Transcript

April 18, 2025, 3:07PM

Barrett, Kim started transcription

BK **Barrett, Kim** 0:06

Alright, thank you everyone for joining.
This is another environmental Justice Advisory Council meeting.
Today is April 18th, 2025.
And this meeting is dedicated to.
Continuing the conversation around the mapping tool, hearing more from you all, there's an agenda in the chat.
But.
Just so you have that to look at and I'll say it verbally.
So right here at 11, we're gonna consent to, or at least review, the Community agreement.
I don't believe we can approve the March 28th meeting minutes until we have 6 Advisory Council members on the call, and so whenever that does happen, if it does happen, we'll go back and approve.
And then yeah, so from 11/10 to 12/10 give or take within 1/2.
This open discussion do public comment and then maybe take the last 10 minutes just to debrief and and figure out if there are any next steps needed and close out from there.
Does anyone have any thoughts or questions or things to add before we start?
No. OK, sounds good.
I think it's worth just reading the community agreements.
I.
Have them up and can share my screen.
For everyone to look at.
OK.
Can you all see the agreements?
Yes, OK.
Often, any Advisory Council member want to start, and then we can pass it off from there.

Birch, Juliet 1:58
Yep.

Davis, Xusana 2:07
I can start.
This is Susanna #1.
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.
Queens two be present for one another by listening deeply.

rich holschuh 2:27
Happy to go with the second part.

Barrett, Kim 2:29
Mm hmm.

rich holschuh 2:30
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.
Tools include using oops or Ouch to indicate a pause is needed.

Watson, Britaney 2:56
I could read the third one.
Expect and accept nonclosure.
We are unlikely 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.

Barrett, Kim 3:25
I can read the 4th one sent to respect.
Be respectful, intentional, and work to build trust and create a safe and inviting space.

VD **victor davila** 3:38
I'll read the last one then. Am I audible?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 3:41
Yes.

VD **victor davila** 3:42
OK.
Share and other space mine.
Sorry, share verbal and other space.
Mindfully consider the balance of talking and making space. Move up. Move back tools to do this. Include the acronym. Wait, why am I talking and vocalizing support for other person's comment without repeating the same points they have already that have already been made?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 4:13
Thank you. OK.
See.
Kyla just joined. Hi, Karla.
We just looked at the Community agreements and.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 4:28
Goodnight.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 4:30
We'll good morning.
We'll jump back to approve minutes once we get 6 Advisory Council members on the call. All right.
So I think we're ready to just open it up.
We wanted to, yeah, open it up and and.
Hear from you all and take the conversation from there.

RH **rich holschuh** 4:56
I can say that I was not present at the last meeting.

I was called away on family business and so I reviewed comments that were made afterwards. If somebody could give a 2 minute summary as to.
Umm.
The reasoning for continuing the discussion I I could get up to speed a little bit better.
I would appreciate that.
My my impression is that the there was some discussion about how the the bidding process went out.
That was a big part of it.
Other than that, I'm not real clear.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 5:45
Yeah, I can share a little bit.
So the the impotence for?
Creating this meeting was just recognizing that that last meeting didn't feel.
Complete and I know that one of our community agreements is, you know, sometimes that might happen. But we also felt like it was important to make sure that if you all had more thoughts to share or if folks who didn't get to speak at the last meeting wanted.
To share.
We wanted to provide an opportunity to figure out how to move forward.
Forward recognizing that you know we have other things to discuss.
And deliverables to to connect around and and so we didn't want to just move forward and have the April 23rd meeting, you know, which is kind of shifting gears a little bit.
Without acknowledging and and also providing more space before we moved into that so.
Umm.
Yeah, I don't know if anyone else wants to share or if any Advisory Council members have any thoughts on on this meeting.
Sarah Bolsen just jumped in.

JB **Jennifer Byrne** 7:29
Sure. Hi everyone.
So I have a board meeting going on, so I wasn't really clear. What if this meeting was

a I'm just catching up.
I wasn't clear that this was a a meeting of the Advisory Council or or is this just a a fill in but?
If we're, we're talking. So. So you all know.
Walter.
And Marianna and I met with Julie Moore last week to to ask about.
This RFP process.
And basically, there's no indication that they're going to extend the deadline or expand the outreach to beyond the.
Existing contractor list. I do have something in writing from her that I'm gonna share with the Advisory Council members.
But essentially they said that other state priorities and policies are are taking.
A more it sounds to me I'm paraphrasing, but, but they're taking priority over, you know, our environmental justice.
Demands which are, you know, for at least some effort in equal access to government resources.
So the biggest thing to me that's disappointing about how this process went like, yes, we weren't shown the RFP, but I think the most egregious thing is that this RFP was only shared with the existing government contractor list, the approved contractor list. And it was not shared public.
Or trying to expand beyond.
So it's it's just hard.
Because there have been so many reports written to Dec to ANR around getting better at their contracting procurement methods and none of those have been taken into account.
So I feel like this is like the one board that that shouldn't happen on.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 9:37
Good morning, everyone.
This is Karla, and I would like to.
Sorry I am a little bit under the weather.
I'm gonna do my best to communicate without.
Making it so difficult for folks to understand me.
My apologies.
So good morning.

Thank you everyone for being here.
I really appreciate you all showing up to have this conversation.
And Rich, I think the the one of the most important.
Reasons to have this meeting is an opportunity to.
Exhaust the topic.
To the extent possible to the satisfaction or relative satisfaction of Advisory Council members here.
There is a willingness from the unit to create spaces and opportunities for robust, meaningful dialogue, and one of the motivations for for me to insist on holding this space and creating this container is to also have an opportunity to talk about how we can have commun.
Ications.
In conversations that communicate.
Dissent and disagreement with decision makings in this space that seem respectful and wholesome.
I, of course, was not at the last meeting.
And it was intentional. It was.
Part of what had been requested by Advisory Council members to have opportunities to talk amongst yourself in absence of interagency.
Agency committee members so that you could get to connect with each other.
And get to know where you're all coming from.
So in attention to that, I did not participate in the last meeting, but unfortunately.
The the conversation did not go according to the agenda that was planned.
And so this is an opportunity really to answer any questions to the extent that there are still questions.
Open and answered.
That seem meaningful and important for you all so that we can move forward and align ourselves and ground ourselves in the deliverables on the, on the EJ law.
So that's those are some of the the reasons we're holding this space and I appreciate Jennifer providing.
A quick summary or nutshell on the conversation that.
Umm. Marianna, Walter.
And her had with.
With Julie, the secretary of the agency.
So I I I hope that answers some of the questions that you have, rich. So I also was not

