

Erie County Community Climate Change Task Force

Sept 9, 2020 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Via www.WebEx.com

Meeting number (access code): 968 668 738

Meeting password: C3TFEMC

Agenda

1. Welcome – Anne Bergantz, Task Force Chair (10 minutes)
 - a. Roll call: Anne Bergantz, Jason Kulaszewski, Sarah Wooton, Doug Funke, Emily Dyett, Kelly St. John, Lynda Schneekloth, Brenda Young, Clarke Gocker, Gabrielle Prince, Keven Meindl, Lisa Kenney, Susan Clarke, Jon Nickerson, Paul Michalec, Rahwa Ghirmatzion, Derek Smith, Bonnie Lawrence, Josh Wilson, Jane Cameron, and Tracy Skalski.
 - b. Approve agenda: Motion: Lynda S.; Second: Emily D. – unanimously approved
 - c. Approve previous meeting minutes: Amend – Doug F. was left out of attendance.
Motion: Brenda Y.; Second: Lynda S. – unanimously approved
 - d. The following items usually on the agenda were tabled until the next meeting with a request to send any updates to the Chair.
 - i. Climate Vulnerability Assessment – Susan Clark
 - ii. ECLIPSE / Greenlink mapping – Josh Wilson
 - iii. Community Climate Action Plan - Bonnie Lawrence
 - iv. Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act – PUSH Buffalo
 - v. Transportation Climate Initiative – Lisa Kenney
 - vi. Climate Smart Community Update
 1. Erie County – Tracy Skalski
 2. City of Buffalo - Kelley St. John
 - vii. Sustainability and Greenhouse Gas Reporting – Josh Wilson
 - viii. Youth Climate Council – Emily Dyett
 - ix. Natural Climate Solutions – Lynda Schneekloth
 - x. Working Groups
 1. Nominations
 2. Public meetings/outreach
 3. Climate Vulnerability Assessment
2. Presentation: Emily D. - Just Transition discussion (80 min) - presentation will be shared

Round Robin exercise: How do you personally experience climate change in your community?

- Water quality issues in Lake Erie. The impacts of pollution is directly tied to climate change
- Old Housing – Hot Summers getting hotter. Many among us don't have adequate housing with air conditioning during increasingly hot summers.
- Family living near West Coast forest fires, living in ash, drought, wind, fire...a lot of Earth trauma.
- Heat related mortality issues related to rolling blackouts and more consideration for that vulnerability looking forward. Backup energy and planning for cooling centers is needed.

- Rural areas seeing increasing ticks over last few years – linked to warmer winters. More variability in local creek (dry to flooding over short period of time)
- Very Dry – “I’m a hiker” and dry spaces aren’t very friendly for hikers and there has been decreasing access to water near hiking spots.
- Plant cycle seems off, and plant systems are now blooming at different times. Lake is 2 degrees warmer from late 70’s, the ash tree issues, invasive species, etc.
- Climate Crisis is an opportunities to provide equitable distribution of resources, however, corporations are taking control, and not being good stewards in terms of job creation, and equitable access to the clean energy economy.
- Old Housing, racial and economic justice being exacerbated by COVID19 largely impacting low income communities’ health outcomes, and these are the same communities (poorer, communities of color) that are on the front lines of the climate crisis.
- More flooding in back yard because the ground can’t keep up with the intensity of recent storms. We’ve seem more over the years in West Seneca due to increased flood events.
- How can you fight back the ocean in places like Florida? I visit there often and they’re blindly denying the rising tides, continuing to develop. How do we change attitudes? We get it but, more attitudes need to change in order to address issues.
- There isn’t equity in the tree canopy in the city. Increased tree planting and natural restoration would help address some of the heat and flood related issues.
- Realizing privilege, and access to how we consume energy. Large disparity across economic groups. Also, Issues with how farm practices have had to change based on changing climate; some opting out for seasons.
- Old housing is an issue that effects urban and rural communities in a very similar way across socioeconomic groups. Also, issues of shoreline erosion is becoming so extreme that people are losing housing & businesses
- My kids are feeling hopeless about everything because of the destruction of our natural habitat. It’s heartbreaking that a young child is expressing hopelessness when hope is such an important resource.
- Noticing erratic weather patterns, micro-climates, mid-spring cold snaps affecting bees and plants. As a teacher it’s hard to not be doom and gloom, but be inspiring for the future generations.
- I’m only 18, and in my short life I’m seeing the emerald ash borer killing trees due to invasive species and global capitalism, fruit trees baring less fruit, a lot of trash in drainage ditches (Lancaster). Socio-economic issues creating a fever pitch, and the youth feeling hopeless is REAL. We look at it like there’s nothing to lose.
- Housing is main concern. Due to COVID people have to be in their housing more so issues of lead and windows in old housing, but are a MAJOR source of lead. I worry about people’s safety in their own homes.
- People depend on a stable climate for their income (globally) and erratic climate patterns are having a large impact. Marginalized communities that are less industrialized (ex. Fiji) are suffering the impacts of Climate Change and are contributing very little to the problem. People without a voice are being harmed more.
- Rural lands are being put in the cross-hairs for renewable development. This could be exacerbated by the need for municipalities to generate revenue due to economic impacts of COVID. We need a new, more sustainable economic approach moving forward. This is a moment to enact change.
- Grew up in Chautauqua...growing issues of algae blooms. Climate Change issues seem daunting, and the way we talk about it is so important because the work can be done if we all do our part.

