**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Commission on Climate Change and Resiliency**

**Quarterly Meeting**

March 12, 2020

Virtual Zoom Meeting

3:00 – 5:30 pm

**MEETING ATTENDEES**

*Commission Members*

Uwe Brandes

Sandra Knight

Chester McPherson

Molly Rauch

Vaughn Perry

Anthony Kane

Peggy Kelly

Kathryn Zyla

Melissa Lavinson

Allen Etter

Collin McCormick

*DOEE Staff*

Melissa Deas, DOEE

Sarah Barnes, DOEE

Kate Johnson, DOEE

*Guest Speakers*

Kevin Bush, HSEMA

Jen Croft, DGS

Dennis Chestnut, Environmental Activist

**MEETING MINUTES**

1. **Call to Order** - Meeting called to order at 3:01 pm by Uwe Brandes.
2. **Announcement of a Quorum** – A quorum is present.
3. **Approval of the Agenda** – A motion approved unanimously.
4. **Approval of Minutes** - A motion approved for December 11, 2019 with one abstention (Molly Rauch). A motion approved for the February 7, 2020 Strategy Workshop with one abstention (Molly Rauch). Melissa Deas’ name is misspelled in the body of the strategy workshop minutes.
5. **Chairman’s Remarks –** The Chairman thanked the Commissioners for their flexibility in meeting virtually in this time of uncertainty. This meeting marks the second public meeting of the calendar year, and the Chairman is excited that the work of Commission is becoming more settled and open to opportunities.

*Public Meetings:* It has been established that anytime the Commission meets with a quorum, the meeting is considered “official” and must be public.

*Interim Rules of Procedure:* The Commission is young, and there is still a lot of infrastructure that needs to be put in place to fully function. The Chairman has drafted preliminary Interim Rules of Procedure until formalized rules are established. The Interim Rules of Procedure acknowledge that the Commission is a product of D.C. Law 21-18 – the Commission on Climate Change and Resiliency Establishment Act of 2016 – and as such affirm that the Commission will follow the rules of public engagement. The interim rules suggest that all media requests received by any member of the Commission be directed to the Chairman for review. As formal guidelines for public communications with the Commission have yet to be established, particularly with respect to how the Commission receives public testimony, the interim rules recommend that time be set aside at the end of public meetings and be limited to a period of no more than three minutes for each organization or individual.

The Commission engaged in discussion regarding the Interim Rules of Procedure. Items discussed included the following:

* While Commission Members understand the need for an established process to respond to press inquiries, there is also a desire to act as ambassadors and speak to the work being done by the Commission. Through discussion, it was established that although it is fine to be an ambassador and acknowledge the Commission’s work, there must be sensitivity to the fact that Commissioners are representing the District as well as the Commission. It makes sense, at this point, to speak with one voice on Commission matters.
* The following language should be added to the document: All press inquiries and responses will be shared with all Commissioners.
* The need to determine whether Commission Members are considered District employees.
* The potential need to state the Rules for Correspondence directed at Commission Members.
* The need for a generic Commission mailbox.
* Three minutes is the standard time allotment of DC government for public comments. While this is a short period of time, Commission Members have the option to further engage individuals after those three minutes have ended.
* The Commission approved the Interim Rules of Procedure, with the understanding that more complete rules will be formalized in the future.

*Staff Support:* Following the 2020 Performance OversightHearing to the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, Councilmember Mary Cheh seemed responsive to the Commission’s lack of staff support. The Chairman is pleased to report that the Committee’s staff has reached out to clarify their commitment to assisting the Commission on this matter. They are currently working to include funds for a dedicated Commission staff person in the FY21 budget.

*Website:* The Chairman has reached out to OCTO regarding the development of a dedicated Commission on Climate Change and Resilience website. OCTO has acknowledged that there is no budget for website development; the Chairman requested interim work until there is a budget to move beyond the single page currently hosted by the Department of Energy and Environment.

