

Transcript

November 18, 2024, 5:03PM

□ **Barrett, Kim** started transcription

BK **Barrett, Kim** 0:05

We're gonna get started.

This is our public meeting of Vermont's environment environmental Justice Advisory Council meeting, and so the Advisory Council will be meeting from 12:00 to 1:30.

And then folks in the interagency committee will be meeting from 1:30 to 3:00.

All right.

So thank you to you all for coming.

It looks like we may have one member of the Community here, so we are.

Thankful that you're here as well.

And so we have Community agreements that we normally.

share and agree to.

Let's see.

Jennifer, you have your hand up.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 3:07

Yes, can.

Can we just be clear?

Like if we don't have quorum or we do have quorum and like do we just start without quorum or how does this process work?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 3:21

Yeah. So we don't have corn right now to make any decisions, but this meeting is really more just like a level setting. And so we don't need quorum to move forward.

And we're tracking who's here.

And so we'll, you know, we'll see who who comes.

Yeah. Do you have any other questions about that?

I think cool.

Yeah. Today's meeting was really just in response to feedback that we've gotten and really just wanting to get on the same page kind of moving forward, so.

All right, so we what?

I was gonna say is that we're gonna go over our community agreements.

Normally we have different folks read each one, but because this is a truncated meeting.

There's Mariana.

We're gonna ask that.

Maybe one person read all of the advance and then.

We get consensus from everyone.

Is is there any volunteer to read all the agreements?

RH rich holschuh 4:38

Willing to read that.

BK Barrett, Kim 4:40

Thank you.

RH rich holschuh 4:44

We'll start right at the top.

Be present with yourself and one another. Be present with your body and feelings. If you need to take a break to take care of yourself, please do be present for one another by listening deeply.

Calling in and calling out.

Assume best intent, but attend to impact.

We can stop things that are being said that are hurtful and be curious and create a space for learning.

Those tools include using oops or Ouch to indicate a pause is needed.

Expect.

And accept non closure.

We're likely to leave here feeling 100% ready to go or to have everything on our agenda wrapped up, especially if we are committed to moving at the speed of trust.

Center respect.

Be respectful, intentional, and work to build trust and create a safe and inviting space.

Share verbal and other space mindfully. Consider the balance of taking and making space. Move up and move back.

Tools to do this include the acronym WAIT.

And vocalizing support for another person's comment without repeating the same points that have already been made.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 6:00

OK, rich. And we just wanna get thumbs up from everyone that we agreed to be agreements and then we'll move forward.

Yeah, I think that was everyone.

Juliet Birch 6:23

Awesome. So thanks everyone for joining today and being so understanding as we've sort of changed the typical routine for this particular meeting.

So just to walk through the agenda really quickly.

Today's meeting is, as I said, very different from usual. We have heard feedback from Advisory Council members that.

There are some conversations that you guys would like to be having, as you know, just one isolated.

And so we changed our schedule to accommodate that. And we also reached out to you all via e-mail to get some suggestions for some conversations that you'd like to be having amongst yourselves. And so this agenda is really a reflection of that.

And I'll also note that.

This agenda is a lot more kind of stripped back and we really want this to be more driven by you all discussion wise.

And so you'll see that as we head further into some of these topics. But today we will start with a conversation about attendance and participation. And as all of you know, we, Kim and I drafted a letter to you all to kind of give some of our thought.

To close out this year of 2024 of public meetings, which is, you know, our first year with you all is EJ coordinators.

And to assess some of the ways that we've tried to.

You know, improve your experiences, Advisory Council members and to hear and respond to the feedback we've received from you all.

So hopefully you've all gotten a chance to take a look at that and we are looking forward to taking some time during this meeting to talk about ways that we can collaborate further to continue to make progress in the.

Implementation of the law.

We'll also take some time for public comment.

Around 12:45 or so.

And then we will move into another section of the agenda that is centered around some of the suggestions we've received from you all, including coming to a common understanding of what environmental justice truly means to all of us as Council members and making some intention setting some int.

For our work under the law next year and then we'll wrap up around 1:30.

So.

If everyone's OK with that agenda.

You can please give me a thumbs up that says you consent to that agenda for today.

Awesome. I'm seeing some thumbs.

I think that was everyone.

Jennifer, are you? Are you OK with that agenda for today?

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 9:21

I'm not. Yes, as long as there's, like, open conversation and wait, it's not over over agenda'd then yes, consenting.

BK **Juliet Birch** 9:32

Yeah, totally this.

Meeting is totally different from some of the ones that we've had in the past.

This is gonna be mostly driven by you all so.

Definitely gonna meet that need.

And then we also have here the approval of the April 29th, 2024 minutes since we don't quorum today, I'm just gonna write down a note that we'll do this in another meeting.

So we'll just pass right by that.

But thank you all for being here today and being willing to.

Participate in what's gonna be, you know, a slightly different sort of feel than usual.

So starting off with attendance and participation, as I said, we sent you an e-mail with a letter from us.

Just kind of pertaining to some of the things that we've tried to instill as norms to help encourage and, you know, make your experience better as Advisory Council members.

But we also know that there's definitely room for improvement. And so we.

Wanted to just kind of offer that as a starting or jumping off point if there's any reactions to that letter?

That we sent you all. But we're also totally, you know, happy to turn the floor over to you all and have whatever discussion you wanna have around this topic today as well. So.

Yeah.

Kim Barrett 11:00

Yeah, we can just hold it here for a second and see if folks have any feedback. Like Juliet said, just opening the floor to you all, really.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 11:23

I could start.

I've read the letter. I'm sorry.

I'll just wait my head, OK?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 11:31

Go ahead.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 11:33

Yeah, I read.

I read the letter and.

Like some initial reactions around, like scheduling meetings.

Honestly, it's really hard when meetings are scheduled so far in advance.

So I was.

I saw that the solution identified was to schedule to meet them in further in advance, but to me like that just doesn't really, you know, align with how how life works and you know our work, my work schedule, parenting schedule, that kind of thing, so.

To me it's more about like the checking.

