

Environment Council of Rhode Island



ECRI Annual Meeting: Building Resilient and Equitable Communities After Covid-19 via Zoom Video Conference
June 1, 2020, 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

We would like to thank our sponsors for supporting this years gathering:

- **Acadia Center**
- **Audubon Society of Rhode Island**
- **Conservation Law Foundation**
- **Empire Loan**
- **Green Energy Consumers Alliance**
- **Meg Kerr/Bob Vanderslice**
- **Providence Friends Meeting in RI**
- **Save The Bay**
- **SOLUTIONS™ SERVICE SYSTEMS, Inc.**
- **The Nature Conservancy**
- **U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse**
- **West Bay Land Trust**

Attendees:

68 participants. Only attendees whose names appeared in the participant list were recorded. More attendees were on the Zoom call anonymously.

Priscilla De La Cruz, Mal Skowron, Joanna Detz, Jim Vincent, Alyssa Lemire, Andrea Bogomolni, Amelia Rose, Anthony Tohmé, Alice Hourihan, Bryce DuBois, Dana Goodman, Daniela O'Regan, Dannie Ritchie, David Perzynski, Dawn King, Elizabeth Goldberg, Emma Cotnoir, Eugenia Marks, Gayle Gifford, Hank Webster, James Crowley, James Truslow, Jeanine Silversmith, Jerry Elmer, Jo Lee, Jonathan Berard, Jonah Thomas, Jonesy Mann, Kai Salem, Katherine Gibson, Kevin O'Neill, Laura Caro Ruiz, Laura Sullivan, Leah Bamberger, Lisa Maloney, Lola Herrera-Ximenez, Marcela Betancur, Meg Kerr, Nessa Richman, Nicole Tingle, Paul Beaudette, Paige Therien, Patti McAlpine, Peter Trafton, Rachel Calabro, Raffini, Richard Laferriere, Raobert Hart, Rupert Friday, Sue Anderbois, Sue Korte, Angie Koziera, Tricia Jedele, Tyson Bottenus, Yasmin Yacoby, Greg Gerritt, Judee Burr

Agenda:

1. President's welcome and introduction (Priscilla De La Cruz)
2. Vote on new executive committee officers for ECRI (Nicole DiPaolo)
3. Introduction of Panel (Joanna Detz, moderator)
4. Panel Discussion (Marcella, Amelia Rose, Jim Vincent)

Watch the Zoom Video [here](#).

Meeting Minutes

Priscilla welcomes all and opens the meeting at 5pm.

Nicole DiPaolo from the nominating committee reads slate of officers nominated for next year.

The slate of nominees:

President: Priscilla De la Cruz
Past President: Jerry Elmer
Past President: Paul Beaudette
Secretary: Paige Therien
Treasurer: Paul Beaudette
VP Communications Co-Chair: Susan Korté
VP Communications Co-Chair: Malwina Skowron
VP Development: Everett Pope
VP Membership: Eugenia Marks
VP Policy: Kai Salem
NWF Representative: Greg Gerritt
NWF Alt Representative: Priscilla De la Cruz
Nominating Committee Member: Nicole DiPaolo
Nominating Committee Member: Everett Pope

A vote is held to approve officers. All votes from present ECRI members were cast in favor of the slate, no abstentions or oppositions were noted in the chat box. Motion passes.

The Panel Discussion

Moderator: Joanna Detz, ecoRI news

Panelists:

- Marcela Betancur from the Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University
- Amelia Rose from Groundwork Rhode Island
- Jim Vincent from NAACP of Providence

Question 1: What inequities is Covid exposing? What resilience have you seen?

Marcela: Central Falls is seeing a big crisis with a large percentage of the community being affected by Covid 19. There are underlying risk factors exacerbating the impact of the pandemic in this community: homes with many occupants, homes that are structurally not safe, lack of access to medical care for foreign-born and first-generation Latinx people, and more. This community has already been disenfranchised.

Amelia: Discussion of the challenges of being an employer: different risks for inside work verses outside work. Using the Paycheck Protection Program to keep people employed and not have to lay anyone off. Covid 19 has also unveiled existing inequities – example of an employee whose license has been suspended, compounding layered systemic problems that prevent people like him from getting out of the criminal justice system and increasing their wealth, security, and opportunities available to them.

Jim Vincent: Communities of color are being impacted more aggressively & disproportionately by the virus. Essential workers have to choose between going to work and getting sick. The paycheck protection program did not help many small businesses owned by people of color in RI. It's an ironic feeling that it's taken a pandemic to make underlying issues in communities of color be talked about.

Question 2: What is your vision for what the future could look like?

Marcela: Work programs and investments made into small or large businesses have to have an equity lens. Communities with existing vulnerabilities are going to be impacted worse. How are we going to take lessons from this pandemic and take them forward?

Amelia: Lots of ideas being shared because of the pandemic. We need to decouple a person's basic worth from their employment. People have human rights and deserve to eat and to live without having paid employment. Policy examples: health insurance, universal childcare programs, and more. A stronger and universal social safety net. Also recognizing existing social inequities and working to address those through programs.

Jim: Ultimately, we need a Marshall Plan through an equity lens. In the meantime, we need to keep people safe from the virus with masks and health advice. Jobs are being lost – NAACP maintains a job board. Also helping small businesses get access to funds. We need to keep people in their homes and apartments – NAACP is working with the mayor to create a rental assistance program. Education is also a huge economic driver and needs to be prioritized. Also getting people registered to vote. There are serious disparities between communities of color and white communities in Rhode Island and they need to be addressed.

Question 3: Can RI muster the political will to implement some of the changes you're looking for?

Jim: RI has a huge deficit. The Governor gets it and the congressional delegation gets it, so we need to get more resources into the state. There is also structural racism in our communities that is preventing people from getting work and gathering wealth. Providence Public Schools is one of the worst in the country – everyone needs to get an education so that our communities can thrive.

Amelia: Rhode Island has a strong local food movement already, which helps connect people with farmers and food during this crisis and others.

Marcela: People will have to be courageous in all parts of government and sometimes it's hard to believe that our political leaders can be that. Privilege is hard to challenge. Change is slow but can happen.

Audience Questions:

Panelists discuss children going to school near highway pollution, economic opportunities outside of consumerist social structures, wages for essential workers and all workers.

Closing Remarks:

Marcela: We all should look at racial inequities that exist.

Jim: Wage increases are critically important for workers and will help small workers.

Amelia: Responding to a question about public transportation and covid-19 – there's a tension between covid safety and environmentally-focused "sharing." We as an environmental community need to figure out how to advocate for better ways of living and focus on systemic problems.

Priscilla closes the meeting at 6:05pm.

Watch the Zoom Video [here](#).