*External Funding:* The Commission is able to receive funding from outside the District. The way that the legislation is written anticipates that the Commission would receive funds from either the federal government or other private sources. The Chairman has begun the process of investigating what would be necessary to receive funding from outside organizations, and suggests that further conversations to identify additional sources of funding can occur via phone rather than through formal subcommittees. One area of concern is the potential for the District to sweep Commission funds into the District’s general fund.

*Governance:* There is a need for additional work around the Commission’s governance and the way that the Commission communicates with the public. The largest risk to the Commission is that very few people know of its existence – the Commission’s ability to have impact hinges on public awareness.

1. **Presentation by DOEE**

Melissa Deas gave a presentation on the development of the District’s Comprehensive Heat Strategy. It is getting warmer; the District is already seeing an increase in heat waves, with associated risks to infrastructure, direct and indirect health risks, increased crime, and urban heat islands – certain areas of the District are up to 16.5 degrees warmer than other areas.

Sociodemographic information was integrated with information on ambient air temperatures and impervious surface and tree canopy to produce a combined heat map. DOEE worked with a researcher earlier this year to identify which heat interventions would have the greatest impact and to explore how the District can increase density while also addressing urban heat. Through modeling it was determined that tree canopy has the greatest impact in terms of cooling potential; it is possible to increase density and mitigate heat at the same time; varying building heights create shade; and cool and green roofs do not have a significant impact on ground temperatures. The District recognizes that both heat sensitivity and heat exposure must be addressed. Therefore, the Comprehensive Heat Strategy will look at cooling interventions as well as sociodemographic interventions.

District agencies and partners are currently in the process of identifying what community engagement should look like, with the expectation that community engagement will take place over the summer. Early discussions have emphasized the need to do outreach where people actually are; a train-the-trainer strategy can get people into communities to make sure those conversations are happening. Engagement is also an opportunity to do public health outreach/education. Some questions to answer include how the District can do a better job in its heat response, how to get people to take advantage of resilience hubs, how to reach at-risk residents, and whether it makes sense to have a tiered approach so that the District can communicate that there is a difference between a high-heat day and a heat emergency.

Following this period of engagement, DOEE will write the plan.

1. **Panel Discussion on Incorporating Climate Resilience in the Agency Budgeting Process**

**Kevin Bush, District Chief Resilience Officer and Chief of Resilience and Emergency Preparedness Division at HSEMA.**

*Climate Issues:* Climate mitigation and adaptation are central to Mr. Bush’s work in both of his roles. HSEMA manages the Hazard Mitigation Plan, which focuses on natural hazards and receives funding from the Federal government for a variety of applications. For example, these funds are used to help pay for DC Water’s Blue Plains floodwall and storm pumps. As the Chief Resilience Officer, Mr. Bush recognizes that resilient strategies should have a significant focus on climate change. His office has tried to elevate the climate issues identified in Climate Ready DC and to make sure the District is resourcing them effectively.

*Budgeting Process*: There are 60-plus agencies who all report to a Deputy Mayor. Clusters of agencies report to the City Administrator, which has a budget team. Each year, agencies send up their budget recommendations through their cluster. These recommendations are then shared with the Council and the budget is passed. In the last few years, rating agencies that rate public debt have started asking what the District is doing regarding resilience, mitigation, and cyber preparedness, and specifically asking detailed questions about how the District is dealing with climate risk. As a result, climate risk is now being incorporated into the budget formulation process. DGS actually builds a lot of this stuff, so it may not be in the top line budget. Makes the buildings cost more, but as a district we are requ.

*Looking Forward*: The Mayor has said that everything in the *Resilient DC* strategy represents a promise and is adamant that we are funding and resourcing these promises. This year, we went through each agency enhancement request and flagged where they supported the *Resilient DC* goals. Going forward, some of these may be the first to get cut because they are seen as a bonus. This attitude is shifting, but we need to make sure we resource the cutting-edge design of our facilities.