Around like you know, I I usually like to between two to four weeks before I can plan things, but further less than that, I really can't because of just how life works.

So to me that's sort of one of the things I wonder is if these are planned maybe?

You know, there's, I don't know, quite how they're picked, but but they you know

that maybe if the time if we could check in on whether the times work for people,

you know, two weeks in advance or three weeks in advance, that might be a better

way to.

Schedule meetings.

That was one of my first reactions.

To the letter.

And I I just.

I've definitely had a hard time engaging with these meetings because it seems like we're always with the Interagency committee, and it seems like our agendas are already like really preset and we're kind of just launched into conversation that.

Yeah, we've never like, I think we.

My reflection on the being on this Council, I feel like we had one good meeting and it was our first meeting.

And after that, we haven't really allowed.

There was like one or two times we were allowed to just sort of be together and in our first meeting we even talked about like.

Just started to discuss whether we want to be facilitated, like whether you know we we can self coordinate and facilitate ourselves. And I feel like there there hasn't really been.

Space to do any of that, so that might be, I don't know.

That's how where I feel like we we don't.

Have any kind of cohesion or relationship as a Council?

BK **Juliet Birch** 13:59

Thank you, Jennifer, for that feedback. I think I just wanted to ask a question 1st about scheduling, since you brought that up first.

We are hoping to kind of talk a lot about ways that we can do better for next year so that we can set ourselves up for that. And so in terms of the like advanced scheduling, I hear what you're saying about, you know, having scheduling done so far.

In advance, you know, life changes a lot in a couple of months and so that can be. Really hard to commit to.

And so I'm wondering some of the feedback we got in the very beginning when we were scheduling meetings like the I think first probably 3 meetings that we scheduled this year, we did schedule about two to four weeks in advance and we got the feedback from a lot.

Of folks that that actually.

Didn't feel great for them in terms of being able to clear their schedule. And so I'm wondering if there's a way that we can come to a compromise about.

When scheduling feels good and how scheduling feels good.

And the other thing that I just wanted to talk about is a way that we were scheduling things in advance for the last couple of meetings. I think like August through November, we scheduled through use of a doodle poll where folks reflected on their availability. And so we.

Chose.

Based off of your responses, we chose the meeting dates that had a majority availability and again life changes a lot over a couple of weeks and a couple of months. So we totally understand that.

And so I'm wondering.

You know what can we do to get your availability and get an understanding of what works and what feels good to help kind of accommodate everybody's needs?

So if there are any thoughts on that, I'd be interested. But also I see that there are hands we can speak to really anything.

It doesn't have to just be about the scheduling there, but I see hands.

Kim Barrett

Zoraya, your hands up first.

ZS **Zoraya she/her** 16:10

Yeah, I I agree.

And I don't know why.

I usually don't mind things being like you're never gonna get everyone. That's there's no perfect scheduling thing, but there's. I feel like there's definitely been times.

Maybe it's like also that we've just had lag time between when we fill out the poll and when it gets on our calendar 'cause I think that's been part of my problem too, is that by the time it comes on our calendar, I've already booked other things.

At that time.

So I think there's no perfect.

Scheduling system. I think having regular times is problematic 'cause that if one person that's a hard time for, it'll always be a hard time for them.

I do think I think 2 weeks is too short. I think somewhere between four and six weeks for notice is better.

Yeah, those are just my thoughts.

I didn't have a whole lot of response to to that other than I think sometimes we're probably giving our availability longer out than it is scheduled. And then?

The other thought.

Is the facilitation stuff.

Is I actually.

I feel like we floundered a little bit.

I I feel like at some point we're trying to more.

I appreciate.

I guess the facilitated agendas and feeling like I'm like, oh, I'm supposed to like, give my input here and this is the. So I would hope we don't strike too far away from just being really open-ended 'cause I thought we for a while were just like FL.

Wondering on like what do we do next?

And I I do like at least feeling like we're moving some stuff forward.

In addition to, yeah, in addition to having room for conversation, so I wouldn't.

I wouldn't switch the pendulum all the way back the other way.

Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 18:02

Thank you, Karla.

Did you have something to share?

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 18:12

Karla Raimundi, the Interagency Committee member.

Representing the agency of Natural Resources, I did have something to that I wanted to share, but I think I will.

I will withhold my comment until all Advisory Council members who want to speak.

Have the opportunity to do so to do so. Thank you.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 18:41

Hello.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 18:47

Yes, hello everybody. How are you?

This is Mariana.

I'm an Advisory Council member.

Sorry, I was a little late.

I my thoughts about these two questions.

Are. Initially I thought that anticipation and the scheduling ahead of time would work better to block my calendar and prioritize these meetings.

As an and also.

Both live at the same time both realities.

It's also true for everyone.

But even if you schedule ahead of time, things change.

And things happened.

That is the nature of life and more of that will be perhaps.

Coming in the in the next month.

As things change, administration change.

So we we will be all shifting and changing so.

I am also happy to schedule meetings within two to four weeks ahead of time with a doable poll or something like that if that is best for everyone.

It doesn't mean that scheduling one year ahead of time will assured anybody to be here. And like, like Soraya said, there's no perfection and we're all doing our best.

And in terms of facilitation?

I do feel good about.

How this? I mean it takes time to feel good around something and become familiar.

So for me, all this time that at the beginning this was very uncomfortable and unfamiliar, and now I am falling into this place in which I kind of know who's behind this little squares and I it feels good that there's feedback about the agenda.

I think it'll be a lot on me, particularly if the facilitation and the decision of the agenda and that is on our side.

Or like yeah, I'm not exactly sure when Jennifer said that she, like, facilitate within ourselves is just more like a closed conversation.

But yeah.

I'm a little.

Perhaps I need to think a little bit more about the facilitation and and how things are going in terms of agenda setting. So far I thought that it was going well for me.

I became used to this setting and that's fine for me for now, but I'm open to other things too.

RH

rich holschuh 21:27

Hello everybody.

Rich for the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs Council member.

I'll just respond to the letter right now.

