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[April 22, 2021](#)

[Summaries of the CAC, Advisory Panel and Working Group Meetings - More from April](#)

Land Use and Local Government Advisory Panel – Wednesday, April 14, 2021

By Jeff Jones

The work of most Climate Action Council advisory panels is beginning to wind down. The Land Use & Local Government Advisor Panel, for one, will be delivering its report to the CAC on May 10th. This is after conducting 8 open-to-the-public panel meetings since September, with over a hundred comments from the public, 2 public engagement sessions and 2 local government round tables. The panel's Land Use, Clean Energy and Carbon Sequestration sub-groups delivered their reports for final consideration by panel members at the April 14th meeting. The late-forming Climate Adaptation and Resilience subgroup will continue to meet until it delivers its report to the CAC on June 8th. Public comments are still being accepted via email to: LULG@dos.ny.gov or by mail to: Adaptation and Resilience Recommendations c/o Mark Lowery, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-1030.

Subgroup reports on the 14th focused on themes developed at previous meetings and working sessions, offering Advisory Panels members and the public a final opportunity to comment.

The Land Use subgroup highlighted the theme of multi-municipal scale planning guiding future growth, redevelopment and conservation. A smart growth approach featuring transit-oriented development is recommended. To improve, assist and incentivize municipal government level planning, additional state guidance is advised. Expansion of Regional Economic Development Councils to include staff trained in planning and climate related measures utilizing improved state-level materials, including tools for measuring success and model local laws backed up by tax incentives is being suggested. Panel member Juan Camilo Osorio urged that, consistent with CLCPA goals, sharper definitions of smart growth impacts are needed to ensure that disadvantaged communities benefit from smart growth and related initiatives and avoid unwanted outcomes such as gentrification.

Clean energy recommendations include plowing money saved through energy efficiency measures back into local government budgets. Training for access to clean energy jobs

is a priority. As one of the fastest growing job sectors in the country, access for workers from disadvantaged communities is critical. Data dashboards to help local governments identify their carbon footprint, evaluating how energy is used in the transportation sector and a local greenhouse gas emissions inventories are all recommended.

The Carbon Sequestration panel primarily focused its work on wetland preservation, with the understanding that the Agriculture and Forestry Advisory Panel is taking the lead on its defined interests. Stabilization and protection of wetland habitats will be critical to adaptation strategies for climate impacts such as sea-level rise and increasingly impactful storm events.

Climate Action Council - Monday, April 12, 2021

By Anastasia Gordon

The **Climate Action Council** (CAC) [meeting](#) on April 12 was dedicated to advisory panel [recommendations](#). These proposed mitigation strategies will be considered by the CAC for inclusion in the scoping plan to implement to NY's climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Among the panels that presented included the [Agriculture and Forestry](#), [Waste](#), and [Energy-Intensive and Trade-Exposed Industries](#) (EITE) Panels. In addition, the Just Transition Working Group (JTWG) presented its [recommendations](#) to transition NY's workforce to a clean energy economy. The next CAC meeting on May 10 will feature the report outs on recommendations of the remaining advisory panels.

[Recently appointed](#) President and CEO of NYSERDA, Doreen Harris kicked off the meeting with several state updates. She [announced](#) the designation of Sarah Osgood Executive Director and Sameer Ranade Climate Justice Advisor of the CAC as well as the green economy investments and \$3 billion [Environmental Bond Act](#) that were passed in the NYS fiscal year 2022 budget. This was then followed by back-to-back to report outs from three panels and the Just Transition Working Group.

Commissioner Richard Ball (NYS Agriculture and Markets) Panel presented on behalf of the Agriculture and Forestry Panel. The Panel [recommends](#) nutrient and alternative management and precision feed forage and herd management to reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions as well as recommendations to increase carbon sequestration in forests and on farms. Next Deputy Commissioner Martin Brand outlined the [mitigation strategies](#) of the Waste Panel. These strategies focus on aggressive initiatives to reduce methane leaks and divert organics from landfills (the largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through organics reduction and recycling. Other recommendations include transforming wastewater treatment plants to capture beneficial products such as biogas, green job development, and continued research on the climate impacts from solid waste.

