



## Environment Council of Rhode Island Full Board Meeting

Monday, January 4, 2021 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM | Virtual Meeting on Zoom

### Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions 5:30 - 5:40 PM
  - Land Acknowledgement
  - Approval of [December 7, 2020 minutes](#)
  - Office Report
2. Presentation and Discussion 5:40 - 6:50 PM:
  - ECRI's Equity-based Strategic Planning and Racial Equity - ECRI President, Priscilla De La Cruz, and Nicole DiPaolo, ECRI co-VP of Development
3. Policy Committee and Climate Crisis Campaign 6:45 - 6:52 PM
  - Coffee Hour on January 27<sup>th</sup>
  - Legislative agenda discussion cont. (PolComm on Monday, Jan 11th, 4:30)
4. Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects 6:52 - 6:57 PM
  - Green Infrastructure Coalition
  - School Recycling Club
5. Announcements 6:57 PM
6. Adjourn 7:00 PM

### Attendees

Noreen Inglesi, Donna Personeus, Bina Gehres, Steve Ahlquist, Paul Roselli, Greg Gerritt, Priscilla De La Cruz, Peter Trafton, Paige Therien, Topher Hamblett, Hank Webster, Jonathan Berard, Laura Landen, Sue Anderbois, Paul Beaudette, Kai Salem, Kevin Nelson, Barry Schiller, Jessie Kingston, Nicole DiPaolo, Amanda Freitas, Gregory Schultz, Timmons Roberts, Everett Pope, Liza Burkin, Jim Kingston, Jeff Migneault, Susan Korte, Mal Skowron, Paul Roselli, Kenneth Filarski, Katherine Gibson, Justin Boyan, Barbara Walsh, Angie Koziara, Victoria Leytin, Eugenia Marks

### Minutes

1. Introduction (Introductions and agenda shared in chat. Meeting is recorded.)
  - a. Land Acknowledgement
    - i. We are on stolen land of the Narragansett, Pokanoket, Nipmuc and Mashpee - whether in Rhode Island or in another state. Even in this virtual space: the materials and devices we are using have been acquired in extractive manners. These processes of settler colonialism continue today.
    - ii. RI holds a legacy of racism and slavery - it was a leading state in the slave trade.