at the meeting, but I I you know I watched the recording.
So this is this is this is this opportunity.
This is an opportunity to really have a good, robust conversation where we can share opinions, concerns and hopefully we can after this meeting.
Align.
You know what the next steps look like?
And also I want to add that after watching the recording, it seemed to me that there were.
Big concerns and what seemed to be big questions that seemed to require some answer and consideration on our part.
And so yeah, just creating the opportunity to be transparent and have further conversations should that be be desired.
By the Council.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 14:09
Something was put in the chat and I think that it should be read out loud for folks.
Does anyone want to do that?
I don't know, Jennifer, if you want to. I think that was something you put in.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 14:48
It sounded before, like Jennifer has another meeting that's happening simultaneous to this. So it might be helpful. You know, if one of us just reads it out loud for a public record, I can do that if that works.
OK.
Good morning, Walter, Marianna and Jennifer.
For reference, I think this is an e-mail from Secretary Julie Moore.
I appreciated our conversation yesterday afternoon. Understanding we have different viewpoints about the best approach for advancing the the important.
Work to implement ACT 154. I left our meeting with a better sense for where you see that the challenges and opportunities lie. As I shared the policies and procedures that state government operates under, including how we select contractors are not perfectly aligned with an approach that.
Would be directly directed solely by the principles of environmental justice. As I noted, I will be asking the team to move forward with the contractor selection related to that mapping tool.

Will ensure that a copy of the RFP is shared with you all.
And we'll work with them to foster opportunities for the Advisory Council to support meaningful community engagement around the development and application of the mapping tool from Julie Moore.

Jennifer Byrne 16:11
Is is the meeting next week that's on the calendar the same as this meeting or is that an Advisory Council meeting?

Barrett, Kim 16:19
That's an Advisory Council meeting.
And that is we have scheduled previously.
To.
Focus on the environmental benefit spending guidance work.

Raimundi, Karla 16:39
These are two different meetings. Jennifer, this meeting was created after.
After the meeting that took place on Friday.
That was.
The topic was about the mapping tool and so this meeting, this meeting that we're on right now was specially scheduled to.
Talk about and discuss to.
To the satisfaction of the Council.
All the topic of the mapping tool.
We are, as you can imagine.
Needing to really focus on the work that has not been able to occur.
In the last several months and and we are wanting to create this opportunity, Jennifer, to have this conversation, answer any questions that may exist and then we will continue our meetings as previously scheduled.

Jennifer Byrne 17:41
OK, I have a question then and A and a comment I guess.
One with the question being from the last meeting, we were told and also with their meeting with Julie Moore, we were told that there's going to be a second RFP for community engagement coming out of ANR around this mapping tool.

And that's something that I think the whole Advisory Council needs to be aware of, informed of and also like.
I don't see that as a need.
I think that we need to use our Advisory Council members.
I have a document I'm gonna put in the chat of the recommendation from back in the law passed on how to do community engagement around this work, utilizing the expertise of these community engagement specialists, really that you have on this Council as opposed to hiring yet another CONT.
To do yet another process around community engagement and develop another set of recommendations.
And then I just also really.
We spent a lot of time on developing the principles of environmental justice.
As a Advisory Council, we've passed those and it feels as though ANR immediately.
Ignored them and went ahead with this, you know, developing this RFP and putting it out to a very small set of people.
So to me, I I won't be satisfied with that.
We we can't exhaust that enough.
This is like this is this is anti environmental justice work that's happening by by putting government resources out in such a restricted way.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 19:18
I really appreciate.
Two things.
One the way that you just communicated.
You know your your thoughts.
And opinions about the process and 2nd the substance of your comment, I would like to share.
That.
And I think we, we and this is really an invitation for all of us here.
To try to really.
We approached this work with the, with the intentionality and the care that it really requires.
So I although I understand, Jennifer, that you feel that ANR and I am assuming that by ANR you mean the civil rights and environmental justice unit. You know these these three people in front of you and to to.

Jennifer Byrne 20:15
No, just whoever did the RFP like, I don't know who did that, but whoever that went through and I know and on the advice of the agency of Digital Services, who unfortunately aren't one of I guess aren't one of the covered agencies who have to, but yeah, sorry.

Raimundi, Karla 20:15
Umm.
Yeah.

Jennifer Byrne 20:31
Not you.
I'm not saying you. I'm saying whoever chose to do it this way.

Raimundi, Karla 20:36
Yeah.
OK.
Thank you.
I what I was trying to communicate is that.
The characterization of ANR immediately ignore the principles. The core principles of community engagement that were developed as the first deliverable of this law.
It's an inaccurate representation.
I would like to share with you, you know, and Kim and Juliet also.
Please feel free to chime in on the the process of deliberating.
How? How, how we got to where we got. But I can say that it was not an immediately ignoring principles and values that are not only representation of ideal.

Barrett, Kim 21:22
Just.
2.

Raimundi, Karla 21:37
But rather are things that we utilize and principles that we utilize to conduct

ourselves with each other on on a regular basis.
So.

Barrett, Kim 21:51
Carla, can I just jump in?

Raimundi, Karla 21:52
The oh someone has. Yep. Yep. Sure.

Barrett, Kim 21:54
Yeah, don't.
Don't forget your thought.
I believe we do have quorum right now.
I believe we have 6 Advisory Council members on the call, so I think we should just jump back and.
Approve the minutes from the March 28th meeting and then also approve the agenda for today in case anyone has to hop off.

Raimundi, Karla 22:19
Yeah, that seems a good.
Order of operation for process.
Sure, let's do that.

Barrett, Kim 22:26
OK.
Great. So.
I'll. Let's see.
It looks like Jennifer's no longer on the call, so we can't approve.
The Minutes of the agenda if she comes back on, then, then we might be able to do that.
All right, go ahead, Carla.