Takeaway – local issues are also global issues and climate change issues are affecting communities right now.

Presentation – Just Transition: need to transition to an economy that puts people and planet first above all else.

note: Encouraging us to come into Climate Justice work with humility and be able to listen to those closer to the problems and different life experiences. Be open to a transformational world view in context of this discussion.

Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA): Clarke G.

- Powerful tool to move the needle on climate goals
- Includes mandates equitable reinvestment in communities around GHG reductions
- A lot of entrenched special interests will fight against this bill
- Governance Structure of CLCPA:
 - o Climate Actions Council: appointed by state officials (Gov., both houses in Leg & both major parties)
 - 22 people (local rep Dennis Elsenbeck , formerly at National Grid)
 - Oversight by NYSEDA and DEC
 - Just Transition Working Group: working on formal definition of Just Transition
 - o Local Example: helping Tonawanda community after Huntley plant closing
 - Climate Justice Working Group (Rahwa G. is in this committee)
 - o Makeup: Urban/Rural Climate Justice groups from across the state.
 - o Working on advising how agencies can meet community reinvestment goals
 - Sector Specific Advisory Panels
 - o Transportation
 - o Land Use & Local Government (Eric Walker, local rep – formerly with PUSH and Erie County)
 - o Energy Intensive Trades
 - o Energy Efficiency & Housing
 - o Agriculture/Forestry
 - o Power Generation
 - o These Advisory Panels will work with the Climate Action Council over the next year to develop an investment plan to help reach the goals of the CLCPA.

Justice Indicators (Sarah W.) – Refer to presentation for maps

- Looking at mapping to see how crisis affect various communities using COVID 19 as the example.
- Crisis impact vulnerable populations in similar ways across the spectrum

Environmental Justice: Born of the civil rights movement of the 1960's by Dr. Robert Bullard (sp)

- 4 Pillars of Environmental Justice Movement
 - o All people have a right to live in a healthy environment protected from degradation
 - o Pollution & risks to their health affect people of color **disproportionately**
 - o Calls for equitable distribution of waste and shift the burden away from communities and toward the companies that are responsible for the pollution
 - o Focus on community based approach to decision making to hold governments and companies accountable
 - Local examples: Tonawanda Coke, Love Canal, Buffalo's lead levels (also Flint, MI), higher levels of emissions and asthma on Buffalo's West Side related to Peace Bridge and 190.
- Climate Justice: Thinking about climate change beyond the ecological lens, also considering racial and economic perspective...thinking more holistically.

- Just Transition built from a labor movement based on poor health outcomes in workers who work for the extractive industries, and sought well-paying jobs that weren't based on the "extractive economy" (See graphic in presentation)
 - o Just Transition defined:

Framework for a vision-led unifying in place-based principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift away from an extractive economy to a regenerative one. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; re-dressing past harms, and creating new relationships of power for future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just the outcome will never be. Just transition describes both where we are going and how we are going to get there.
- Just Transition Graphic comparing extractive v. regenerative economies:
 - extractive economy (dig, bury, dump, low value for labor)
 - centralized wealth by few
 - government system to protect this
 - "business as usual"
 - regenerative economy:
 - Economic control within the community.
 - Democratize wealth in the workplace
 - Advancing ecological restoration (community's view of "restoration")
 - Re-localizing production & consumption
- 15 minute breakouts & discussion
 - o Groups talked about incorporating this into their work and working with the youth
 - o Liberation of women and girls will make a huge difference
 - o The current system is very strong, and harmful (consumerism)
 - o Thinking about where we live and work in that context-local people have the solutions to local issues
 - o Each of us in this space have the power to affect this type of change, educate the public, and begin to work embed this work into local governments taking the lead. – a lot of power in this room.

Motion to adjourn – Doug Funke

3. Next meeting – **Oct 14, 2020, 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM** via WebEx