



Monthly Board Meeting

Monday, February 6, 2022 | 5 PM – 6:30 PM | Virtual on Zoom

ECRI Office Contact: info@environmentcouncilri.org

Attendees

Priscilla De La Cruz, Barbara Sullivan-Watts, Barry Schiller, Bina Gehres, Chris Kearns, Chris Gaynor, Clare Brown, Diane Hill, Eugenia Marks, Everett Pope, Greg Gerritt, Greg Ohadoma, Hal Walker, Jeanine Silversmith, Jessie Kingston, Jim Kingston, Kate Sayles, Katherine Gibson, Kenneth Filarski, Mary Lhowe, Meg Curran, Nisa Pistachio, Paige Therien, Peter Trafton, Rafeed Hussain, Timmons Roberts, Seth Handy, Sheila Dormody, Sue Anderbois, Susan Korte, Susan Marcus, Tori Scott, Nicholas Ucci, Terry Grey, Norren Inglesi, Amanda Barker, Val Reishuk, Erica Hammond, Fancis Pullaro, Jacqueline Ferriera, Barbara Walsh, Logan Torres

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions 5:05 PM - [December Meeting Minutes](#)
 2. Presentations 5:05 PM
 - Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Director Terry Gray - Office of Energy Resources, Commissioner Chris Kearns
 - Q&A by 5:35 PM
 3. Office and Administrative Report/Presidents Report 6:00 PM
 - o - Environmental Justice & ECRI debrief and next steps
 - o - Implementation of Equity-Based Strategic Plan
 - o - Bylaws committee
 4. Policy Committee Report 6:15 PM
 5. Other Announcements 6:25 PM
- Adjourn by 6:30 PM

Minutes

- 1) Welcome and Introductions
 - a) **Peter Trafton made first motion to approve the [December 2022 Meeting Minutes](#). Greg Gerritt seconds. No abstention or opposition. December 2022 meeting minutes approved.**
- 2) Presentations 5:05-6:05 pm
 - a) Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Director Terry Gray
 - i) Highlights from past 6 months: New wetlands Regulations, Completion of 2022 Update to RI Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan, significant progress on bulkheads and docks at Galilee,

response to Spotted Lanternfly, key new hires, and hiring for additional climate policy position in final stages

ii) Governors FY 23 Budget

(a) Highlights: 15 new positions on staff; increases for Local Agriculture and Seafood Program, Water Safety Initiative and Litter Initiative

(b) Follow up: Updated DEM strategic plan; grant programs for 2022 bond; continued investment in galilee; Advanced Clean Cars regulations; regulations for dam operations with large impoundments; PFAS regulatory standards for groundwater/study of potential sources; \$300K line item for urban tree work; Environmental Justice grant application; Climate Response grants; planning for 2025 Climate Strategy (Takeaways from 2023 plan: engage businesses and municipalities, look at workforce development, just transition and climate education); Initiation of Youth Environmental Academy

b) Office of Energy Resources, Commissioner Chris Kearns

i) Highlights of past 6 months: four new hires; [EV Car Rebate program](#); [eBike Program](#)

ii) Highlights of next 6 months: FY24 State budget (Article 5 – extension of the State Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy Fund Programs, Utility Shareholder Incentive and Administrator, and securing dedicated EC4 funding); Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure Program; Utility Grid Resiliency Program; Home Electrification and Hope for Homes Programs; 600 to 1,00 Megawatt Offshore Wind RFP; Affordable Solar Access Pathways Administrative RFP; Launch of State Heat Pump Program; Energy Efficiency conservation Block Grant Funds to Municipalities;

c) Q&A

i) Transportation is a big source of GHG emissions - what is being planned (beyond EVs) in the transportation sector to lower emissions?

(a) DEM: Increase investments in electrifying school buses – working with EPA in Providence, Westerly and Block Island. Keeping an eye on RIPTA's electrification work. Received a large amount of feedback/ideas on alternative modes of transportation through the 2023 GHG Reduction Plan update process – want to collaborate with other agencies.

ii) How is federal funding such as IRA funds going to be rolled out? Will you be using RI Infrastructure Bank or setting something else up?