- iii. "Providence Plantations" removed from the state's name in 2020.
- b. **Approval of December 7<sup>th</sup> Minutes - Paul Beaudette make first motion and Nicole DiPaolo seconds. All vote in favor - Laura Landon abstains (was not present for December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting)**
- c. Office report (Given by Greg Geritt)
  - i. ECRI Operations account Balance: 1/1/20 - \$41,607.44; 12/31/20 - \$39,680.82
    - 1. Income \$22,168.00, Expenses \$24,094.62, (Deficit \$1926.66)
  - ii. Year End Appeal received \$2070 in contributions
    - 1. Spent \$90 on an ad in EcoRI News
  - iii. ECRI Balance: 1/1/2020 - \$32,838.73; 12/31/20 - \$35,561.39
    - 1. Income \$10,199.42; Expenses \$7,476.76; Net gain \$2,722.66
  - iv. Tisdale Awards: Convening committee to fundraise for the awards. Volunteers welcome (contact Greg). Winners (to be announced via press release this week):
    - 1. The Central Falls School Districts to expand Learning Community
    - 2. The Westerly Land Trust to expand the Living Laboratory.
    - 3. Middle School in North Providence will partner with Tree-Plenish
  - v. Video Festival received 20 entries. Judges are picking which one to show on February 20 (Planning for a 50 minute show total - 65 minutes worth of video submitted)
  - vi. Annual meeting will be in June, virtually. Topic will be ECRI at 50. Volunteers for planning welcome.
    - 1. ECRI donated policy archives to the State Historical Commission - looking for volunteer(s) to go through and pick out past accomplishments to feature
    - 2. Also looking for planning volunteers
- 2. Presentation and Discussion: ECRI's Equity-based Strategic Planning and Racial Equity - Priscilla De La Cruz and Nicole DiPaolo
  - a. Link to presentation slides: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/169YknS\\_SE7R2GW4SgrMMqpoZ4AC23p5Y/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/169YknS_SE7R2GW4SgrMMqpoZ4AC23p5Y/view?usp=sharing)
  - b. Incorporated the feedback of the strategic plan planning committee and also the executive committee
  - c. Presentation/Discussion "Group Agreements" borrowed from the Urban Sustainability Director's Network (USDN)'s Equity Foundations Training workshops (which is the curriculum being used in RI's environmental equity cohort)
    - i. Meeting attendees encouraged to share things in chat. Presentation meant to begin a conversation.
  - d. POP
    - i. Purpose: Bring ECRI members together: share common language about racial equity and highlight past, current, and future learning process for an equity-based strategic plan and desired outcomes.
    - ii. Outcome: ECRI members begin to gather to discuss common language, conversational norms, and the importance of the work we're going to embark on in equity-based strategic planning -- a framework and foundation for an equity-based strategic planning process.
    - iii. Process: Nicole and Priscilla will share information, video clips, & recap the 2018 ECRI Retreat Outcomes and some aspects of our ECRI'S 2021 Strategic Planning Process.
  - e. History of racism in environmental movement begins with chattel slavery
    - i. Rhode Island had was one of the leaders in the slave trade, and they had more per capita than any other New England state.
    - ii. Environmental movement has been intentionally dominated by white folks/founded by white men who saw "nature/wild spaces" as a place they could escape to from people of color, poor people, women.
      - 1. Big Green orgs have begun to acknowledge these racist forefathers and founders - such as John Muir (Sierra Club), Ding Darling (National Wildlife Federation)
      - 2. Impacts the movement today - including how we view/define our environment
  - f. Learning Videos and Common Language
    - i. Video 1: [The State of Black and Brown America: Vernice Miller-Travis](#) (Toxic Waste and Race in the United States Report)

1. The places where black and brown people live which are intended to harm. Sustained exposure to toxic air pollution has lifelong effects (beginning in utero): disproportional health outcomes and more susceptibility to environmental triggers.
    - a. Example: COVID-19: Worse outcomes for black and brown people (higher likelihood of acquiring COVID-19 virus and dying from it)
      - i. Only 22% of all counties in the United States have majority African American populations, but of these counties, 57% of COVID-19 mortality comes from these counties.
  2. Reflective Questions: 1) What was most impactful to you - a definition or concept that you learned after watching the video clip? 2) How do you see ECRI or your organization applying these values or concepts?
    - a. Comments
      - i. Nicole DiPaolo: The concept of calling green spaces and wild places “the environment”, but we need to broaden that to everywhere where people live and work.
      - ii. Mal Skowron: The distinction made between individual problems and more collective large-scale issues: asthma/other health problems may come with feelings of failure/shame even though the real issue is larger/systematic (the perpetual sighting of fossil fuel infrastructure in low income neighborhoods which leads to poor health outcomes) - systems level thinking
      - iii. Paul Roselli (chat): Denial of Inverenergy power plant; recognize and use my white privilege to fight and work for other communities regardless of location or race.
      - iv. Kai Salem (chat): I was reminded of how closely-linked the environment and public health are-and that race is a driver of inequity no matter the environmental issue. We can't be good environmentalists without also being anti-racist!
    - b. Term: **Environmental Racism** is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color (see slide 8 for full definition)
- ii. Video 2: Non-racist vs. **Anti-racist**:  
[Are you racist? “No” is not a good enough answer - Marlon James](#)
1. Most of us are non-racist: we live by a strict moral code (not being a bigot, not burning crosses, not saying the “N” word) instead doing something about racism
  2. Replace the c with a “p”: Saying “I am not a rapist” does not stop people from getting raped.
  3. It’s not enough to not do the “racist things” - we need to get active
  4. Reflective Questions: 1) What was most impactful to you - a definition or concept that you learned after watching the video clip? 2) How do you see ECRI or your organization applying these values or concepts?
    - a. Priscilla De La Cruz: “Non” = passive versus, “anti” being active
    - b. Kai Salem (chat): I like the climate change parallel a lot! A lot of us know that there are things you can do every day (use less plastic, call legislators, bike/walk instead of drive) to fight the climate crisis, but we might not be accustomed to being actively anti-racist in the same way
    - c. Sue Anderbois (chat): This is a really helpful video. I really took away how “non” is just passive and doesn’t change a thing. Anti makes you take more action.
- iii. Video 3: **Racial Inequity - History & Case Study**:  
[Driving Toward Equity - Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative](#)
1. “Genuine movement for sustainability must include not only the environment, not only the economy, but the three E’s: the environment, the economy, and social equity.” - Carl Anthony
    - a. Sustainability = how these components work together
    - b. Seattle’s Race & Social Justice Initiative