Raimundi, Karla 22:59
Yes. So I wanted to communicate really briefly and with not a lot of detail and open up the space for any of for any questions that folks may have. Like I mentioned Kim

and Juliet, please feel free to chime in.
If I miss anything, so I the the the process of the mapping tool, the conceptualizing of the mapping tool process started.
It over a year ago.
In a meeting that we had with Advisory Council members and interagency committees in the presence of some of our partners, including EPA.
I shared with the two bodies that we had received important information regarding the ability of the agency.
Need to carry forward the money that was allocated for the creation of the mapping tool and community engagement that accompanies the mapping tool, the creation of the mapping tool.
That meeting it is, I am unsure about when that meeting took place.
Julietra Kim, if you can remember.
So that that that first touch point.
That was had was to communicate the new information that we had received.
Coming from the legislative process, and so it was communicated right away.
To the Advisory Council and the Interagency committee that we have received information that we needed to proceed and move forward expeditiously.
But taking the time to ensure that we are also taking into consideration feedback and advice from the Council.
So during that meeting, that was facilitated by Ashira from EPA, we requested input from Advisory Council members.
On the process of the mapping tool.
That meeting, of course, is up on our online resource library.
You can should you decide to do so, you can go back to that meeting.
That was may 2024, and we solicited.
Get feedback at that time regarding how to move forward with the mapping tool and seeking advice from Advisory Council members and sharing the new piece of information that we had received at that time. We had been communicated that we should try to have an RFP.
Out and published to ensure that those funds would be secure.
And not at a risk of being lost through the legislative process because of priorities of budget and and other considerations.
So then at that time, we had already considered an approach to meet what seemed to be an urgent and important consideration that we could do what we could not

disregard.
So then we identified a process.
Whereby.
We could solicit feedback right from the Advisory Council and then that first meeting May 2024 was the first instance in which we communicated.
You know recent unfoldings regarding and touching the mapping tool and seeking advice from counselors.
I see that Kim has a hand.
Up.

Barrett, Kim 26:53
Yes, sorry to interrupt.
I do feel like because of.
If you so you had mentioned that some of the information that we got.
In May, or whenever that was.
You know was about this.
You know, possibly the funds, the $500,000 that that's allocated under the law to the mapping tool development.
You know.
Could possibly be in jeopardy and you? You mentioned priorities and budget and the, you know, the the legislative session. And I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit more to that, particularly for folks who may not have, you know, understanding of what that means. And then clar?
Between an Rs, you know, priorities and things like that versus.
You know, possibly legislative.
Priorities.
And budget and other factors that may have been.
Impacting us, I think that that would be an important clarification because that piece is part of what kind of.
Forced us to move forward with.
Trying to hold on to the the the actual budget to to develop the RP.
Does that make sense and would Advisory Council members be like? Is that something that you all wanna hear more about? If not, we can move on, but it feels important to me.

Davis, Xusana 28:42

I did just want to say.
That, you know, I I'm hearing a couple of of things.
The the concerns that were raised about the process.
Specifically around the mapping tool RFP.
Our office generally agrees with those concerns. Whenever we see them in other in other agencies or in other state government processes, we always look to have more inclusive contracting processes.
We're gonna do a bid process, then we want it to be open, give people long runways and you all remember in the last meeting I shared a number of things that we considered good practices in the chat as well.
So I wanted to say that I appreciate.
That all of that was raised vociferously.
I appreciate the courage that it took to object to those things and and those are some objections that that I think I share.
Separate from that, I'm also wanting to acknowledge.
That.
This this group and this work and this bill have been put into a really bad circumstance fiscally.
And.
And because of that, we are forced to operate from a scarcity mindset where we have to preserve funding because it's at risk of being lost.
So that we can get work done and that forces us to do it in a way that's inequitable.
And and that feels just that's trash.
And so.
The reason I wanted to acknowledge that is because I think that.
It's important that we kind of.
Recognize that there's those those hemispheres to it.
I think that if this group wanted to insist that we're either gonna do it equitably or not do it at all, I would support that if this group decided we're gonna move forward with it because we'd rather see the work get done than not or get done rather.
Than be done later. I could also support that, but I did just want to acknowledge that it seems like bureaucracy is forcing us to operate outside of what we've publicly declared to be our values.

And I don't think anyone here.
I don't think that that means anyone here.
No longer holds those values.
I think that we're making a choice from a set of bad choices, and there were probably things along the way that could have helped us avoid this.
Maybe if we had moved quicker before then, we wouldn't have to be here. Now I'm sure, I'm sure.
But I did just want to say that because it seems to me like the conversation last time and this time have kind of ended up bringing us to this to this point that I think it's fair to with knowledge that and I'm not saying that because I think.
That.
Should take blame off of anybody in particular.
I think that whoever made these decisions probably didn't do them lightly, but I still don't like the decisions and I would, and I still think that regardless of what conclusions we ended up arriving at, it's clear that this group would have wanted and benefited from having that inform.
Sooner and along the way. So that's definitely.
Something to acknowledge, but I do think that overall it sounds like we are in that age-old.
Old Evergreen battle between process and principle.
Not necessarily through any fault of of through through this group's doing.
Anyway.
That's me reflecting on what I've been hearing those last two weeks.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 32:29
And you hit the nail on the head. Susana. You hit the nail on the head right there.
And that was what I was gonna provide as an answer for Kim is to explain what Carrie forward phones are or Carrie forward monies are so that we're all talking about.
The same thing and then move to that piece, right is the options that.
Were had at the time decisions needed.
It to be made.
Were not ideal options and the challenges that going against.
A pre selected set of.
Contractors did not escape any one of us.
These were really hard considerations that were discussed and to the extent possible.