I guess that's what we're doing.

I appreciate the fact that you sent this out, that you, you you took the time to put this together.

I recognize that as coordinators that you're you're trying to handle the situation and and find ways to work with it.

I think we're still.

Struggling a little bit and that's why we're having this meeting.

As far as meeting dates, when when they're sent out well in advance, I just accept accept all of them and I put them on my calendar and and then I try to make them because they're already blocked out.

I try not to double book occasionally that happens because life is life.

Things come up. So, so be it.

It happens to all of us.

So the the way.

The way it is right now is fine.

Doodle poles make me crazy.

Way too many boxes and circles and checkmarks and.

It, but I I don't have a strong opinion one way or another.

I'll just try to be here.

Turn the method to contact and partner emails. Just do not work for me.

It's it's I. I think it's a shared problem.

Being outside of state government.

I don't know.

It it, it's definitely woven into logging into teams and teams is already problematic and when you throw a partner e-mail at it gets even worse for some reason.

So I come in under my my my work e-mail, but I mean I usually manage to make it in.

Sometimes I don't.

So that that works just fine.

Meeting locations. I'll use this opportunity to to concur with Jennifer.

At the very first meeting we had was the best meeting I've been to. It was in person.

We were talking to each other face to face.

I understand that that, that remote meetings serve a a very good purpose and sometimes I can't because I'm way down here in the corner of of the state. I can't make it to person to in person meetings.

I appreciate the effort.

I do prefer in person meetings, but you know, back to the fact that the first meeting was the one that that.

Worked the best for me and and apparently for Jennifer.

After that first meeting where we were starting to get to know who each other, who who we were, and why we were there.

I frankly are getting.

I'm getting more and more lost.

I I am not part of this process and I think the fall off and attendance could reflect that as a shared feeling.

We have a law that we're going through with its requirements and I think the folks who who are are staffing this.

And the folks who are inside government for the agencies have.

Some grasp of that because it's their jobs. The rest of us.

Gosh, I I'm having a hard time, I really AM.

Deadlines come and deadlines go, and I I don't know what's going on.

Umm.

I don't know what else to say.

I don't try.

Not I don't wanna make you guys feel bad that this is on me, but I'm. I'm lost in the in the legislative process, and I mean, I understand legislative processes.

I'm rambling here.

I just want you to know that something's not working and I don't know what it is. Engagement with the communities I represent.

I guess the simple thing I could say is that if I don't understand this, I can't convey what what's going on to my people.

It's just jargon to them.

It's another law. It's another process.

What do these words mean?

It's it's tough.

And I have great concerns that.

Mariana touched on this a tiny bit.

This the the state of Vermont took a whole bunch of these type of initiatives on all at once in one year basically.

And I see many of them which I either attend or or my.

My colleagues attend.

Having a hard time, they can't get off the ground. They have attendance issues.

And with the roll over in the national government and the state state legislature.

I'm really concerned what's gonna happen with these things.

I'm sure you guys are too.

I'm just, you know, speaking the obvious.

I would like to do good work with all of you, so I I appreciate the intentions and I'll I'll stop there.

Thank you.

BK

Barrett, Kim 26:58

Thank you, Rich. Yeah, just kind of reflecting on what's come up.

One thing I can say is I'm I'm grateful that folks are also sharing.

Not just what works for you in terms of scheduling, but what your workflow looks like.

You know 'cause, there are some folks who have said we really do need like 3 months in advance and hearing that some folks, you know it two to four weeks works better.

So I wonder if there's room to.

Both of those things to honor that.

There were a few.

Maybe two or three.

Who specifically requested having meetings scheduled? You know, like maybe three to four months out.

Out and then also find a way to honor that other folks need.

Meeting scheduled in a shorter time frame.

And then the other thing that came to mind as well.

And and Rich, I appreciate your thought about Doodle polls and the check Marks and all the boxes and everything.

It's it's a lot to look at.

And we also kind of rely on those polls. And so if we part of the reason why there's a lag sometimes between when we send poll out and then when we.

Send the meeting out is where we're not getting responses.

And so.

If there are other ways that work better for collectively getting that information.

Let us know.

But you know, we do rely on those on those polls and I think another thing too that would be helpful feedback from you is if you for example.

You know, accept the meeting, but you know, maybe.

Within a two to four week time frame that you can only come for the first hour and a half or maybe the last hour. Just shooting us an e-mail and letting us know that would be helpful because then we can factor that into the agenda. Factor that into.

Any like time sensitive decisions that need to be made in those types of things?

So just sharing a little bit about, you know how we can work with what you're sharing and then also?

You know what you can do to also support us in supporting you.

Do you wanna talk about meeting location?

Juliet Birch

Yeah, sure.

So just to take a step back before talking about meeting locations, another thing that I think is coming up a lot that you mentioned, Rich.

Part of the reason why we're we may not be getting as kind of fast responses to the doodle polls I'm presuming is related to this.

Like, it's really hard to communicate via the partner emails, and it's also just generally not everybody even likes e-mail.

No, I don't prefer it.

And so something to just throw out there for folks is that, you know, there are some members of the Council who have said to us that they're more comfortable communicating over text or communicating over phone call.

And so while we want to communicate via e-mail, to have things like on public record and to make sure that things are in writing, yes, they're asking if we can take stop sharing the screen. Oh yes.

Yep.

You can lose your train of thought.

Now I can see you all.

Crazy how that works when you can see people's faces when you talk to them. Hi

everyone.

Yeah. So I think you know, if I know that some folks would rather have like boundaries of who has their phone number or who texts them for what reason, things like that.

But if there are better ways of communicating with you, all that are more preferred than e-mail totally just let us know, because we really want to just meet you where you're at.

And then in terms of meeting locations?

That's that's a big that's a big kind of hurdle to jump.

I know from my perspective, like we tried to, as we said in the letter, we tried to schedule meetings in Middlebury and Rutland in Bennington to just try and have more variety of where in the state we're just putting the pin on the map.

And it hasn't totally worked out entirely.

And we love we're we're going to give it another go next year, of course.