- c. Racial disparities throughout the country - forms of racial segregation, domination and equality we see today are simply not possible without active participation in leadership and government
  - i. Housing example: Government actively and deliberately worked with private realtors to develop on segregated basis. Then in the 1930's/40's, integrated neighborhoods became segregated because of lending and zoning policies - schooling and law enforcement resources reflected these policies. Deep investment in white people across the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2. Reflective Questions: 1) What was most impactful to you - a definition or concept that you learned after watching the video clip? 2) How do you see ECRI or your organization applying these values or concepts?
  - a. Johnathan Berard (chat): If anyone wants to dive deeper on this topic, I highly recommend "The Color of Law" by Richard Rothstein
  - b. Liza Burkin (chat): ^ yes! And PVD Streets / Prov Community Library is [hosting a community discussion](#) of that book later in the month.
  - c. Laura Landen (chat): Redlining is still with us, even if in covert forms like neighborhood associations.
  - d. Mal Skowron (chat): Racism can be upheld by things that seem race neutral, like "protecting the neighborhood" or "preserving property values"
  - e. Priscilla De La Cruz: Intentional imbalance - how do you restore balance sustainably?
  - f. Laura Landen: This is the continuation of redlining. Example of neighborhood association's first right of refusal on property sale.
- iv. Systems Iceberg
  - 1. Identify: events & patterns; Expose: underlying structures; Unearth: mental models, cultural & institutional values
  - 2. Only 10% of icebergs are visible. Requires deeper understanding and increasing leverage of cultural & institutional values to change events & patterns.
- v. Video 4 & 5: [A Conversation With Black Women on Race](#) and [A Conversation With White People on Race](#)
  - 1. Black Women
    - a. Attacks on us come in different, nuanced forms; Internal race issues within own culture vs external race issues vs mothering issue on race = race/being WOC is multi-layered; Questioned for being in a hotel lobby - had to bring in white colleague; hair isn't professional enough, "you are not professional enough" - felt like she could be emotional in response; questioning person in charge of costuming why her hair was just lumped together while other girls had pretty styles - response was "your hair can't do that [you're not good enough, your hair is not good enough]"; maybe I am unattractive, maybe I am a monster - mom says don't listen to that; huge population of Black girls who weren't dating anyone - why? They seem to be attractive, intelligent, ambitious; Once you accept your womaness, that's where power comes from - your perception of self; Father gave me books which he colored the characters with brown crayon; If I had a daughter, I would tell her that she is beautiful because we don't hear that enough in the media; I'd tell my daughter I want you to be happy and find joy - whatever that means for you, not what society wants
  - 2. White People
    - a. It's uncomfortable to talk about race; Feelings of apprehension; I don't want to say anything that would offend anyone; It's a touchy subject, even if you feel like you are on the right side of it; Especially for white people because we don't want to see the racism we hold; Many people's perception on racism is a guy in a robe; Now I understand that it is a system; I want to bring up race in a way that helps my children think there is no difference, but by bringing it up I am suggesting there is a difference; Why is he called black when his skin is brown?; 3<sup>rd</sup> grader realizes not everyone has to

be worried about race; I don't think about being white; I didn't know I had a racial identity and how it shaped my life; Color-blindness approach is held by white people - comes from shame and guilt; weird burden of being a privileged white male; Individual role in the system; I've realized I've never said anything when heard racism jokes & comments; I've only been a beneficiary, wouldn't sound wise to talk about it; I have all these other things - gender, sexual orientation