We were attempting via communications and setting up opportunities to talk about these things in meetings to further communicate what was impinging and the factors that were.
That were being considered and that couldn't.
We could not ignore, so let me just go back to carry forward monies. So carry forward money's are.
On spent funds that have been appropriated in a previous fiscal year and then for reasons of order of business or the ability to spend those funds, those funds are not spent with within the following fiscal year for which they were.
Appropriated.
Right. So then carry forward monies are unspent funds from a prior appropriation that are authorized to remain available beyond the fiscal year in which they were originally appropriated?
And then typically the ability to carry forward those monies.
Require legislative or statutory authority.
Our statute does not have that provision in it, so we need legislative action in order to carry forward those funds.
And so that brings us to the information that we received, which was it is difficult given the current state of affairs.
To carry forward those funds. And so the question was, we either appropriate the funds and.
Use them.
And the way to do that was to.
To publish an RFP.
Or we run the risk of not being able to carry forward those monies, something other that's important that cannot be ignored is what's been happening in this space at the federal, at the national level, right?
This has been something that.
Has been creating a lot of challenges.
For our unit to be able to move forward in in a in a way that we had anticipated and had planned for.
So recognizing all of the all of the factors that that.
May may impact the decision making and the ability to use those phones.
The question was.
A question of risk.

Do we risk these funds on behalf of Vermonters to do the mapping tool work, recognizing that this work at the state level is more important now than ever?
Or we move forward in a way that.
Would take more time.
And our ability to carry forward the money.
Would be jeopardized.
So yes, Susana, the decision making process and I and I really like the way that you conceptualize this, was coming from a place of scarcity, right?
The options that were had were not wholesome options that that would allow for.
Or the consideration and the time that was needed.
And these are the structural barriers that we are seeking as a body to challenge.
And so it was also an opportunity to reflect on what the structures are and how we can, with the options available, ensure to to.
Ensure that we have.
These two Rfp's now, and that was a decision that was made right is OK.
We put together one RFP.
Was presented to the agency of Digital Services.
From a technology standpoint GIS.
The.
The Ada's folks.
Thought and recommended that the the technology component and the community engagement component because of how robust the community engagement component on the joint RFP was that the technology aspects of the of the.
Creation of the tool of the RFP, the request for proposal that it would be better to separate those to ensure that the Community engagement portion of the request for proposal was implemented in a way that that would counteract some of the challenges that were identified from inception in.
The way.
That the bidding process would go. And so like I mentioned, may was the first consultation to the Advisory Council, may 2024 and then after that.
We communicated.
You know, throughout this process.
And created opportunities to have these conversations with Advisory Council members for one reason or another.
It was challenging to have those conversations and we've talked about.

How to improve communications? How to improve engagement from folks?
How to ensure that folks are having access and reading communications that are coming to the agency?
And I don't think we really need to, you know, continue having those conversations.
We met with all of the advisory Councils, 1 Council members, one-on-one to try to respond to these challenges in a in a satisfactory way.
And so now this is.
This is where we are. So we are in a place where the process is.
There is a statement of work that was released.
Against a pre-existing retainers list, we understand the challenges we considered. All of these challenges and based on guidance that we received and also the reality at the time and the factors that were impinging on decision making, it was decided to separate those.
Two those two components of the request for proposal and then create and ensure that the technology.
Component. The actual, you know, programming and creation of the tool incorporated.
Environmental justice principles. Equity principles.
I remember a conversation that our unit had with Susana about equity in the mapping tool and.
Consultation that we decided was gonna take place later on to ensure that.
Components of equity were incorporated into the evaluation process and ensure that elements of that were incorporated in the in the mapping tool. Those conversations are yet.
To occur and we're looking forward to that conversation.
And so as you mentioned, Jennifer, there are two distinct Rfp's now.
So we have the statement of work.
And that's the bulk of the of the monies that were appropriated.
And then we are working on a second request for proposal.
And the intention with this second request for proposal is that this will be going through the traditional.
Process so this will be released openly and not be released among.
A.
Pre-existing retainers list in the state and so that that RFP.
We we already have talked about and plan for input from Advisory Council members.

From Interagency Committee members, to the extent that folks are available.
And so another another intervention that was created back then in May 2024.
Or was the creation of a mapping tool task force?
I don't know if you all recollect that you know, since May of 2024, we've been asking Advisory Council members and interagency committee members.
To if they have the capacity.
And interest to.
Contribute their time and knowledge.
To a mapping tool task group.
Unfortunately, we have not yet received communications regarding intentions to become part of that group, and so we've been moving forward this work to the ability to the, to the extent that we can.
And taking into consideration the ability of folks to contribute.
To the decision making process.
This taking into consideration all of the things that we all know and by we I mean Juliet came. And I know that our shared between within this group.
And so moving forward for the, for the Community engagement RFP, it is our intention and as you may recall from the one-on-one conversations that we had in January.
January of this year it is our hope that some of you will, you know, help us inform.
That process.
By you know.
A task group so that we can really, robustly consult the Council and center the Council the way that.
The way that.
Seems a representative of the values that we hold both as professionals and as individuals. Moving this work forward on your behalf and on behalf of the older manners.
Victor.

VD **victor davila** 45:48
Two quick things.
One it is occurring to me that I think more people are now here to potentially move on on that vote now before we run out of too much time.
And the other thing which I'm going to say, even though it might put more time

between that, I'm I'm currently in conversation to be officially on here. There was a bit of a paperwork hiccup between Haley's transition and my entering this work.
So nothing I say or do in these moments technically like, you know on record or not on record, but like they don't hold any like authority space that's fine.
I really appreciate hearing the details like the behind the scenes thought processes, the realities of what's happening in process.
That's forcing positions.
I fully appreciate that as someone who is very new to the Council.
Was this internal struggle this this kind of hectic pace that you guys had worked on to secure funding?
Was this that communicated before?
Like was what was just told to me now.
Communicated before at any point, because if I think that everything said is relatable, I think everyone knows that this it's kind of like an external.
Lies. Unfortunate circumstance that is a part of like the growth pains of creating something more stable.
But.
This communicated in a way beforehand that would have alleviated some of the initial kind of like flare ups, because I can also appreciate that anything that resembles sliding backwards is especially scary to any one of this Council right now, given the current administrative restraints that everyone is dealing.
With even just thinking about an executive talk, an executive action potentially being taken this morning against.
Environmental justice overall.
So like the the feeling of wanting to know that.
Folks are in communication for the sake of feeling safe. At the very least, even if that doesn't directly apply to anything involving official rulings.
Would probably appreciate it in general.
So this is once again me speaking from a position of not really knowing much, having only recently joined the Council. But was this information which was eloquently communicated now.
Was there an opportunity to communicate it earlier in process?
For the sake of avoiding some of this miscommunication and MIS presentation.