But we really would love feedback from you guys on.

What locations are most feasible?

Knowing that no one location is gonna be feasible to every single person 'cause, we're from all over the state.

But another important thing that I think isn't is something that we should think about when it comes to meeting locations is also how to get members of the public to show up, to give public comment, to engage with the work that we're doing.

And so that's another thing that we wanna think about when it comes to suggesting potential meeting locations is like you know where?

There are communities.

Who? Who want to be in touch with our work?

So we'd love to collaborate on that.

And, Karla, I see your hand.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 32:17

Hi, good afternoon, everyone.

Karla Raimundi Interagency Committee member representing the Agency of Natural Resources let me lower my hand here.

Yeah, I have several comments based on.

What you have shared up to this point?

And I think I have just.

A comment.

That comes from like a really far away. Look at the feedback and what's been part of the conversation and is that there are recommendations and comments that are intention with with other comments. So for example.

The hyper facilitation.

Comment, Jennifer, that you shared with us.

For me, is intent is intention with the desire to self govern more?

And we've had conversations with Advisory Council members regarding.

The importance of having a self governing body.

So that decisions can be made internal to the Advisory Council, somewhat independent of the environmental justice coordinators and the Agency of Natural Resources.

And the feedback that we received is that that is not necessarily the approach.

That would best alleviate the concern for hyper facilitation.

And so we've revisited that question over and over and have been exploring the suggestion that Soraya provided to do a body system.

We've attempted to that have to have that conversation to sort of like address.

The independence that we've been receiving as an important part of the work that the Advisory Council is looking to do.

And yet we have really not received significant.

Like engagement or really like.

Engagement to and responses to the questions that have been asked around.

The body system, that's where I provided.

And so I see a lot of tension.

In some of the feedback and I think what is particularly.

Important is that we're all dealing with.

An incredible amount of work that needs to get done.

This law intends to center the work.

Around the communities that are represented in the Council.

There are challenges that are preventing.

Us to do the work the way that it was intended, and when conversations are had around how to troubleshoot, mitigate, investigate alternatives to improve the way that this work is doing.

There's feedback that's provided in public meetings and then when follow-ups is required via the use of Microsoft forms.

The participation gets reduced and there are structural barriers that we are mindful of, but in order for us to do this work, we and I and I hear what rich you mentioned, there are definitely challenges and that's why we're having this conversation. If this is the last convers.

Of the.

Of the of the year.

But I just don't see how.

Right now, given the dynamics.

There can be a space.

Jennifer and I'm looking to you to brainstorm.

How we can provide an opportunity for more?

For a more.

Self determined.

Approach to the implementation of the deliverables when the feedback that we get regularly is.

This is confusing work. When we try to, you know, have those conversations, then the feedback is we don't know each other.

We need to engage better.

We provide opportunities for in person meetings and hybrid meetings and then.

You know, attendance is very limited for in person, so it's really a struggle.

And I believe wholeheartedly that we all want the same we want an effective, efficient implementation of the deliverables of this law that are centered on marginalized, underserved communities in Vermont. And in order to do this, we need to identify what the challenges are and commit to this work.

In a very radical way.

Because I developing a real concern that we are not going to be able to perform the mandates of this law in the way that will best serve Vermonters. And I I am really wanting to hear from you, you know, regarding scheduling, we got feedback.

Let's schedule ahead of time.

We did schedule the ahead of time.

That was not dispositive of the concern.

The partner e-mail.

I understand that it is very difficult and not necessarily user friendly and intuitive and it's like handling 2 emails at the same time. But we have to ensure compliance with public records law.

And just ensure that we can.

We can respond to any concerns that members of the public have without having to. I'm going to personal emails.

You know the in person versus virtual.

The first meeting was mandatory in person.

We received feedback that it's good to have touch points throughout the year that are in person, but the mandatory component did not seem to resonate.

Representation has been an important aspect of this work.

And, Rich, you mentioned representation and the ability of council members to represent effectively.

The the the interest and the needs of the communities that you represent in attention to that we've initiated conversations about providing support for community engagement and we attempted to create a community engagement, public participation task group and we had those conversations. And then when we asked for members.

For that, unfortunately, we didn't get.

That you know, as many volunteers and we were hoping for.

So the work can be advanced to a certain extent on the side of.

The staff that have been identified to move this work forward but in isolation of meaningful contributions from Advisory Council members, I am afraid that this work will just perpetuate work as in business as usual.

And.

And I remain very mindful and I aware of that and really not wanting it wanting to fall down that.

Historic path of government work.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 40:43

Thank you Karla for sharing.

We appreciate that.

I see your hand, Jennifer.

And then Zoraya's hand was up and then also wanting to make sure that other folks can share as well.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 41:02

Sure. I'm gonna try to remember everything, but regarding.

The point around like.

Really it's it's like meeting flow.

Facilitation, you know, opportunity to speak and a chance for us to get to know each other.

A chance for us to tackle some of these issues in the way that you know we as advisory members, not government employees can handle.

That's, that's where I guess I would.

You know, I would like to push us to to really lean into like let's not do business as usual business as usual being you know, we come to a meeting and the agenda is already set for us by, you know, by an agency and there isn't I I.

Think what?

You know something to consider is if we're having an Advisory Council member meeting.

You know how many minutes are the Advisory Council members speaking?

Members. So I I just an observation looking back over the last I think it's been like two years now. I don't know of many meetings where the Advisory Council has been free to have discourse with each other and kind of grapple with some of I've been to a.

Lot of meetings where there's like a a really heavy agenda, you know with with some serious topics that then are like, OK and what do you think and if we didn't do a lot of homework ahead of time, we don't have any thoughts but as a group.

Potentially, you know, we could start to think through these things.

I'm curious about, you know, I've heard from Carla and from the the EJ staff that like you, you said you know what we've received feedback or or we've heard this we've heard that.

And I'm wondering, it seems like that's happening outside of the Advisory Council meetings, but there could be feedback that's coming from inside these meetings that I feel like we we haven't gotten to a point where we can give any type.

