

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 17, 2024
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Rachel Carson State Office
Building, and via Teams**

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT:

In-Person:

Chairperson Elizabeth Marx
Vice Chairperson Lindsay Baxter
Patrick Henderson
Jaret Gibbons
Joe Sherrick (for Chairperson DeFrank)
Adam Walters

Kevin Warren
Steven Krug
Flora Cardoni
Terry Bossert
Greg Czarnecki (for Cindy Dunn)
Glendon King (for Rep. Stambaugh)
Rep. Ben Sanchez
Jason Kelso
Kevin Warren
Perry Stambaugh
Terry Bossert

Online:

Jason Kelso
Jennifer Greenburg
Marc Mondor

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Christopher Sandvig, Sara Innamorato, Jenny Greenberg, Paul Morris, Zachery Smith

PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) STAFF:

In-Person: Lindsay Byron, Chris Nafe, Kerry Campbell, David Althoff, Naimul Islam, Lena Smith, Garrett Strunk

Online: Heather Cowley, Michelle Ferguson, Robert Reiley, Laura Rigge, Maria Solomidou, Collen Unroe

INVITED GUESTS:

Patrick Martin

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Online:

Trent Machamer, Roy Gothie, Morton Rubenstein, Robert Gottlieb, Brian Smiley, Paul DiRenzo, Andrew McMenamin, Emily Wildman, Robert Routh, Rachel Goodgal, Alice Lu, David Hess

MEETING: The December 17, 2024, meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC or Committee) was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Chairperson Elizabeth Marx. With 12 of 21 seated members present at the start of the meeting; a quorum was established.

MINUTES: The October 22, 2024, CCAC meeting minutes were presented to the Committee for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Baxter and seconded by Mr. Gibbons. No one opposed the motion and Mr. Walters abstained from voting. The motion to approve the minutes without amendments was carried by a voice vote and passed.

MEETING SUMMARY: (This narrative provides a summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting. It is not a transcript of the proceedings.)

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Energy Manager Program

Dr. Chris Nafe provided an overview of the Energy Manager Program in collaboration with Mr. Patrick Martin of Wilson Engineering. The presentation highlighted the program's structure, key initiatives, and its impact on municipalities. The discussion emphasized the tailored approach to energy assessments, benchmarking efforts, and the collaborative work being done to meet the unique goals of participating communities.

Discussion

Mr. Sherrick asked whether energy assessments were required or simply recommended by the program. Mr. Martin clarified that energy assessments are typically recommended at the discretion of the program manager and are based on the priorities identified collaboratively with each municipality. He noted that some municipalities prioritize community-focused projects, while others emphasize operations. For example, in Doylestown, a benchmarking effort revealed that a building was consuming more energy than expected, leading to a recommendation for an energy assessment. Mr. Krug followed up by asking about program expansion. Dr. Nafe explained that the program has funding for four years, but expansion depends on available resources, contractor capacity, and municipal needs. When Mr. Krug inquired whether Wilson Engineering would remain the sole contractor, Dr. Nafe confirmed that the RFP stipulated a single contractor for the program's duration. Mr. Sherrick then asked if funding varied by municipality size, and Dr. Nafe clarified that funding is consistent and tied to the scope of work requested, with additional funds available when necessary.

Chairperson Marx raised concerns about the lack of environmental justice (EJ) communities in the program, highlighting the dominance of wealthier boroughs and suggesting collaboration with authorities like housing or water organizations. Dr. Nafe acknowledged the issue and explained that EJ communities are prioritized using metrics such as PennEnviro Screen, but capacity challenges often hinder their participation. To address this, Dr. Nafe and his team have been conducting outreach and considering partnerships with regional planning organizations to provide additional support. Chairperson Marx also asked about municipalities leveraging utility-funded resources like Act 129. Dr. Nafe explained that this depends on whether municipalities are served by regulated utilities or co-ops, as the latter may lack formal programs. Mr. Warren then asked about the contributions expected from participating agencies, and Dr. Nafe clarified

that technical services are free, with the primary contribution being internal time for data sharing and facility walk-throughs.

