi	Director of Programs	Yale Center of Climate Change and Health	X
Ruth Georges	Energy Efficiency Community Strategist	Eversource Energy	X
Leticia Colon de Mejias	Co-chair	Energy Efficiencies Solutions	X
Lynne Bonnett	Resident	New Haven	X

Lee Cruz	Community Outreach Director	Community Foundation for a Greater New Haven	X
Susan Quincy	Coordinator	Project WET	X
Becca George			X
Maisa Tisdale	President	Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community	X
Kathy Fay		New Haven resident	X
Steve Schrag		Western CT Central Labor Coalition	X
Aicha Woods	Executive Director	City Plan, City of New Haven	X
Brian Thompson	Director	Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, CT DEEP	X

Associated Staff	Title	Organization	Present
Mark Mitchell	Chair	George Mason University	X
Doris Johnson	Outreach & Education Coordinator	DEEP EJ Program	X
Max Teirstein	Intern	DEEP EJ Program	X

## AGENDA & NOTES

### Welcome and Announcements

### Expectations for WG

*Facilitated by Rebecca French, DOH*

- GC3 convened last week (175 people attended meeting) to outline process transparently and address COVID-19-related concerns
- New timeline extends through December 2021
- This WG is charged with providing review of recommendations from the Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Subcommittee
  - Each subgroup will come up with recommendations, all must make the connection to vulnerable communities

- This working group will review those recommendations for perspective on vulnerable communities or anything else they may need
- The other working groups will present to this working group around August 12
  - Lengthy reports, presentations will expedite review
  - Written report due by 12<sup>th</sup>, whether presentations occur in the week before or the week after is up for debate
- 40 day public comment period, dates could be budgeted a bit
  - If there are real concerns there, we can keep talking about that, anything can be run concurrently would be helpful
  - Only real set deadline is January 15<sup>th</sup>
- What goes into the EEJ report is entirely up to the EEJ working group participants. The governing issue is the order, so what I put into guidance is the order, but the rest of the content is what your working group subjects are. I'm imagining that you'll have recommendations about mapping, about public participation, mitigation, and adaptation.

## Public Comments

### Mark Mitchell, George Mason University

- Dr. Mitchell sought to clarify the timeline further: the first set of recommendations is due by August 12. Then, E&EJ must review those recommendations between August 12<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> and get back to the appropriate working group with recommendations. Then, the working groups are to come up with revised draft reports by September 10<sup>th</sup>, and those are then to go for public comment between September 10<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup>
  - Several opportunities for public input before the January 15<sup>th</sup> recommendations before the official recommendations go to the Governor via the official GC3
- Suggested that presentations occur before the 12<sup>th</sup>, maybe Tuesday 8/11, then could have discussions about EEJ's recommendations on the week of the 18<sup>th</sup>?

### Marianne Engelman-Lado, Yale School of Public Health

- Professor Engelman-Lado remarked that the timeline doesn't afford time for a full EEJ review.
  - In theory, it was an iterative process of subcommittees and then those subcommittees would be able to make recommendations that the whole EEJ would consider, but it doesn't seem like there's enough time for the full EEJ to review recommendations. It would be useful to engage the whole EEJ on what will be coming out of its own subcommittees.
  - Professor Engelman-Lado expressed concern that the iterative process is collapsing, it'll be a more iterative conversation if people have that ahead of time
- Professor Engelman-Lado reminded participants in the call that the two functions of this working group are one, to give feedback to what the other groups represent, and two, to be affirmative, not just reactive. Are there gaps? Could there be a new approach?

- Ultimately EEJ will have its own report that can go directly to the GC3
- People will bring their collective experience and wisdom to the table and be able to groundtruth what we're seeing. It's experience, but also a variety of areas of expertise so we can get some groundtruthing in that way. It's less of an established rubric and more of a groundtruthing approach.
- Professor Engelman-Lado reminded participants that the EEJ working group will have its own report. We can affirmatively be putting forward recommendations, and even what needs to happen in 2021 to hear more about the substantive piece. We do feel rushed. Some of these recommendations really require analysis. I don't know how we do a decent job. We'll have a report—doesn't mean that all our ideas will get in there, but that's the idea behind our report.

**Lee Cruz**, Community Foundation for a Greater New Haven

- Mr. Cruz impressed upon the call that it is critical to get recommendations drafted as early as possible so we can review them before the meeting. If people have any drafts, please send them.