Group feedback, you know, because we we just haven't had that level of of space.

And whether that's not having a facilitator, I don't know.

We have to go that far, but but being able to, you know, have more of these Advisory Council meetings where it's just the Advisory Council, not the Interagency Committee.

And being able to to grapple with some of these questions that will help us to build community and get to know each other. And I think like thinking that we're going to

do so like the the outside the meeting.

Work is extra than any of what were paid, you know, or like what we've I think the original.

You know, being nominated and signing up for this committee, we're committing to coming to these meetings, you know? And so there's a lot of stuff that could get done in these meetings that I feel like instead it's it's less of trying to get the wisdom out of the.

Heads of the folks in the meeting and more about delivering information which it just hasn't really worked.

So I would love to break out of that business as usual because that is how every single county.

And every single like government agency works.

And it's just not.

I don't think it's really like getting at the heart of the intent of why would we come together as an Advisory Council and what kind of conversations could we be having that then inform these more like strict processes?

Yeah, that's what I'll say for now, I think.

Yes, that's that's all I'll say for now.

BK

Barrett, Kim 44:36

Makes a lot of sense and I think it it makes me think also that different folks like to contribute differently and like share differently speak differently.

How they show up can be different and so maybe, I think what would be helpful even next year as we continue this process is just getting really clear about like more specifically what works so like.

Just speaking in a group work you know for you does one-on-one like breakouts.

Would that work better?

Because we definitely want to honor what you're saying. And I think also like, we can't prescribe how you develop relationship and be in relationship with each other.

So what we can do is like try to provide that space, but as far as like how you do it, you know that's something that really has to come from you all and so.

I I also just want to make sure that the folks who don't always.

One not necessarily been folks who aren't here.

But folks who are here and don't feel like they have the space even when there's just Advisory Council space to speak like I really want to know how to support those folks

as well. Because I think that that they need to have space to, to share as well. And and sometimes I I feel like we are getting the feedback, but not everyone's thought.

So I just wanted to share that as well because I think that folks have different ways of. Still deciding what meaningfully engaging here looks like so.

There I am.

ZS **Zoraya she/her** 46:24

Yeah. Thanks.

And I do think even just to Jennifer's point, I think even just having half an hour before after big meetings for us to meet as a group.

Is really helpful just because. Yeah, it helps us kind of be on the same page, unlike even how to interact with like the big group before we do that.

So I think that might be a nice addition as any time there is like a joint meeting, making sure that we've got a couple of minutes beforehand to to check in with each other.

I think that might be kind of a an in between between having you know full meetings for just us, the alternative communication methods. I really appreciate and I think this has been really important to me is having my personal e-mail copy just because like it's not just that.

It's a different.

I have lots of different e-mail accounts so I don't mind having the different emails, but there is something about like the security of the Vermont system that makes it particularly difficult.

Incompatible with other emails.

And so yeah, I 100% agree.

Of course, you're gonna put everything in the partner.

E-mail so that you can pull that out of.

Out of out if anybody has a public records request, but I personally feel very comfortable with my personal e-mail being copied and so that's been that's been really helpful to me just in knowing what's going on. And I I much I do not respond to text messages all.

Of my I don't even respond to my friends as much work text messages.

So I'm I I strongly prefer e-mail just 'cause that helps me keep things straight.

So I appreciate that you all at least have moved to copying all the personal stuff and I

wish every agency were as good about doing that or every group. And then I just wanna like, I guess I wanna name 'cause. I feel like we're talking around this to. Some extent is that to and this is true of every. I feel like I maybe not every, but all the ones that I've seen like it's like the law is confusing. Like what the law is trying to do versus what it sets out.

Deliverables it just it doesn't make a lot of sense. And so it's hard to go from like what's written to like what we think.

EJ and Vermont should be and to fuse all of those things and then do work that makes sense for this body.

So I think I just want to name that I think.

As well, like lots of laws, it just starts from a confusing place.

And it's not necessarily asking the right questions or has the right deliverables. And so I think we're constantly in this thing of like these, you know, people who care a lot about EJ and wanted do it a certain way and have less about how to do it while.

Then also like trying to go back to the law and do what it tells us to do.

And so that's not anybody in this room's fault. But I think that that just necessarily always comes for like really difficult processes.

So I just want to make sure we're starting from that baseline of like it's not going to make sense because lawmakers don't always do things that make a lot of sense.

And I think yeah, and sorry, now I'm just going through all the points of the letter.

But then, and I think that made it really hard with the listening sessions, because I think there's so many listening sessions in Vermont that happened and I don't even know if I responded to the Brattleboro.

Idea. But I do think it's really hard to have a listening session when we're still confused a little bit about what we're doing is just too like we're too broad right now to have a productive conversation where we can take what the Community gives us and run with.

It because we don't have a mandate.

That is so wide that whatever we hear, we can implement like. Nor do we have something so specific that we want feedback right now.

So I feel like we're not in a place yet. I guess of course we want to connect with communities, but we want to do that in a meaningful way.

Where we can either bring them into what we're doing.

Or we can, you know, be really broad and then have that mandate. And I don't think either one of those things are true right now.

So I do think as much as like we wanna be external. I think we wanna have a really good sense of what we're going to communities for before we do that. And then I think I said this a couple meetings ago, but.

For different board I know at some point I submitted an invoice and I never got it back and I've just never and I never got it and I've just never submitted any invoices for any of these meetings since because I'm like, I don't know, just goes into an. Ether and then maybe comes back.

I really think that having automatic payments for us would be helpful.

It's not a lot of money, but at least if you come out of a meeting, you're like, I don't know what we did, but at least you got you know.

Like that does make you feel a little bit differently about it.

So I think be having a little bit more of a proactive like, hey, these people showed up to these meetings, we're gonna get them. Payments would actually be really helpful.

In making people feel like their time was valued.

And complete.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 51:15

Mariana, your hand was up earlier this morning to make sure you could join in.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 51:25

Yes, I, but I don't know if I'm the next person or somebody else who's waiting.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 51:30

You you are the next person.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 51:33

OK.