Raimundi, Karla 48:16
Hmm.

Barrett, Kim 48:16
Yeah.
Thank you so much for that, Victor.
So we brought up kind of many interventions and and factors. And So what Carla had mentioned earlier is that at that main meeting, we did share a little bit about the concern for, you know losing the funds.
The carryover memo was communicated.
And shared a number of times and then the other thing that I wanted to also share is that the splitting of the RFP. So moving from doing a joint RFP and when we say joint mean having.
You know the extensive, you know, GIS components and needs.
As well as the expensive.
You know, technical needs associated with community engagement. Both of those things were in one RFP and one of the things that I wanted to add on to what Karla had mentioned is that part of the need to and part of the decision making around.
Starting this GIS RFP a little bit earlier.
Is that getting some like having some sort of?
Forward movement to get closer towards appropriating the funds was also part of that decision making, and so.
The sharing of there was one RFP and then we had to split them.
That was also communicated.
And the other thing that I want to emphasize as well is that the splitting of the Rfp's, even though they're two different Rfp's.
There's many things that both Rfp's share and so the GIS component. I just want to make sure that folks know that environmental justice and equity is a huge part of that RFP and whoever the GIS focused contractors are are going to be required to like uphold those.
Principles, but also work extremely closely with the community engagement.
Folks.
And so yeah, some of that was communicated.
Another thing that I want to share before there's miss more miscommunication is

that the community engagement, like the separate community engagement RFP was not developed or thought of as a way to replace.
The Advisory Council, one of the things that we had communicated in earlier meetings with you all, is that the there's all these different challenges related to developing a mapping tool like this. And you know, the understanding came to be that community engagement has to be a part of.
That process and part of that involves having someone who can translate whatever information is you know.
Yielded from community engagement and holding the GIS contractors accountable, which means probably several meetings, communications, processing of data.
And things that are very time intensive. And so the purpose of that community engagement, our feat is to have.
Some dedicated direct support in working in tandem with the GIS folks to make sure that everything is cohesive.
And so some of what I'm communicating, you know, the level of detail may not have been there. Like, I'm not sure.
Exactly how much we were able to talk about that.
But one thing we did communicate is that written into these Rfp's is that consultation and also collaboration for both Rfp's both the GIS and the Community engagement, Rfp's is required.
And so I just wanted to throw that out there.
As well, and one consideration and thing that I you know that I've been reflecting on is you know we did use language like carry over memo. We did, you know mention retainers list and so I'm not sure that that landed like everyone knew what that meant at the.
Time. But if you're asking if that communication was shared.
It was.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 53:11
Yeah. And if I may, I may explain the carryover memo.
So I try to explain to the explain to the best of my ability what carry forward monies are and so the way that the Agency has to solicit that those carry forward monies be carried forward for the next or for the cycle where they were not appropriated for.
Is via.
A carry forward.

Board, memo and so we communicated when we learned first when we first learned of the challenge with regards to carry carrying forward the money we share that back in May 2024 and also communicated that what that means is that we will need to.
To come up with a timeline that allows for.
Us meeting the deadline for the Carry forward memo, which is then.
The avenue that the agency has to identify all of the monies that are being requested to be carried forward beyond the fiscal year that they were appropriated for, and so that work on the carry forward memo was also communicated to the Advisory Council.
In, you know, separate meetings.
That and also you know the call for.
A.
A mapping tool task group to ensure that several of the Advisory Council members.
Not hitting quorum could also help us formulate and identify ways in which we could move forward through this challenging space.
So I don't know, Victor, if that answers the questions that you had. But I thought they were, you know, it's a really good question and important for us to answer to your satisfaction, Victor.

VD **victor davila** 55:11
Yeah, I I think that gives me some idea, although it seems that other folks have things they want to contribute as well.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 55:20
Yeah, maybe a perspective from an Advisory Council member to in terms of.
And for for me, I'd like to share a few things that you know, I shared this budget request in the chat and just just to be clear and maybe I can share my screen to show you all.
When the when the law was passed.
This was a budget request that was put together by people who were advocating.
The passage of the law.
And what we did was include exactly what ANR was.
Also advocating for, which is down here, they were advocating for funding for staff for the civil Rights Coordinators Title 6 coordinators.
I'm not sure if you got all this money.

They were they.
They specifically requested that they needed funding in 2023 for the environmental justice mapping tool. At the time, it didn't make sense.
At the time to me, because.
The mapping tool is the last deliverable of the law.
There's a lot that comes before the mapping tool, so it concerned us at the time.
But what we did was we requested an additional $180,000.
This was never supported by an R when they testified in support of the budget, but this is what we we wanted stipends for the Advisory Council at a higher level. We had research done to show that other councils get paid at higher levels.
We wanted money for facilitation.
Which we still don't have any facilitation of these meetings.
We wanted money for professional development, for the Advisory Council and Interagency Committee members, and then this part $100,000 for community engagement.
To both like Recruit Environment Council members, but really to inform the work of Council members.
And so we.
Here this is.
We we figured that the the Council members themselves.
Could be the ones who were engaging in their community and had a budget, you know, to host community engagement in their in their community. So to do our role and and and inform these processes with a budget and so.
That now what we were told at the time, what we got was I think $500,000 just for the mapping tool.
But that a chunk of that money would be used for community engagement.
Don't worry.
And so now we're at this point. And so from from my perspective.
In terms of the mapping tool RFP for clarity, I've almost every council member meeting I've raised a concern over last year. Last July, I think, was when we first started talking about it, that we're putting the mapping tool ahead like the cart in front of the horse.
And then there was, I think in October, November, there was a draft shared about the mapping tool.
We didn't have access to it, though, when it was shared, so I know I clicked the link.