**Laura Bozzi**, Yale School of Public Health

- Dr. Bozzi inquired into whether if there is some sort of framework that's being applied when looking at these recommendations or if it is based on collective feedback from the group, especially given how quickly these have to turn around.

**Leticia Colon de Mejias**, Energy Efficiencies Solutions

- Ms. Colon de Mejias expressed concern that her comments are not often accurately reflected in public materials and in the reports that come out of planning sessions like this.
- Ms. Colon de Mejias impressed upon participants that just saying the word equity does not make a process equitable. She went on to express concern that this process has been hurried and dampened by covid.
- Ms. Colon de Mejias also pushed back against the idea of a rubric process. She is concerned about the method of assessing that each piece of this plan is through an "equity lens." As she said, there are a few areas where someone will beat the concept of equity like a dead horse, and then there are other areas that are light on equity, and it's possible that the person who presents these recommendations won't care about equity.
- [via chat] The report focuses on personal cars and not public transit and why we do not help LMI to even access building upgrades. But we pay for rich people to fix entire foundations on min mansions.

**Kathy Fay**, New Haven

- Ms. Fay noted from her experience with the buildings and electricity and mitigation subcommittees that we can say some things proactively and positively, and pretty much all of the new recommendations, the 2018 version did not address equity, and then we can say which of the items under there are in our group's idea addressing that and which things are neutral, but it can't hurt to keep repeating everywhere that the 2018 version and the 2011

version really missed the mark on equity.

**Lynne Bonnett**, New Haven

- Ms. Bonnett recounted from one of the groups she was in, the discussion was revolving around what happens when there isn't consensus within the group on what to put in the recommendation. That is especially true for EEJ. If you're the sole person on the committee, then you may be the outlier.
- Described one subgroup she'd participated in where the chair admitted to a lack of expertise on a subject and ceded responsibility of writing that portion into the final recommendation in something called a "minority report."
  - If you feel strongly that your view isn't feeling heard, you can participate.

## Vulnerability Assessments as a Tool for Resilience

*Facilitated by Mark Mitchell, George Mason University*

- Adaptation needs to engage vulnerable populations on the local level who know what the issues are and can provide informed plans on how to make their communities more resilient
- Tools we should be aware of:
  - National Climate Assessment's [2018 Impact of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States](#) (link in agenda, and attached) their "Populations of concern"
    - May be useful in meetings with other groups
  - Presentation to GC3 about the climate in the context of systemic racism and the COVID epidemic (attached in agenda for review)
  - Weekly Webinar on CJ Issues (Marianne, Mark, Lee) included as an attachment with the meeting notice—hasn't been cleared with everyone listed, but will be starting on a weekly Thursday basis starting September 10<sup>th</sup>
- People should be encouraged to bring their lived experiences into the planning process to inform the recommendations
- The office is interested in conducting a vulnerability assessment: vulnerable infrastructure and vulnerable populations
  - The larger EEJ is pulling together a map of vulnerability and the assessments
  - We need to make sure that EEJ communities are ready to provide more detail on vulnerability on a local level and what needs to be done to build resilience
- Developing a vulnerability assessment itself and notifying the people who are most vulnerable is a process of resilience
  - If you know you are more vulnerable, you may pay more attention and act proactively if you know you are particularly vulnerable because of X, Y, or Z.
- They can also advocate for funding (oftentimes funding is needed) either to reduce vulnerability or to increase resilience, if you have a plan then you know that you need the funding and if there are opportunities for funding then you can take advantage of it or the community can advocate for that on a local level and presumably other communities would have the same vulnerabilities and the communities can unite to advocate in tandem.
- Looking for input via email on the funding proposal itself
  - We don't have any indication that anything is likely to be funded but there is an openness to at least access

- Wanted to set up a meeting: Leticia, Becca George, Doris Johnson, others?
- Next EEJ-A meeting will be on *Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday August 18<sup>th</sup>*
  - As many presentations on the 11<sup>th</sup> as possible
- Reports from each of the work groups that are ready to share

## Public comments

### Steve Schrag, Western CT Central Labor Coalition

- What kind of tool are you looking at when you mention "Vulnerability Assessment?"
  - Provided topic idea
    - **Maisa Tisdale** expressed interest.