One recommendation proposed by both the Waste and Agriculture and Forestry Panels is with regards to the production of renewable natural gas (RNG). This was met with mixed views amongst Panel members. Bob Howarth, cautioned against growing biofuel crops on prime lands and urged them to have a quantitative analysis on full lifecycle emphasizing that as a transportation fuel, “you are better off using diesel.” Raya Salter (NY Renews) referred to RNG as a false solution explaining its limited capacity in contributing to the achievement of the CLCPA goals and providing environmental benefits. Peter Iwanowicz (Environmental Advocates NY) further added that biogas contributes to net co-pollutants locally and encourages the build out of fossil fuel infrastructure.

There were also concerns over anaerobic digestors (ADs) that produce RNG. Dennis Elsenbeck (Viridi Parente) pointed out that they fail due to high electricity interconnection costs. On the other hand, Donna DeCarolis (National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation) and co-chair of the utility consultation group noted that the group could assist with this challenge. She also encouraged the Council to “be inclusive in options because we have a long way to go” pointing to an American Gas Foundation [study](#) which shows limited but substantial potential of RNG in NY.

The [EITE recommendations](#), presented by the chair and CEO of Empire State Development Eric Gertler, incorporated providing financial incentives and technical assistance to decarbonize EITE sectors, creating procurement and providing economic incentives for businesses to capitalize low-carbon opportunities and grow the green economy, support for technical innovation, GHG reporting, and workforce development training.

During feedback, John Howard (Public Service Commission) raised the issue of the transfer of utility assets to be used for cryptocurrency behind-the-meter, which will be extremely energy intensive. Dennis Elsenbeck urged the Panel to consider the electrical infrastructure needed noting that utilities should be investing in distribution upgrades. He also reiterated that incentives and subsidies should be targeted to manufacturing green energy products in NYS. Peter Iwanowicz underscored the importance of Regional Economic Development Councils as mandated under Section 7 of the CLCPA while Donna DeCarolis identified utilities and resources such as the [Low Carbon Resources Initiative](#) to assist manufacturers in NYS decarbonize. She also raised the issue of investment leakage in addition to business leakage - a key requirement of mandate of the Panel.

Lastly, the JTWG report out on not only its [workforce development recommendations](#) but also presented its just transition principles as well as updates on its jobs study (to be completed in December 2021), business impacts, and [power plant inventory](#) and site reuse, as mandated under the CLCPA. Donna DeCarolis asked whether the Panel considered reliability, resilience, and fuel costs on EITEs, to which agency staff noted that these challenges were discussed but is ultimately under the purview of the Power

Generation Panel. Raya Salter enquired about whether there was a gender lens being applied to the job study while Rose Harvey (Regional Plan Association) suggested the [Excelsior Conservation Corps](#) DEC program as an additional clean energy jobs training program the working can consider. Dennis Elsenbeck also pointed out that there are numerous local workforce development initiatives that can be matched with green economy and manufacturing jobs.

Across of the Panels, Raya Salter called for more overarching plans and structural changes that support the statutory requirement for 40% of clean energy investments to go towards disadvantaged communities as opposed to a portfolio of projects. Questions by ACE NY's Anne Reynolds revealed that many of panel recommendations are a continuation or expansion of existing state incentives and programs. At the next CAC meeting on May 10, the Power Generation, Transportation, Energy Efficiency and Housing, and Land Use and Local Government (LULG) Panels will present their recommendations. There will also be a report out from the LULG on its climate adaptation and resilience recommendations and an update from the [Climate Justice Working Group](#) at the CAC's meeting in June. Meeting materials from this meeting can be found [here](#).