I just want to make sure that the other folks who haven't gotten the chance to speak if they want to do so, given that it's only 5 minutes less.

Left, especially the members of the Council, I'm happy to give my turn to others.

If not, I just wanted to reiterate what I said in terms of the payment, because this Council is supposed to represent the people that are underserved and those people need to be paid easily.

If they attend or they take this count, this Council chairs this, this Council work, so that would be the first thing that I would that I would.

That I would request support with if there's a way that you could help us and make sure that we are not.

You know, having to download a document, try to find a code type little something. That process seems like all all for, you know, \$50.00 for that meeting that you attended.

I don't know when if there's a way to make this more mechanical in like a little form or like a little signature that you collect and you could move this process forward and we just received the check that would be so attractive, especially for.

For when we have to recruit new members that.

That their time, I mean, some of us get this is part of my job. So I'm getting paid for doing that. And when I receive the check from the state, I send it to my organization. So, but some people, this is their only perhaps income or voluntary work that they get compensated for.

So that would be very important. And then in terms of what Jennifer said and Rich also said.

In person and an opportunity just to sit down and chat.

And break down that ice and that like, oh, we're all lost Rich.

Believe me, I said.

That I became more familiar because it's been 2 years and I finally I feel a little bit more familiar, but I'm still very lost with the deliverables and I feel like I didn't even know that the Bennington was going to.

Do you want to know the truth?

I am just understanding that the Bennington meeting was going to be a listening session that flew by me.

I thought it was one of our meetings, so I just right now, when somebody says listen in session, I'm like, oh, I totally missed that.

So a good example of how we are lost in the process, even though I'm feeling a little bit more familiar.

And I think this the suggestion of having time 1520 minutes before and after each meeting could be a good way to block a little bit more time in that same day and have us.

Sharing with each other in a more in a less threatening and more colloquial and more familiar way.

And finally they in person.

I think in the middle of the state would be the most inconvenient and inconvenient

for everyone kind of equally.

It's if you have to drive an hour and a half of one thing, but if you have to drive 3 hours because that meeting is on the other side of you, that will be too much.

Whereas if it's in the middle, you know it is possible to drive 50 minutes an hour, an hour and a half.

As if not all the meetings can be impersonal.

At least we could choose the beginning or the middle of the year in which we said, OK, let's let's all focus on this big effort, and that day will devote a couple more hours and we'll make it very meaningful and that perhaps will bring down barriers and will.

Make us all more familiar and able to know each other and understand a little bit more.

Our vulnerable spaces in which we will need to blink an eye to each other via the camera or send a little message.

Hey, I'm lost here.

Please speak for me or help me out.

I'm I don't have an idea what they're talking about that, that, that sort of, you know.

Familiarity is built first in person for for them later, perhaps using more of the technology, and I also would love to have my work e-mail included in the in the distribution list.

Yeah. Thank you.

That will be easier.

BK

Juliet Birch 55:56

Thank you.

Yeah. Thank you for that, Mariana.

So from this whole discussion I'm hearing like a a few things that we could really stand to, you know, us as the EJ coordinators with you guys as Advisory Council members. We could stand to talk way more about this than what the amount of time that's allotted for.

Us today will allow us to, you know, automatic the automatic payments or invoices that something that has come up several times in.

Person.

Like I would be totally interested in meeting with those of you who have ideas about this to like figure out what we can make happen.

'Cause really, I think the thing that we need to know first is like.

We there's all these problems with the current system.

So what?

What would feel like a rational solution and is it possible for us to make that happen for you?

That's totally something that we wanna talk about.

You know the meeting locations where we've set this?

We we would love to.

Get some more variety and we want feedback first from you guys about where feels feasible and then in terms of like the agenda setting, that's something that really interests me. Is like, you know, giving you guys more autonomy over what you talk about.

And so I think that you know, it basically what I'm trying to say is if you guys are interested, I know we already asked a lot of you time wise, but if you guys are interested in like meeting with us in smaller groups to talk about some of.

The things and start developing solutions.

That would be something that I'd be interested in.

It helps us all get to know each other and it helps us start, you know, ironing out some of the kinks in what makes doing this work difficult.

So I I would be grateful to meet and do that. Something else that I want to note is that you know we have about 30 minutes before we are going to close out this meeting, so.

I don't know about you guys, but I could use a bathroom break in the next like 10 minutes or so.

But so I just wanted to note that if we could take a minute for like public comment in a few minutes, that would be super awesome.

And Zoraya I see that your hands up.

ZS **Zoraya she/her** 58:18

I think old hander accidental hand.

BK **Juliet Birch** 58:22

OK.

Cool. Are there any other thoughts about this?

Like, you know, things that we can do to make this process better.
Things that we can do to alleviate some of these barriers to participation.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 58:40

This is Walter.

I just say I 'cause I really appreciate everyone's comments.

I put some things in the chat 'cause I didn't wanna take up time. So just note that I really appreciate what Marianna said as well as especially about.

That would be helpful.

So.

That's all.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 59:04

OK.

Yeah. One thing also that's coming to mind for me.

So we definitely we agree that more in person meetings if that's going to be really important. I also wonder how we can make the virtual hybrid meetings better and how those can also be crafted.

Better for your participation.

We've definitely tried a lot.

Figuring out different ways to ask questions or.

It's still repeating.

But we know that that's not enough.

So basically getting some feedback on what would be helpful.

So that you you're also, you feel like you're building relationships in those virtual meetings as well?

Yeah. I think Jennifer and maybe Anna, I'm not sure.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 1:00:08

I just want to say that I can't access the chat for some reason.

It's not opening.

I don't know what am I doing wrong, but whatever Walter is sharing, I wasn't able to read. I'm sorry, Walter.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:00:24

Carla.

BW **Brownridge, Walter** 1:00:26

But I'm sorry I could let me try to copy it and send it to you, Karla.

Maybe they can.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:00:37

Hi, Karla.

Agency National Resources Representative to the Interagency committee.