It requested access and then we never talked about it again.
Until this last meeting, when we were told that the RFP was out, the contractor, you know, meeting had already happened the day before and we were not allowed to see it.
And that's really the part that was incredibly troublesome because we were being told that this public RFP was not even allowed to be shared with us when it's live on the Internet.
So.
So that's, that's where like it.
It's it's.
That's that's one thing the community engagement RFP is something that we have not been involved in at all in terms of developing even the concept around that. I'm I'm not sold on that at all.
I'm not in favor of of hiring a community engagement contractor.
But we could talk about it as a like.
I'd love to actually be able to talk to the Council members about this, like and and have back and forth with them.
To really understand what people feel about this but.
I would just say that.
In terms of yeah, moving forward with with any RFPs, well, yeah, I I guess I could.
I could just leave it at that, but I I feel that yeah, we're we're.
We're at risk of spending money on a map by the same people who make every other map that we use in Vermont.
We have so many mapping tools in Vermont.
This was supposed to be something different and so it's like.
What good does this do?
You like? I'm not even convinced.
Like, let's keep the money.
Like, why have a map if we're not gonna do all the other pieces of what environmental justice really is?
It's not a map that's gonna help people.
So until we really have a concept behind the map, I don't understand why we're pushing so hard. I and I do.
I understand everything that was said, but at the same time it's just like.
Is it gonna help people?

I I think the benefit spending guidance analysis is gonna help people to understand where is money being spent around the state.
How our burdens and benefits being distributed right now, so that we can make better decision making. But I think there's so much more that's more important in this bill and the map is something that like, it's like the default thing that every state does just to say they.
Have an EJ map and it's like so I'm I'm more on the side of like give up the money and let's do our job really well instead of focusing on this on this and and spending a bunch of state resources on something that maybe will never help anyone.
1.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:01:01
OK.
Thank you, Jennifer. That's.
Like you just shared a lot.
Let's see if I can.
Help shed some light on some of the things that you said.
So the first one is the budget that you presented.
That was before the enactment of the bill that was not captured by the bill, so that budget.
Did not get legislative action support right, that was not supported by the legislature.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 1:01:34
Well, it was during the negotiations around appropriation.
This was a this was a memo we submitted to the Appropriations Committee and testified.
And you know, it was at the same time ANR was testifying about how much money it would cost them to implement the bill.
And then we came in with this additional $180,000 request for support in addition to what ANR was requesting, which was $700,000.
That's what this is.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:01:59
Yes.

Byrne, Jennifer 1:02:00
And yes, the $180,000 was not accepted.
In the.

Raimundi, Karla 1:02:03
Nor the 700.
And so that's the that's, that's what's that's what's challenging about, you know, the process of creating a bill is there are many desires that I communicated and some of them are communicated as bottom lines, the agency of natural resources needs X&Y resources to be able to.
Implement to the satisfaction of the law.
These certain deliverables, right and so.
As Jennifer.
Demonstrate like showed on the screen, there was a request that was not met with appropriations, right?
So we don't even have the full amount of money that we had requested was needed in order to do this work appropriately.
I I. So that's with regards to those appropriations and that budget, Jennifer, as you know, the law did not capture that. And right now there's nothing that the agency of Natural resources can do nor our unit can do.
To pay directly, Advisory Council members, that is not an appropriation that was made.
And so to the extent.

Byrne, Jennifer 1:03:10
Not paying us supporting work that the Advisory Council members do is sort of what I'm I'm saying. Like can we get a little bit creative beyond just hiring an outside contractor and say the Advisory Council was going to do this work and it's going to cost money, not?
To pay us, you know, but to host community meetings like do that, that workflow. I'm just saying there might be another way if we could talk about it and develop something different.

Raimundi, Karla 1:03:29

Yes.
Yeah. And we did talk about this and actually this is in some public meetings and we can go back and identify what those meetings when those meetings took place. And I do also remember, you know, conversations that you and I had Jennifer earlier earlier on in this process.
Where where we were trying to figure out whether we could use some of the appropriations that the law.
Like secured.
For the mapping tool to support the work of Advisory Council members, and this was a point of conversation before the Advisory Council.
Another thing that is important to consider Jennifer is the extent to which we can actually operationalize what you're recommending really depends on the capacity of the of the Advisory Council members to do what you're proposing they do right and capacity. As we all know, is a challenge.
We are all very tapped for resources and what we've received in you know in in the many communications and conversations that we've had one-on-one with Advisory Council members is the lack of capacity.
So in order to to restructure the way that you're suggesting, first a bill that is not under our.
We we do not have the capacity to do that, Jennifer.
We cannot eliminate a deliverable that is captured in law that has appropriations and say we're not going to do that, we're going to use that money.
That action is not supported.
It's contrary to law, and so we are not.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 1:05:19
But the Advisory Council could absolutely, if we were able to discuss as a group, we could put any kind of recommendations forward that we wanted.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:05:28
You could make you could make recommendations for sure.
I also wonder about, you know, the statement that you made regarding the mapping tool and that that's just something states do to say they're doing something. And I would like to bring attention to the fact that environmental justice mapping tools are incredibly important for.

Regulatory agencies and state agencies to be able to actually.
Embed environmental justice principles into the their daily operations it without without a tool that helps agencies and other folks on the ground assess where the real needs are.
It is very difficult to do several things, one to redistribute.
Expenditures prioritize areas of work and geographies.
And then also identify.
Opportunities for certain entities, like municipalities, for example, to be able to apply for funds, and this is a big problem that Vermont has, because relying on the federal tools that the federal tools.
Sorry, I said at the beginning that I was going to try to.
Excuse me, the federal tools that.
We were relying on and some entities were relying on to apply for funds and grants did not really provide.
Effectively, the support that these entities needed to secure funds now, as you all know, these federal tools are no longer in existence.
So I I I caution against saying that the environmental justice mapping tool.
That has appropriations in law to get done for Vermont on behalf of Vermonters.
Is not a useful thing, especially now that the federal tools that existed are no longer available.
They got. They were taken down, so I caution against making such a statement.
Now in terms of the supporting of the work of the Council.
Call.
There are no appropriations to do that.
I think it would be great.
And this is something that we've attempted to discuss. It would be great if the Advisory Council.
Could make recommendations.
About how to do that to the General Assembly, ultimately, ultimately.
Such support will have to come from legislative action.
And so there are ways in which and we had a really rich conversation with Walter when we met with Walter, 11, about how to influence the legislative process and the incredible ability and capacity that I think the Advisory Council and the influence that the Advisory Council may.
Have on these conversations, but the extent to which.

