

## Diversity Advisory Council Meeting Notes

March 9, 2021

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### Attending from the council:

Susan Badger-Jones, special projects consultant  
Charity Fain, Community Energy Project  
Dolores Martinez, EUVALCREE  
Indika Sugathadasa, PDX HIVE  
Shane Davis, City of Portland  
Cheryl Roberts, African American Alliance for Homeownership  
Sherry Tran, Bend small business owner  
Rebecca Descombes, Native American Youth and Family Center  
Oswaldo Bernal, OBL Media

### Attending from Energy Trust:

Michael Colgrove	MacKenzie Kurtzner
Emily Findley	Susan Jowaiszas
Cheryle Easton	Kirstin Pinit
Elizabeth Fox	Karl Whinnery
Wendy Bredemeyer	Steve Lacey
Tyrone Henry	Andy Grighun
Debbie Goldberg Menashe	Phil Degens
Ryan Crews	Ashley Bartels
Hannah Cruz	Jay Ward
Juliana Hairston	Matt Getchell
Kenji Spielman	Dan Rubado
Wendy Gibson	Amber Cole
Julianne Thacher	Amanda Zuniga
Caryn Appler	Kathleen Belkhatat
Sue Fletcher	Mana Haeri
Shelly Carlton	Fred Gordon
Thad Roth	

### Others attending:

Mark Kendall, Energy Trust board	Frederick Randall II, Small Business Utility Advocates
Tina Brooks, Pacific Power	Jenny Sorich, CLEAResult
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility Commission	Knowledge Murphy, Multnomah County
Ruchi Sadhir, Oregon Department of Energy	Heather Moline, NW Energy Coalition
	Tina Schnell, ASK Energy
	Shelly Beaulieu, TRC

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### 1. Welcome, Agenda Review and Group Reflection

Tyrone Henry, Energy Trust's diversity, equity and inclusion lead, convened the meeting at 10 a.m. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available at Energy Trust's website at <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/diversity-advisory-council-meetings/>.

Tyrone Henry led the group in a reflection on a quote by Dr. Patricia Bath, the first African American woman to achieve a residency in ophthalmology and gain a medical patent. The quote addressed the limitations of majority thinking in the science community. Council members observed parallels between Dr. Bath's own blindness and how majority thinking can blind groups of people. One member shared how the quote prompted thinking about how we measure value and success of people of color, and that the value of their lived experience is not seen as valuable compared with "expertise."

## **2. Legislation and Policy Update**

### *Topic summary*

Staff presented an update on state legislative activity and the status of bills Energy Trust has been monitoring. Staff reviewed Oregon Public Utility Commission grant agreement language outlining the organization's prohibition on lobbying. Staff make new legislators aware of these guidelines and reference the organization's non-advocacy role whenever responding to requests for information on pending legislation. A bill proposing to modernize the public purpose charge, HB 3141, has received a hearing and now has a work session scheduled to consider amendments to the bill. Staff reviewed the status of other energy and equity-related bills that are moving forward.

### *Discussion*

Council members expressed support for continued monitoring of a bill aimed at distributing reparations to Black Oregonians. Staff is open to feedback and guidance from the council on what bills Energy Trust should monitor or engage with that advance racial justice. The council said the potential impact of the bill on the Black community could be transformational, allowing Black individuals to purchase new appliances and become homeowners. One member asked for a status update on the Oregon Public Utility Commission moratorium on residential electricity disconnections that was slated to end in April (Rebecca Descombes). Staff shared the moratorium was extended to June, starting with 15-day notices to customers allowed June 15. The council suggested some of the demographic data that Energy Trust has begun to collect on underserved customers could be useful in considering what reparations ought to be if the bill were successful (Susan Badger-Jones).

### *Next steps*

Staff will continue monitoring bills and provide information on request give an update at the next meeting of the Diversity Advisory Council.

## **3. Customer Insights Study Report Findings**

### *Topic summary*

Marketing staff presented results from the Customer Insights Study, which will be available in an upcoming report. The study included responses from participants and non-participants from 2013 to 2019. It revealed the method Energy Trust has been using for the past few years to gauge participation rates using census tract data does not accurately reflect the demographics of participants. As a result, work is underway to determine a more effective way to measure progress toward participation goals in the 2021 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Operations Plan.

### *Discussion*

Council members expressed support for the work to evaluate the census tract approach and that a majority of the organizational marketing budget go to increasing awareness among underserved customers. One council member who had reviewed the draft report stated there was a lot of valuable information and recommended council members review its executive summary (Susan Badger-Jones). A member said it can be challenging to collect survey

responses from the Hispanic community and offered to support efforts to do so (Oswaldo Bernal). Staff noted each survey respondent received \$15.

*Next steps*

Staff will make the full study and presentation slides available to council members. The council is invited to provide additional input on ways to improve awareness in underserved communities and suggestions for how to effectively measure awareness.

#### **4. Update on DAC Engagement Collaboration Pathways**

*Topic summary*

Staff brought an update on a proposal from last month to create a more streamlined and effective system for council members to provide input on program and service design. Staff recognized the council's perspective would be valuable on a wider variety of initiatives than just program offerings. As a result, the project scope has been broadened to include other entities at the organizational level. Collaborative engagements are expected to typically be short and conclude within a few weeks.

*Discussion*

No discussion.

*Next steps*

Staff is gathering additional feedback to create a selective interest survey to allow council members to identify categories of interest and create a profile allowing staff visibility on who to engage.

#### **5. TRC Contracting Update**

*Topic summary*

TRC staff provided an update on progress toward implementing its new contract managing the Existing Buildings program. TRC was selected last year as the program's Program Management Contractor and took over the work in 2021. The contract features a requirement to spend at least 20% of the subcontracting budget with companies that meet diversity requirements in the first year and increase that by 2.5% each subsequent year. TRC staff is taking steps to promote a positive experience for these subcontractors by not marking up subcontract costs, implementing a faster payment process and ensuring right-size contracts to fit the business. The program is also introducing a new type of position, community-based liaisons (independent consultants who are leaders or influencers within a community) to provide insight on program strategies, offers and messaging.

*Discussion*

Council members asked if TRC has a history of engaging underserved markets. Staff stated the company has robust experience serving low-income multifamily customers and some experience reaching communities of color and Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity-certified businesses. The group discussed the need to slow down and be more intentional when working with new customer groups and community agencies. The council expressed support for the collaborative approach TRC described. Staff meets with community-based liaisons weekly and their feedback has already directly impacted programs.

*Next steps*

TRC will implement the Existing Buildings program in 2021 with the support of its advising and partner entities.

**6. Announcements**

Oregon Public Utility Commission staff briefly spoke about the Energy Trust 2021 diversity performance metrics set by the commission in February and previewed changes to the development process for 2022 metrics.

**7. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m. The next council meeting will be a joint session with the Conservation Advisory Council and the Renewable Energy Advisory Council on April 14 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Zoom.