3. Reflective Questions: 1) What was most impactful to you - a definition or concept that you learned after watching the video clip? 2) How do you see ECRI or your organization applying these values or concepts?
  - a. Laura Landon (chat): what a remarkable contrast in these two videos!
  - b. Sue Anderbois (chat): I'm really struck by the contrast between the "not talking about it" uncomfotability with the white video v. the non v. anti-racist video at the beginning
  - c. Kai Salem: Great job editing of the video with white people by focusing on the discomfort and fear of saying something wrong getting in the way of doing something right at the beginning of the video.
  - d. Paul Roselli (chat): I wonder if there is some inherent bias in the production of these two videos. They are meant to show contrast. Is there a video showing unity of thought, people talking about race easily. Where is the middle ground?
  - e. Barry Schiller (chat): color-blind goal is not just a white goal, it was in the dream of MLK, lets not forget that.
  - f. Ken Filarski: When building inclusive coalitions and relationships, we have to be careful. It's hard to get a long-standing relationship/commitment to things if the people you are talking to are made to feel guilty. We want to embrace people and get people to do things because they want to do something, not because they feel guilty of doing something.
  - g. Priscilla De La Cruz: Agree that the videos are impactful but one thing I have done is feel all the things - part of the process. Feel all the sadness, guilt so you can take a more active role
  - h. Christopher Hamblett (chat): Those two videos are powerful and bring into focus just how deeply race and racism are embedded in American culture and society.
  - i. Amanda Freitas (chat): It's striking that race was constructed by whites and is now something most of us can afford to ignore if we choose/are taught that's best, whereas not talking/thinking about race is absolutely not an option for black and brown people.
  - j. Kai Salem (chat): I don't think the intent here is to make individuals feel guilty but rather unearth the systems we're participating in. We may feel guilt--I certainly do and have, and find it to be a powerful motivator to become a better anti-racist--but I think any guilt we feel is coming from within when we start to recognize our own complicity.
  - k. Barry Schiller (chat): having lived in Jim Crow south and here in RI I'd note that both culturally and individually racism (and misogyny, homophobia, anti-Semitism etc) is not a yes-no question but matter of degree and significant progress can be made without eliminating the problem
  - l. Noreen Inglesi (chat): The videos were very realistic and powerful. Thank you
  - m. Ken (chat): My point is that people do things better and commit themselves with fullness over a longer horizon if they embark on a journey or an initiative with a positive mindset rather than a guilty mind set, whether they feel that guilt themselves or whether a message or feeling of guilt comes from others.
  - n. Liza Burkin (chat): What do you think that looks like in terms of inspiring more white folks to engage in racial justice? I definitely agree, just not sure how to put it into practice