### Orlando Velasco, DPH

- Hartford has a stewardship tool and other health departments and things at the regional level might be doing something with regards to climate resiliency and that might be another tool.

### Leticia Colon de Mejias, Energy Efficiencies Solutions

- Thanked Mark for making a funding proposal in the first place because the assumption is often that residents are expected to do that work for free.
- [via chat] There has not been any formal training on climate in EJ with the exception of the work I have done with Green eco Warriors and EFA, and I fully funded that work myself. All the money has been given to white led organizations to trickle down... Last year Bobby Gibson and I held a few Climate change and you talks at public schools. Other than that there has been NO public education in urban schools on climate change. In 2016 John Humphries was on GC3 and was paid to give talks in the urban areas, and I gave those talks for FREE all across CT. We gathered feedback at these talks, and I have no idea where that feedback went. Frankly, I am tired of being used as a Free resource when Central, Green Bank, CBIA, and CREC get millions in funding a year to do this work and don't reach the at risk communities. My materials can be located here [and meet all state and federal education guidelines and are culturally appropriate and multi lingual](#). Yet, DEEP has yet to even look to support our work in at risk communities.
  - Attached links: <https://www.gewportal.org/store/> ; <https://www.gewportal.org/articles/>
  - I have never missed an EEB meeting, there is much talk but there is very little action. One of the recommendations should be a requirement for reporting for any entity that receives ratepayer or taxpayer dollars, that they release data on how many at-risk individuals were served relative to other individuals.
- [via chat] I am tired of the lip service on " what we plan to do for Equity and inclusion, outreach and education in underserved communities. " I would like to see accountability on how ratepayer and taxpayer dollars are allocated and how the outcomes are tracked.

## Public Health & Safety Reportback

Orlando Velasco, Department of Public Health; Laura Bozzi

- We have our subtopic teams throughout the work group, and within those subtopic teams we've already started identifying vulnerable populations and drafting recommendations.
- Vector-Borne Disease already has their recommendations, but there are two others (mental health, nutrition and food safety) that need to take a closer look at their vulnerable populations
  - Laura Hayes will reach out, Orlando will assist
- 1-4 recommendations per subtopic team
- Next meeting this upcoming Thursday at 10:30 am-12 p for the entire working group. Invitation open to EEJ members if there is interest.
- Public Health & Safety is taking an approach of looking at the impacts, identifying vulnerable populations, then selecting recommendations based on how they address the issues based on vulnerable populations
- Two are following up on recommendations from the 2011 report
  - One is addressing schools and student athletes with Mark's good recommendation that there should be a governor's-appointed committee looking at heat related closures of sporting events. Some sort of heat standard as a part of the state's OSHA policy, That could also be for indoor workers
  - One is on a heat response plan, way to provide guidance at the state level across the state but would be implemented at the local level, incorporate recommendations on cooling centers
  - One that is addressing housing, Mark will dig into. Different policies requiring no shutoffs during heat waves or expanding live cooling assistance or mandating that landlords maintain a maximum temperature. Ensuring that houses are safe and affordable at an appropriate temperature.

## Public Comments

### Leticia Colon de Mejias, Energy Efficiency Solutions

- Via chat] Here are some links on health and EE links.  
<https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/posts/>  
 additional educational resources can be located here <https://www.gewportal.org/what-we-do/>  
 Free ways to educate communities Dinero learns to Save Energy  
<https://youtu.be/BOaMWYgWmX4> Save Energy Save lives Physicians for Health  
<https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/h1801.pdf>  
 Here is a shelter that can now serve more people due to an EE upgrade, they also lowered crime rates with the new outdoor lighting and removed health barriers and increased safety  
<http://eesgogreen.com/had-a-great-experience-with-this-company/>

### Laura Cahn, NH Environmental Advisory Council

- Interested in whether anyone is looking at exposure to lawn chemicals, lawn tools, gas-powered lawn tools, people who rent don't have any control over who takes care of their lawn and how it's done, it's mostly people who can't afford to do anything else working outside

exposed to things

- **Orlando Velasco** doesn't know of any team like that. There is a land use and building work group and the conditions of what happens around those buildings, maybe that should be brought up with that working group. For public health and safety, we're looking at these large areas where there are disparities in vulnerable populations. Those are issues open to everybody, but it's harder to pinpoint the disparity you would have there, especially if you're considering land use. That may be more appropriate for land use and buildings, not public health and safety.