The discussion concluded with a focus on overcoming capacity challenges for EJ communities. Suggestions included simplifying entry points to the program, such as beginning with benchmarking efforts requiring minimal municipal involvement. Mr. Warren shared his experience with a similar program in Delaware, noting that simplicity could help engage communities with limited resources. Chairperson Marx emphasized the importance of addressing inequities in program access, acknowledging the great work being done while advocating for solutions to ensure that underserved communities benefit. Dr. Nafe reiterated his commitment to improving outreach and collaborating with regional organizations to support greater EJ community participation.

Home Energy Rebate Program Overview

Mr. Garrett Strunk, an Energy Specialist for the DEP, provided an overview of the Home Energy Rebate Program, aimed at reducing energy costs for Pennsylvania residents. The program includes two primary components: Home Efficiency Rebates (HER), which focus on retrofitting households to improve energy efficiency, with \$129,980,260 allocated for this initiative; and Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR), which encourage the adoption of energy-efficient electric appliances, with \$129,226,380 allocated for this initiative.

Discussion

Mr. Dave Althoff emphasized that designing and implementing a rebate program is an extremely challenging process. The complexity arises from the significant amount of information required to develop the program, create training plans, and manage outreach and community engagement. He noted that it could take considerable time to establish such a program and asked about its current progress. Mr. Strunk responded that the program's design initially focused on multifamily housing and the Home Energy Rebate (HER) program, as it seemed like a simpler starting point. However, the program encountered delays related to financing and determining whether the rebates would be sufficient to implement measures for multifamily dwellings. This led to a temporary pause as the team gathered insights from professional designers and interactions with other states. These efforts boosted confidence in moving forward with the HER program. Mr. Strunk stressed the HEAR and HER programs are being developed step-by-step alongside each other and may evolve over time.

Mr. Krug raised a question about outreach efforts to stakeholders. In response, Mr. Strunk confirmed that outreach had been extensive and included collaboration with energy efficiency programs to ensure effective application processes. Ms. Cardoni added that community outreach plans would be similar to past efforts. She suggested that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) create guides that are easy to share, not only with stakeholders in this meeting but also with state legislators. These legislators could distribute the information to their constituents via weekly or monthly email blasts to maximize awareness. Ms. Cardoni emphasized the importance of widely disseminating information about these programs, as many people remain unaware of existing funding opportunities, such as tax credits from the Inflation

Reduction Act. She expressed a strong desire to ensure eligible individuals across the state are informed about these programs.

Mr. Warren inquired about the structure of point-of-sale rebates and how income qualification would be managed, acknowledging the inherent challenges in combining these elements. Garrett explained that in the HER program, contractors would oversee the application process, which could be completed either on paper or online. Income qualification would be determined as part of the application, with opportunities to identify other programs the applicant might qualify for. After approval, a case manager would collaborate with the contractor to assess the necessary work. The rebate value would be deducted directly from the invoice at the point of sale, ensuring that the consumer sees an upfront discount. This approach simplifies the process for the consumer and eliminates the need for upfront payments.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the program's step-by-step approach, the importance of effective stakeholder outreach, and efforts to simplify rebate processes for consumers while ensuring accessibility to underserved populations.

DEP Updates

Ms. Heather Cowley provided an update on the “When Disaster Strikes” training, highlighting the DEP's collaboration with PEMA using FEMA's BRIC funding to educate staff, including elected officials, township and borough managers, and disaster facility managers, about energy efficiency and building energy codes as part of a mitigation strategy. Webinars, flyers, and articles have been created, leading to scheduled training sessions in Allegheny County on January 9 (location TBD), February 12, and at PEMA HQ on March 25.

Ms. Michelle Ferguson also spoke about the Energy Auditor Training (EAT) program. DEP submitted a \$1.78 million grant application to the US Department of Energy under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in July 2024, which was awarded on October 24, 2024. The EAT program aims to address the growing demand for residential energy audits. The project will train 150 individuals, with most participants expected to earn Building Performance Institute (BPI) Home Energy Professional certifications. The program is supported by various partners, including the Clean Energy Center at Pennsylvania College of Technology, the Energy Coordinating Agency of Philadelphia, and Action Housing Inc. of Pittsburgh. Recruitment and training will begin in 2025, with a contract expected to be negotiated by June or July 2025.

Next Meeting

Ms. Lindsay Byron reminded the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 18, 2025, and shared a proposed agenda for the meeting.

New Business

No new business was discussed.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Sherrick and seconded by Chairperson Marx, motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:36 am.