I would like to go back to what Soraya mentioned as a tangible way to help us move this work forward, the 30 minute.

Touch point for Advisory Council members, either before or after you know, I would like to know whether before after.

Which work best?

And the other thing too that I would like to under score here is that.

There was a recalibration that was requested for the deadlines in the law and there was a concern that was expressed by Advisory Council members regarding the timely implementation of the law.

And the deliverables within the act. And there was a concern shared at one point about whether this implied that.

There was work that's not gonna get done in a timely fashion.

I would like to offer that as a reflection regarding the importance of engagement, participation and attendance.

It was, and I think we had that conversation and exhausted the conversation to the satisfaction of all members of the Advisory Council and the interagency committees, but I just would like to highlight that the Agency of Natural Resources and the environmental justice coordinators.

Very committed to the timely implementation of the deliverables as per the new deliver the new timeline.

And not only that, but also we.

Believe that the work of the Advisory Council is central to the implementation of this law and all of the deliverables, regardless of whether the Advisory Council has been assigned a duty and responsibility within each of the.

So I just want to under score that there is another concern.

Regarding timely implementation of the law and there are there are, there are several deliverables in the law that require.

Input from members the extent to which that input is given.

Will really determine what outputs come out of the implementation of those deliverables.

So another another aspect of this conversation is that perhaps those 30 minutes 20 minutes that the Advisory Council member will be meeting.

Could be devoted to whatever business you believe should be addressed, and then perhaps.

You know, as you start having more conversations, we can get feedback.

And suggestions and advice?

On how to move forward the business of getting deliverables done in a timely fashion with the input.

At the at the level that is appropriate, or seems doable from Advisory Council members.

Because, you know, we would not like to request any more extensions of the implementation of this law.

So we remain very committed to the timely implementation of the law and more so doing that in a way that's respectful and centering of the voice is.

Council.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:04:24

Yeah, I'm just going to hold some space in case anyone else wants to share.

We we kind of covered a lot here.

We're gonna open the floor up for public comment.

And then if we we don't get any comments, we'll, we'll use that to take a quick break.

MH **Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h)** 1:05:22

Kim, will we have some time today to meet by ourselves with the, with the Advisory Council after this meeting?

A few more minutes or before jumping into the next one.

Or from here we jump into the next one after the public comment.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:05:37

No. What we were thinking of doing the public comment until for the break until 1:15, if you all wanted to use that time from 1:15 to 1:30, you're welcome to.

Yeah.

Yeah, just to be clear, we'll just hold like a minute for public comment just to see if anyone's gonna share, and then we'll go from there.

Just take a 5 minute break and then we'll come back.

1:15.

Hi everyone.

It's come on back.

Well, I think your hand just went up.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:12:34

Thank you very much.

As a response to the feedback and conversations that are being had about the interests of the Advisory Council to have conversations amongst themselves, I will excuse myself from the meeting so that those conversations can be had in absence of any interagency committee members.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to have a good conversation around.

The work of the implementation of the EJ law.

I very.

I am very grateful to you all for contributing to this work in the way that you have done and I really look forward to working alongside you to do the work that we're being asked to do in the best way that we can. Thank you so much and.

I'll see you next time. Take care.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:13:28

Thanks Carla.

All right.

Well, we'll just give you the rest of the meeting and we can check in via e-mail afterwards, so.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 1:14:04

OK.

That's what we asked for.

MH Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h) 1:14:09
Finally, alone.

BJ Byrne, Jennifer 1:14:26
Does someone I want to share how they're feeling about all things?

RH rich holschuh 1:14:36
Don't really have a whole lot more to add here. I I I'm just frankly I feel lost.
I don't like I'm a part of something and I don't.
I can't keep up with what's going on, and then I don't know what else to say.
Everyone else has said it.
I've been attending the meetings.
I think I've only missed one.
But.
I don't know. That's it.

MH Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h) 1:15:08
Would you mind asking me?
What do you think would help or what?
What would?
What would make you and all of us?
Feel more part of this work or this process?

RH rich holschuh 1:15:27
I don't feel like I know my fellow Council members. A couple of you. I know who you are.
I can, you know, have a have a a name to face and the folks that are here are are mostly those folks.
Walter, Jennifer, Mariana.
Folks from the state are familiar to some degree.
I.
I don't even know how many there people there are on the Council right now and what it takes to make a quorum. That's how.
How disconnected I feel?

Still think that we've got some fundamental challenges about definitions, but.
We're already moving into implementation.
Maybe that's beyond our.
Our our ability to inform at this point because the law is the law.
I don't know.
I'll give you a real good example.
I think, and I think I'm correct in saying this.
And then the EJ law was passed.
2022 I believe.
The Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs didn't even know that we had a
seat on the Council.
We we weren't told.
We were included, which is wonderful.
But we were not a part of that.
Drafting or.
Whatever those intentions were, we weren't part of the discussion.
And I'm still in a place of playing catch up.
Umm.
We have about 6 different seats that were required to fill.
According to statute on various councils and commissions, and were spread then
and.
I think I'm not.
I'm not complaining here.
We're a small state.
We have very few.
People who are able to serve in a position to serve, and we're doing the best we can.
This one's just a big black hole.
Of not knowing.
That sounds like a lot of complaining, but I'm. I'm just trying to say I'm I'm lost here.

MH Mariana Sears / HFVT (s-h) 1:18:03

Doesn't sound like complaining to me.
I do feel a lot of being lost on and perhaps.
Just out of my personality, I always think like I must be me, but I'm glad to hear that
it's just not me.

I not only.

I'm 40, you know, to the language, to a certain extent, but also was not born in Vermont and not born in the United States.

So not familiar with the government, so various level and the language.

Main mainly I said that to begin with.

So yeah, there's a lot of feeling very similarly.

I kind of volunteer for this because our organization learned that there was very similarly we learned that there was a a spot for someone who worked in an organization working for around food security.

And I do outreach for for hunger free Vermont.

So.

I feel to a certain extinct, completely unprepared and.

Almost not capable to visiting here, but.