**Jen Croft, DGS Sustainability and Energy Division.**

*Climate Issues:* The Sustainability and Energy Division was created to reduce emissions from the District’s building stock and to green the buildings footprint. A number of divisions within DGS play a role in sustainability. DGS is looking at a variety of ways to have better visibility on when things go out of range, for example, when building temperatures get out of range. The Sustainability and Energy Division pays all utility and waste bills for District buildings, which allows the opportunity to integrate resilience into these processes. Other examples of what DGS is doing include installing solar in 50 District buildings and providing school education programs on waste management. Making the buildings footprint sustainable is ingrained throughout the agency, and DGS is now starting to look at integrating resilience into new construction.

*Budget:* Resilience and climate mitigation are embedded in budget line items. For the Sustainability and Energy Division, they are actually called out in separate line items; for other divisions they are not usually called out in a specific line item. It’s up to the client agency how to decide how they want to prioritize climate measures. As an example, DCPS decided to make two schools net zero, which is more expensive than a traditional building.

Specific line items include a Sustainable DC line item, support for budgeting and reporting benchmarking data to Energy Star Portfolio Manager, creating Resilient Design guidelines, a Healthy Schools Act line item which supports an organic education program in schools, etc.

The energy efficiency retrofit budget supports lighting and HVAC retrofits, and DGS tries to prioritize facilities with the lowest energy star ratings. The facilities management budget is the first to be cut; if you retrofit a site but don’t maintain it the savings will be reversed over time. The more funding and support that goes toward that the more likely we are to meet the District’s sustainability goals.

*Looking Forward:* There will be a lot of focus on how these initiatives will impact District buildings’ ability to achieve Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS), and a focus on facility retrofits to make sure buildings are more efficient from the beginning. DGS is working with DOEE to develop Resilient Design Guidelines to get buildings into compliance with BEPS, and the agency hopes to have a draft by the end of the calendar year. DGS is trying to make these guidelines as streamlined and easy to follow as possible and would like to develop a check-the-box style document for those who are interfacing with contractors. Another major focus will be on how to fund/budget for these improvements. Resilience retrofits are not as cost effective, so the District government will have to weigh the costs and benefits of retrofits and energy efficiency measures.

1. **Public Comments**

Members of the public were invited to make comments and clarifying discussion ensued. Comments were made by the following organizations and individuals:

* Charles Sharp, Chairman and CEO of the Black Emergency Managers Association. Mr. Sharp had several questions which will be submitted to the Commission via email in the interest of time. Mr. Sharp expressed concern that there was no agenda available that he could follow on the line items for discussion. Mr. Sharp requested clarification from Ms. Deas, DOEE, on the heat distribution maps; specifically, he raised questions on the time of day that temperature readings were taken and whether the heat strategy will promote more shade and less HVAC usage. Mr. Sharp would also like clarification from Ms. Croft, DGS, on whether DGS is taking LED lighting into consideration as they do public building renovations.
* Dennis Chestnut, environmental activist in Ward 7. Mr. Chestnut discussed resilience hub planning efforts that have taken place, through a working group of 13 residents, over the last year in Ward 7. Mr. Chestnut hopes that once it is designed and developed, the resilience hub will be a model for other communities and wards and will be replicated in other areas of the District. He also discussed his work on a flood risk analysis to prepare residents to deal with flooding. Mr. Chestnut discussed the progress on the Anacostia River Sediment Project and stated that they are looking forward to moving forward with remediation decisions this spring or summer. Mr. Chestnut would be open to having a conversation with anyone with questions.
1. **Review of Schedule**

The next public meeting will be held on June 18,2020. The Commission does not have a set agenda for the June meeting, although there will likely be some discussion on the resilience lessons learned from the District’s response to the COVID-19.

The Chairman proposed for consideration the idea of holding a major public summit on the issues of climate and resiliency. The Commission could sponsor, co-sponsor, or partner with other entities to hold a summit as a way to rally multiple stakeholders around the issues occurring in the District. This may be out of reach based on the Commission’s current capacity and limited staff support, but the idea has been brought to the attention of the Chairman on multiple occasions.

1. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:11 pm.