- o. Mal Skowron (chat): Thanks for your comment, Ken! I appreciate your point. We can't be productive coming from a place of guilt. Unfortunately, guilt is the reaction that a lot of white people (including myself) default to when talking about race. It can be used as a deflection of responsibility or action, but it's also an important part of taking that next step to act. Kind of a diversion, but I watched the John Lewis documentary (Good Trouble) over the holiday. It made me think a lot about how staging peaceful protests and marches stoked guilt in white people during the 60s, which eventually inspired action. Guilt can be productive if it leads to action
  - p. Kai (chat): What might an anti-racist environmental movement in RI look like? What issues could we work on?
  - q. Susan Korte (chat): FYI, The RI Center for the Book's book for all Rhode Islanders to read and discuss is an abbreviated version of Ibram X. Kendi's "Stamped from the Beginning: The definitive history of Ideas in America"
  - r. Ken (chat): I work in the concept and practice of ecology, in its fullest sense, not just environment as it is traditionally and popularly considered. In my outlook I have developed the 11 e's of ecology. One of the e's is equality, described as "the way people, an idea, or a place embraces engagement, diversity, access, questions, answers, exploration, and tolerance.
- g. Racial Justice in 2018 ECRI Retreat - [full summary of retreat outcomes](#)
- i. If ECRI was forming today, what would we want it to work on?
    - 1. More compassion & empathy
    - 2. Justice-focused environmental movement centers frontline communities & young people
    - 3. Advocacy that follows the lead of the most impacted communities
  - ii. Overall themes: Emphasize environmental justice ( Fund EJ seats on ExComm; Go to others meetings & sponsor others events; Work with REJC on events)
  - iii. Overall Themes from Discussion of Diversity & Equity in ECRI
    - 1. Facilitate conversations about equity among membership and mobilize members to do more
    - 2. Set clear goals for bridging gaps in communication and supporting EJ
- h. 2021 Equity-based Strategic Planning
- i. In June, ECRI's executive committee [released a Black Lives Matter statement](#) acknowledging climate justice is racial justice, committing ECRI to racial equity principles to ensure our work is inclusive.
  - ii. ECRI-led pre-work for strategic planning process (actual plan creation will begin this year)
    - 1. Goals
      - a. Establish new vision for ECRI's future
      - b. Identify organizational barriers that prevent frontline community members from engaging with ECRI
      - c. Identify & dismantle oppressive practices within our coalition, formalize our anti-racist position, and center environmental justice
      - d. Organize anti-racism training to help our existing member base recognize and dismantle the racist practices embedded within our work
    - 2. Definition of Success ([slides 21 & 22](#) or in the [Request for Proposal](#))
      - a. Establishing a common language: we want to make sure for our equity based strategic planning process, not only do we have a shared foundation and understanding but shared approach to our strategic goals as well.
      - b. Interconnection of how we do our work, how we run the organization, A
      - c. Acknowledge lack of capacity in areas where we need growth and welcoming frontline communities to center those voices throughout internal and external work.

3. Staying the course...
  - a. Other topics to delve deeper into: implicit bias, white privilege, white fragility, Just Providence Framework, Racial equity lens
3. Policy Committee and Climate Crisis Campaign
  - a. RI Legislative session begins tomorrow (1/5) - stay tuned!
  - b. Coffee Hour is January 27<sup>th</sup> - hoping for 3pm start time on Zoom
    - i. Interactive, topical breakout rooms with chance to talk with legislators
  - c. In February, we will officially launch the 2021 Climate Crisis Campaign/priority bills with a Press Conference and a Climate Advocate Training
    - i. Climate Crisis Campaign members are working on outreach to other organization as well as narrative language
4. Reports from ECRI fiscal agency projects
  - i. Green Infrastructure Coalition: Nothing to report
  - ii. School Recycling Club: Nothing to report
5. Announcements
  - a. Media coverage on ECRI Green Report Card and upcoming priorities
  - b. Nicole DiPaolo: RENEW Coalition launch is next week ([Share on Facebook](#) | [Register to Attend](#))
    - i. Coalitions pushes for equity-centered legislation
    - ii. PolComm meeting will be discussing framework and/or legislative endorsement; will then need to make full board recommendation
  - c. Katherine: Reading of The letter from the Birmingham Jail - Friday January 15<sup>th</sup> by the Westerly-Pawcatuck Peace and Justice Group
  - d. Climate Action Rhode Island upcoming Two-Part series: How a (Climate) Bill Becomes a Law ([Register Here](#))
    - i. Part I: Wednesday January 6, 7pm: How A (Climate) Bill Becomes A Law – Rhode Island Edition with Kai Salem
    - ii. Part II: Tuesday January 26, 7pm: Panel Presentation: Key Climate Bills For 2021 with Amy Moses, Director, Conservation Law Foundation RI, Joshua Kestin, Policy Director, Renew New England, and Kai Salem, Policy Coordinator, Green Energy Consumers Alliance
  - e. Ken Filarski: Named national Chair of the American Institute of Architects Disaster Assistance Committee.
    - i. Aware of the equity issues and not only disaster recovery, but in disaster response, but in rebuilding and the impact it has on on a variety of communities in our society.
6. Nicole DiPaolo makes motion to Adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm.