

Clean Heat Standard Equity Advisory Group

November 29, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Attendees

- Members of the Equity Advisory Group present
 - Melissa Bailey, Vermont Department of Public Service
 - Matt Cota, Meadow Hill Consulting
 - John Mandeville, Central Vermont Council on Aging
 - Jen Myers, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
 - Pike Porter, individual
 - Emily Roscoe, Efficiency Vermont
 - Chris Trombly, Vermont State Housing Authority
 - Mia Watson, Vermont Housing Finance Agency
 - Geoff Wilcox, Department of Children and Families
- Other active participants
 - Erin Hicks-Tibbles, Vermont Public Utility Commission
 - Thomas Knauer, Vermont Public Utility Commission
 - Deirdre Morris, Vermont Public Utility Commission
 - Tracy Myers, Vermont Public Utility Commission

Meeting commenced at 1:04 pm ET

- Reviewed the agenda; no changes were made
- Equity Advisory Group's statutory role
 - Commission staff emphasized the importance of the Equity Advisory Group and the need for the group to use their expertise to lead on equity issues
 - Commission staff led a review of the responsibilities of the Equity Advisory Group in statute, focusing on 30 V.S.A. § 8129 and Section 6(k) of Act 18 of 2023.
 - Group members made the points that:
 - The Clean Heat Standard program would need approval by the legislature to go into effect.
 - The Equity Advisory Group will need multiple opportunities to provide input on the design of the Clean Heat Standard, and timelines for the group's work will need to be continually adjusted.
- Draft procedures
 - Commission staff updated the group on the status of procedures to govern the operation of the Equity Advisory Group, referencing the recently closed public comment period on Technical Advisory Group procedures. Commission staff represented that the draft Equity Advisory Group procedures will closely reflect the draft Technical Advisory Group procedures and that the procedures were currently being updated to incorporate the feedback received on the Technical Advisory Group procedures.

- Commission staff indicated that the current plan for finalizing procedures for the Equity Advisory Group is: first, update the draft procedures in the context of feedback received on the Technical Advisory Group Procedures; second, put the draft Equity Advisory Group procedures out for public comment; third, bring draft procedures updated with information from the dedicated public comment period to the group at their next meeting for discussion and recommending other changes; fourth, the group's recommendations would be considered in a final procedure issued by the Commission. Group members were reminded that they could comment on the draft procedures in their personal/professional capacity during the public comment period.
- It was noted that all materials for both of the advisory groups would be publicly accessible.
- Key Milestones
 - Commission staff provided an overview of key milestones in this design process, including statutory deadlines and points at which the Commission expects the Equity Advisory Group to provide crucial input. Commission staff mentioned that scheduling orders were forthcoming in both cases that would lay out when various topics are planned to be addressed.
 - Group members made points that:
 - The deadline for fuel dealers to register in the first year (set in statute for the end of January) is tight and may lead to under-registration, which could pose equity concerns for businesses.
 - It would be useful to have paper copies of materials mentioned in the meeting.
 - A schedule of dates when the Commission expects to request input from the group would be useful.
 - It could be important to include low- and moderate-income requirements for early action credits.
- Election of officers
 - Commission staff mentioned that the draft procedures for the Technical Advisory Group included officers (a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary), and it is expected that the Equity Advisory Group would also have officers to lead the work of the group. Electing officers at the first meeting was not deemed appropriate, but it is a priority for the group to do once procedures are adopted.
 - Group members made the points that:
 - It would be useful for the group members to have each other's email addresses.
 - It would be helpful to have the Commission do logistical work on behalf of the group, especially for the next meeting.
 - Without more details about how the potential program is designed, it will be difficult to assess its equity impacts and provide useful feedback to the Commission.
- Other discussions

- It would be useful for the group to discuss the meaning of “equity,” which is something the group can do without additional information about the potential program design. Ideas included the Guiding Principles Towards a Just Transition, thinking about low-income Vermonters, and considering the impacts of annual registration compliance by fuel dealers and obligated parties.
- Act 18 mentions the hiring of a public engagement facilitator; the group can interact with the facilitator, but the two entities will work separately. The Commission is in the contracting phase with a facilitator and will announce more information as soon as possible.
- It would be useful to have meetings held at a consistent time every month. There will likely be times when additional meetings will need to be scheduled during busier months to complete work on time.
- The role of the Commission in the work of the Equity Advisory Group is not yet entirely clear, but there is a desire for the group to advise and criticize the work of the Commission effectively. The Commission expects to come to the group with questions and requests for input but does not plan to dictate the work of the group. The Commission hopes the group will be able to be self-directed in completing its statutory responsibilities. It was recognized that the Equity Advisory Group will need help laying the groundwork for effective operation and could use help ensuring they are not siloed or set adrift. It is required that all substantive communication be conducted through public means (at public meetings or in the public dockets).
- Vermont Public Meeting Law is applicable to this group, which dictates how the group must conduct its business. Details of the applicable sections will be detailed in group procedures. Related to the applicability of Public Meeting Law, there was a discussion on how to circulate information to prepare for meetings most effectively and how best to conduct this work consistent with Public Meeting Law requirements.
- Scheduling the next meeting
 - There was agreement that the Commission will send out a Doodlepoll to determine the time and date of the next Equity Advisory Group meeting.
- Public comments
 - No comments were made by the members of the public in attendance.

Resources shared during the meeting include:

- [Clean Heat Website](#)
- Cases [23-2220-RULE](#) and [23-2221-INV](#)
- [ePUC Resources](#)
- [Guiding Principles Towards a Just Transition](#)
- Vermont Public Meeting Law
 - [Statue](#)
 - [Secretary of State resources](#)

Meeting adjourned at 2:23 pm ET