We are.
Just.
Going through this process as a way.
To.
As a way to, you know, identify, you know what the obstacles are and challenges are without. Without the focus on problem solving, because we're, we're all in this together, we are all in this together.
I can assure you.
And reassure you that.
What our unit wants?
Is generally wanted by this group.
We want to transcend and continue challenging, inequitable structures that impinge on the work that we're doing.
We call out whenever we see inequities.
They get called out.
They get presented to our leadership and the leadership of other.
Entities that are part of this work.
What I invite us all to do is to see these challenges as opportunities to problem solve.
And right now, given given the current circumstances and what's happening at the federal level, I think this is more important than ever.
And so I understand, Jennifer and I sense a lot of frustration.
You know when when you are communicating, what you're communicating and I share the the frustration. Unfortunately, the things that you identified for us as viable alternatives are not viable alternatives.
Because they depend on legislative action and we cannot force General Assembly to appropriate certain funds to do certain work, that, although it would be ideal.
We just have, we just don't have.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 1:11:01
I'm not presenting anything.
I'm sharing something that was shared years ago.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:11:04
Yeah.

Byrne, Jennifer 1:11:04
We haven't had time to talk about any kind of viable alternative.
So like that's I'm just saying what the discussion was a couple years ago.

Raimundi, Karla 1:11:13
Yeah. No, I understand and I appreciate that.
But to to the extent that there was a a recommendation, an idea there to take monies that were appropriated for the mapping tool to support the work of the Advisory Council, that unfortunately is not something that we have the ability to do.
As it's contrary to law.

Birch, Juliet 1:11:40
I just wanna take a minute to acknowledge that this is around the time in the agenda that we would have opened for public comment. We don't have any members of the public on the call at the moment. So I just wanted to acknowledge that.
And I see that Victor's hand is up, so I'll pass it to you. Victor.

victor davila 1:12:01
It it it?
Yeah, just another reminder, I'm not.
I can't vote on it, but that there was a vote that needed to be called earlier, and time might elapse soon.
But also.
It does sound like it would be useful.
To have folks meet outside of this space to discuss next steps as council groups, and I know we all have limited capacity.
But it might be worth.
At least temporarily stretching that capacity to a line moving forward.
And I'd be happy to send out an e-mail with a doodle poll to see when folks are free and available to meet.
If that would be something that folks would be interested in.

Davis, Xusana 1:12:47
Can I ask a clarifying question?

Do you mean meet in groups or meet one-on-one with you?
I just want to make sure I'm that's something that I could support.
I just want to make sure that a we're not doing too much duplicate work and be that we're not violating open meeting law by having too many of us in a room discussing the the the Council's business.

VD **victor davila** 1:13:09
Typically we are, if I remember correctly, we are allowed to meet outside of this time frame.
That's why there's like hours reporting thing for work done outside of this.
Am I mistaken on that?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:13:24
Yes, you the the only kind of limitation to that is that there can't be a group larger than or that meets quorum or exceeds quorum or else it's considered a public meeting and is subject to the same requirements.

VD **victor davila** 1:13:40
OK.
Well, then I I personally need to do one on ones if everyone anyway.
At some point, so I'd be happy to set up one-on-one. So just talk to people one-on-one.
But also, if folks know who has a burning desire to meet and discuss, that would be under the allotted limit, we could maybe set that up because to make things moving forward in the future, a lot simpler.
And I saw a thumbs up.
So that's confirmation from at least one person.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:14:12
Thing that has come up in some of the like brief check insurance we've had with folks over the last two weeks is maybe the possibility of.
Having executive sessions for your group, you know if they're if you would like to meet.
Meet as a full group or like with or more with or exceeding quorum. But you know not necessarily in a public forum.

Maybe if you need to have private conversations, you're not you.
You would not like to have.
Public at this time.
That's something that could be possible and I would just opening it up as an as a an option. You would have to discuss it as a Council and decide if that's something you wanna move forward with. But just posing it.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:14:53
Can I?
Thanks for that.
I'm so sorry to be this guy, but can I just say one more thing about that?
Again, that's something I would 100% support.
State of Vermont does outline the specific types of conversations and rules about when you can do executive session. So as long as, as long as that fits within those categories, then again, that's something that I would support. And those categories include things like if you're having a person.
Discussion like, let's say this, Council wanted to hire.
Somebody or discuss applications?
For candidates or something like that, that would be one of the allowable uses. Or if we're having a conversation about contracts and money, like if we're gonna award a contract, that would definitely be one or anything.
That's I think there's a catch all one that's like, you know, any discussion that if it were held in an open forum, would somehow disadvantage the group or the state or something like that.
So if we wanted to talk about something like vendors and contracting that possibly might fit into that one.
But there's more guidance on the Secretary of State's website.
That will help us determine that. But like I said, I'm not trying to say no to any of this stuff.
I just want to make sure that nobody can, you know, call us on any kind of legal or, you know, inclusion violations because that is a separate headache in itself to respond to afterwards.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:16:15
Yeah, thanks for sharing that, Susanna.

That's really great. I feel like, you know, this might be a discussion you all would like to have. Perhaps when there's more time at another public meeting in the coming months to decide if executive session is something you'd like to pursue.
But also acknowledging that we have like 5 minutes or so left in this meeting and you know if if we all wanted to talk about how we want to move forward next steps, there were a couple of things that were posed throughout this meeting that maybe we could.
Either readdress or tie a little, you know, tie up before we close out.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:16:57
I would like to reiterate the ASK that we've presented to this body multiple times about a mapping tool task group.
You know I don't.
I don't think I need to under score the importance of having access to some of you during this process.
We are also asking Advisory Council members if.
Any of you would like to participate in the selection committee, that is welcome.
And actually highly desirable.
Again, we understand the capacity constraints.
But you know right now we are in the process of identifying.
Who would like and has capacity to be in the selection committee?
Something else that I would like to share.
Is that we are creating.
Processes to ensure that we do an impartial review of proposals, and so I think it would be incredibly helpful.
If one or two of you would like to participate in the task group regarding the mapping tool and that would support the evaluation of the statement of work for the GIS component.
Of the mapping tool work and also.
It would, you know, help us conceptualize and move forward with the Community engagement.
Component which is its own separate request for proposal.
So I just would like to reiterate that those asks are out there. We have yet to identify members.
Who would be interested and able to?