## Infrastructure and Land Use

*Brian Thompson, Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, CT DEEP*

- Lawncare, maintenance impacts. Interesting thought about how that relates to land use and buildings. I'll take that back to the group and we'll think about how that fits in the context of adapting to climate change. Not sure what they might expect about how that chemical use would intersect with climate change.
- Transportation, land use, buildings, utility infrastructure
- Discussion around areas they want to focus on, some sort of preliminary recommendations identified in refining those
- For transportation preliminary strategies, they've talked about doing vulnerability assessments including access to facilities such as hospitals
  - Having that discussion in the context of the need for coordinating those strategies at the local regional and state level.
- Assessment in planning and decision-making tools and best practices for transportation, things like engineering design, those sorts of tools for assessing conditions
- Evacuation route planning and coordination and ensuring that there is dry egress around the areas vulnerable to flooding.
- Land Use and Buildings area, municipal community resilience program, a programmatic funding opportunity, looking at building codes, consideration for zoning related to adaptation, low impact development, green infrastructure, open space and green spaces in urban areas, acquiring and buying out vulnerable properties, promoting development in urban and village centers away from vulnerable locations
- Mapping of vulnerable communities has been of interest to that subgroup: geolocating the utility infrastructure and overlaying that with the vulnerable population mapping to prioritize utility infrastructure needs based on that overlay
- Integrated nature of utilities, integrated vulnerability assessments of the interlocking utilities or overlapping utilities with an objective of providing continuity of service across the sectors. Fair amount of discussion on vegetation management and protecting/enhancing tree cover in urban and suburban areas.

**Laura Bozzi**, Yale School of Public Health

- Any discussion about affordable housing or prioritizing adaptation for affordable housing in



CT?

- **Brian Thompson:** No. We are talking vulnerability assessment, housing in general and affordable housing is certainly a lens I'd want to look through.

**Dr. Mitchell,** George Mason University

- Dr. Mitchell is concerned by affordable housing siting—near pollution exposures. People who live in affordable housing can't just decide to move if they're sick or in the hospital or whatever, so both schools and affordable housing need to look at the siting of that and do it in areas where they're not being exposed to high levels of air pollution.
  - **Brian Thompson:** When there's state money involved, critical facilities like hospitals or schools and housing is either not located in flood-prone areas or that certain mitigations be provided in those flood-prone areas. What are the other impacts we'd be concerned about?
- 10 years ago there was a study showing that asthma rates are much higher in schools that are built in floodplains or have two or more leaks in their rooves and those are often the schools that are in low income neighborhoods because that's the property tax that supports the schools

**Leticia**

- [via chat] On buildings there has been much talk on indoor health barriers and also stopping funding raids.
- The normal rate is 30% or more of one barrier (asbestos, lead, high CO, etc.). In low income communities, that number jumps to 50%, and for that 50% it's more than one barrier because that's the nature of poverty, they have problems they can't afford to fix. It's also true in multifamily housing and in schools. There are schools that have unremediated asbestos that is visible to the eye and PCBs. Remediation funds do not exist. It's not that we don't know about the issues, it's that no one looks at how to solve them successfully.
- Not only do they not know the programs exist, if they do, they have problems getting to them because of this virtual world. If you don't have an iphone, if you have a disability, if you fcan't scan something in the system, you can't access it. The complex application process is a barrier to at-risk communities. This call, even—conceptually, anyone could join it, but in reality, people would need access of a computer, know how to operate zoom, know how to navigate the website. On the Buildings and Mitigation team, there are lots of people with good hearts and good intentions, but many haven't had the lived experience to recognize these issues. It's incumbent upon us that our recommendations reflect the fact that so many people couldn't weigh in, or even if they could, they didn't have the basic information and prior knowledge to successfully do it.

**Maisa Tisdale**

- [via chat] The South End of Bridgeport is still dealing with coal dust from the coal heap.
- [via chat] Absolutely same issues in Bridgeport schools.

**Next Steps:**

August 11<sup>th</sup>, presentations

August 18<sup>th</sup>, discussion of recommendations

**Marianne Engelman-Lado**

- It'd be very helpful if we can get drafts in advance of the 11th!