(a) OER: Currently in conversation with RI Infrastructure Bank to utilize their loan programs

iii) What is the plan to fund the EC4 and its boards if the energy efficiency funds are not approved in the legislature?

(a) DEM: Currently looking at project eligibility criteria under IRA funding opportunities. Funding is really needed for FY 2024 & 2025 so we will have more opportunities to get funding (optimistic)

iv) Youth education programs are great – but what about adults? How do we keep everyone alongside us, engaged, involved, informed, and energized?

- (a) DEM: Communications for climate and environment needs to be a bigger priority for the state. DEM is going to be better educating seasonal workforce (400-500 people a year) on their work and why it is important.
- v) Municipalities also need education – especially when it comes to environmental justice and transportation. What is the role of the state?
 - (a) DEM: We are invited to a conversation with municipalities and school districts through RI Dept. of Education to discuss the social value of green space.
- vi) Are there any options for conserving energy for residents who are under the restrictions of a condo association?
 - (a) OER: Residential solar incentive programs like the Federal Investment Tax credits. Environmental trade labor groups may bring solar sighting reforms/solar legislation for this upcoming legislative session. Always happy to engage with condo associations.
- vii) Good news about e-bike program, but can it be expanded to ordinary bikes which are even more affordable and the closest to a "zero-emission" vehicle? What is being planned beyond
 - (a) No plans but can be considered.
- viii) Will MBTA be electrified?
 - (a) Neither has heard of any plans
- ix) We are seeing new opposition groups seeking to stop or slow offshore wind, which is key to our climate action. What are your plans to address this and the misinformation?
 - (a) Discussions are happening. Room for national leadership – Janet Coit is doing that work with NOAA

3) Office and Administrative Report

- a) Environmental Justice & ECRI debrief and next steps
 - i) Fiscal agency work has really picked up and ECRI is in good standing to offer support. We have consulted with RI Foundation for guidance on funding opportunities. We have also talked to a couple consultants about scope of work for looking at fiscal agency policies and procedures and then come up with an action plan to streamline the work.
 - ii) Discussion in December 2022 with ~20 people about ECRI's role in environmental justice, perspectives on our work on developing an equity based strategic plan, what it takes to become an anti-racist organization. Takeaways: we need more dialogue around issue of environmental and climate justice and we need more training and facilitation.
 - (a) Jamie Rhodes will guide us next month, when we convene in March through a debriefing exercise and share more information.
- b) Implementation of Equity-Based Strategic Plan
 - i) Met with National Wildlife Federation, who is interested in support ECRI reassess the vision and mission statement
- c) Bylaws committee is being developed. More information to come.

4) Policy Committee Report

- a) Coffee Hour was on January 31st. Over 100 people joined us virtually. Notes were taken in breakout groups, which will be circulated.

5) Other Announcements

a) Next Meetings:

- i) Policy Committee: February 13, 2023
- ii) Executive Committee: February 14, 2023
- iii) Full Board Meeting: March 6, 2023

- b) City of Providence and the Racial Environmental Justice Committee will be hosting anti-racism trainings – dates TBD
- c) Nature Video Festival is on February 26; 2 pm at Rhode Island College (snacks provided!)
- d) RIEEA's 2023 Summit is March 4 from 8am to 12pm: <https://www.rieea.org/programs/annual-summit/>
- e) Transit Equity Day is rescheduled for February 6th in Kennedy Plaza
- f) Notable Work's is accepting poetry submission for Voices of the Earth Volume 3; as well as any updates to organization's listings that will be in the book: <https://notableworks.org/>
- g) Cranston City Council Planning Commission – Tuesday 2/5 (solar siting concerns); Warwick Planning and Review Board – Wednesday 2/6 (Development along Pawtuxet River)

Adjourn at 6:24 PM