Support those tasks you can.
You know how you can reach those? You can send us an e-mail teams.
And yes, just wanted to reiterate that that's still an ask that we're very much interested in exploring with you all.

Barrett, Kim 1:19:22
Yeah. And that's pretty immediate in one-on-one phone calls, a lot of folks expressed interest and it would be really helpful because we'd like to schedule meetings and things like that.
With this eval committee.
So if you're interested in supporting or if you're interested, I put something in the chat about this.
But if you're interested in in seeing the eval criteria and advising on it, those are things that we have to do within the next, like we're gonna have.
Yeah. And I'm actually not sure if we can vote and I don't know if if we're counting Susana and Angela as one or two folks.
I don't know if I pronounced your name right, but you can let me know.

Davis, Xusana 1:20:12
Yeah.

Lasso-Jimenez, Angela she/her/ella 1:20:14
Yeah. No, it's OK.

Davis, Xusana 1:20:17
I'm sorry. I yeah, I didn't get the opportunity earlier in the conversation, but just folks allow me to introduce Angela.

Lasso-Jimenez, Angela she/her/ella 1:20:18
No.

Davis, Xusana 1:20:23
So Jimenez, she is a staff person in our office.
She's our new policy and research analyst.
Historically, my backup for this committee has been a different staff person, but

Angela comes to us with a really deep passion for environmental justice matters, and so we've made her my backup. So in the event that I can't make it to a meeting, you might see her feeling.
In for me, and so to answer your question, Kim.
Since I'm here, I'll just go ahead and participate in any votes that need to happen.
And she would just be my proxy in the event that I can't for whatever reason.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:21:06
I'm trying to write something in the chat Juliet.
I don't know if you wanna support with the vote.
And enable account.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:21:18
Yeah. So when you say the vote, we're referring specifically to the Minutes approval.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 1:21:23
Yeah, they're possible.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:21:24
Yeah, I think that Victor's point about not being formally appointed to the Council just yet is one that is.
Really poignant.
So I think with that in mind, we don't really, we don't actually have quorum to approve the minutes, but we can definitely bring.
The March 28th minutes and the minutes for today's meeting.
To the next meeting that will be happening next week, so I don't know that we should vote now, but we can definitely do it next next, next week's meeting.

MA **Maryam Shabbir Abbasi (she/her)** 1:22:01
Oh, it's only one minute just left.
Sorry, I joined late I think.
Moving forward, I would like to have like more discussions about how we can engage communities and how advising Members can be like part of that because that since the beginning there was something I was really interested to like, interact with communities, know from them what are their like.

Concerns instead of like relying on existing research studies done by different people and then.
Try to address those concerns.
Environmental justice related concerns, especially in these political situation going on there, would be like a lot more environmental concerns or environmental justice by the communities in Vermont specifically.
And how agency can support us on that if that can be put up on agenda point, I would be like really interested.
In discussing more in the future.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:22:57
Yeah, I was actually just gonna put on the chat. Mariam.
That what you communicated here that your priorities, community engagement by advisory members, that that actually really aligns with how we conceptualize the, the implementation of the mapping tool.
So I was gonna ask here on the chat whether you have interest in attending some of the meetings of the Community Engagement Task group?
That's another task group.
That we've identified as being really important not only for the mapping tool, but really just the regular functioning of.
The Advisory Council.
I know there are concerns with regards to capacity, but you know, unless we have willing Members.
Volunteer them their their time.
We will not know what the needs are, what structures are needed and.
One of the roles of the community engagement contractor is to communicate directly with each of you and identify.
Identify interventions and tools to bolster engagement from the communities that you represent.
So there is there is big opportunity here to influence this process.
So I you know, this is also another invitation to consider community engagement.
Work in a way that would allow us to directly include.
Perspectives of council members again, that that community engagement task group we provided a document some time ago about what that would look like and it will complement the GIS work and the community engagement work.

So it's really important that if you have interest and strong.
Thoughts and ideas about how to move this work forward that we have access to that information and the way that we can do that is via task groups so that we're not hitting against quorum.

Maryam Shabbir Abbasi (she/her) 1:25:15
Yeah, I'm just trying to reach out here.
Yeah.
Yeah, I would like to be part of those task groups.

Raimundi, Karla 1:25:34
Fantastic.
Fantastic. I I I think it is really important and I understand the the capacity constraints, but we are able and this is something that we've done with the environmental benefits spending Guide Task Group, we are able to tailor engagement based on the availability of the Members who are.
Contributing their expertise to the task groups. So, for example, one of the things that we've done with environmental benefit.
Task group is.
To create a way in which folks can work asynchronously.
But then share content and via Juliet's and Kim's work, we make sure that all of the Members are informed on what's happening and what work is being advanced.
So we are very much attuned to the capacity question and challenge.
So please be assured that we will work with you to make your contribution.
Contributions be shared with others, even if you cannot attend all of the meetings of the task group.
The important thing for all is that we get.
We get your input right that we get your knowledge and advice.

Barrett, Kim 1:27:03
All right. We are over time.
So thank you all for joining and you'll see an e-mail from us later today.
Yeah. And it would be great if you all responded.
You know, if there's other things that you want to communicate to each other.

OK.
Thank you.

LS **Lasso-Jimenez, Angela she/her/ella** 1:27:29
Bye.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:27:29
Thank you. Bye.

DX **Davis, Xusana** 1:27:30
Thanks everybody.

MA **Maryam Shabbir Abbasi (she/her)** 1:27:30
Thank you all.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 1:27:31
Thank you.
Have a beautiful rest of your day.

VD **victor davila** 1:27:33
Have a good one.

Barrett, Kim stopped transcription