In the sense that I don't have any experience, I've never sat in any council before for the state of Vermont or anywhere in the world.

So yeah, I'm pretty lost too.

And and I've had the same questions. And I also think that there is a chance for us to.

I can't remember, but I think along the process I heard.

But there is a chance.

To edit the definition of environmental justice at some point in the process, I cannot remember where, but I'm sure we could bring this up and ask again. And also.

Perhaps discuss among us.

What is it that we would like to see change in the definition or added? And I know Richie have said that there is an environmental justice definition without any part of the environment or the.

The different living things not included in there, it's more like base.

And and you know around humans. So I would love to see that expanded as you do or similarly.

And then yeah, I also would like to know people more and.

And understand who is still members of this Council and if the other people that were at that initial meeting are not participating anymore or are they participating somehow else?

But I'm not able to attend the meetings and if we should wait for them or include them somehow or it will be more just time.

S.

Are there efforts to have other people joining at some point for those vacancies if they're vacant?

So yeah, lot of questions too, but I'll leave it for others now.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 1:21:16

Just that one. One point is changing the definition of the EJ focus population was really one of the first tasks and I think still remains one of the first tasks. But all these other ones you know are taking kind of the front seat in the discussion it seems.

And but that could be something that we just decide to bite off, I mean.

And and actually have meaningful discussion about.

Because yes, I think putting any kind of like.

Mapping tool in front of having a real discussion around the definition or even these environmental these spending report that they're going to require the agencies to do without a definition around who we're talking about populations is putting the you know.

Doing it out of order.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:22:18

I don't been.

I haven't said anything the entire meeting.

But which I know for many of you is the first from me.

So I'm very proud but also.

I I just wanted to respond to the in the chat I had put just just kind of appearing a lot of of what we were talking about this meeting I I keep coming back to this idea that we should have a set of visuals to help map out.

Some of what?

You know what is our mandate?

Who are the members of the Council?

What's the Venn diagram of Council activities to legislate it to whatever I think that visuals are helpful for people who may not be auditory learners or.

You know, whatever kinesthetic learners or whatever, it's.

And and.

And then in response, Jennifer, you asked what were my thoughts on where this Council fits in with all the other groups and Councils addressing similar issues.

So that's what I unmuted to to respond to.

You know, to be honest, I.

Feel in some ways lost as well, and I don't think that that's necessarily.

A function of the way that this Council's being run, I think for me it's just because our office is tagged for a lot of things.

And sometimes it can be difficult to keep track of all the different workflows and the details of each.

But I do just from.

From being here and in the interagency space and in kind of a few other, both state created and non state created spaces.

I think that.

This Council has done a lot of the really difficult ground softening work of trying hard to cultivate an environment of, you know, consensus and.

Openness in discussion.

A lot of committees don't do that.

They just say the legislature gave us 6 meetings to do this, so boom, boom, boom, Robert's rules were done and I don't think that this group is like that.

And that's one thing I appreciate about it. Some might see a downside of that of it takes us way longer to get to what is seen as the finish line because we're doing that work on the front end and granted, when you're talking about something like environmental justice.

Is there even a finish line?

Is there a defined point that's a whole nother philosophical thing, but.

But I think so.

So I'm saying, let's say that.

I sometimes feel antsy because it doesn't feel like I can point to a list of things and say we did that we did that we did that.

And yet I don't know.

Maybe we are where we're where we need to be anyway, I'm not sure.

So where do I see this group fitting in with other groups? I don't know.

In some senses, you could. I see us as kind of being a bit behind in the sense that we don't have a long list of stuff that we can say, and we did that we did that we did that.

But in another sense, I don't really think that.

That there should be.

Maybe that kind of comparison, because I don't think that our group operates in the

same way that a lot of other entities do.

And anything that's that's sort of blended state and non state is always gonna be more bureaucratically annoying anyway.

You know, we can't just have an ad hoc meeting because we feel like it on a Thursday 'cause you have to warn it within a certain number of days and etcetera, etcetera, right. And post minutes and and. And so there are a lot of organizations out there doing.

This kind of work that have way more leeway and flexibility.

And latitude because they don't have to adhere to those kinds of things. So.

I don't know.

In some senses, I don't.

I don't really want to compare this group to to other entities because I think that because it's government, we just have certain things that we have to deal with.

But I I also want to be respectful of the fact that.

It is sometimes seen as if state folks and non state folks are.

Not equally in activist mindset.

And that sometimes I think makes it hard 'cause I'll be really honest with you in our last minute here, a lot of times people who work for the state, we are winking at you on the camera.

It's one of those like we close our eyes and it says help me and maybe that's dramatic.

But I think sometimes you you'll find a lot of alignment in in values and principles, and there may be some other.

Structural thing that is.

That's in the way, but I think if we're able to.

Cultivate spaces of courage. Where?

State people can say the thing out loud or find a way for the thing to get said. If they're not empowered to do it.

Then I think I think we'd we'd be surprised at at how much agreement there actually is on some of these calls.

And I guess I'm fortunate or whatever we want to call it that I often do that anyway.

But there's a lot of people who don't, and who exist in a very rigid and very, very long vertical hierarchy of state and don't feel empowered to say stuff off the cuff and say things like I say callously.

That's like, what's he gonna do? Fire me?

Which he could, right?

But we're not all callous like that, so.

I don't know.

I try to hold that in mind for my left Calis colleagues.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:27:38

Thank you for that.

Now, that was really wonderful.

Yeah. And before we close out, I just wanna say that that we, we have accomplished things.

We we there's a checklist and we have done a lot of things this year.

We've, like, met deliverables in the law.

And we've dealt with things as they've come up. So there's a lot. There's a lot that we should be.

There's more work to be done, but we should also acknowledge that that things have happened.

And anyway, it's over time.

I just wanted to say thank you and maybe we can come to an agreement that there will be an e-mail exchange, so we'll connect with you all and then try to figure things out for next year.

OK.

Alright, thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you all so much.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 1:28:32

OK.

□ **Sadowski, Lauren** stopped transcription