

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 11.10.20

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Note Taker: Xavier Vallejo, New Mexico First

Speakers:

- Tammy Fiebelkorn, Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEET)
- Sherrick Roanhorse, PNM

Welcome

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Good afternoon everyone. I am the President and Executive Director of New Mexico First. We are halfway through the information sessions scheduled before we begin to develop recommendations. During our last meeting, we discussed implementing changes to the layout and process of the task force. The changes approved by the task force and adopted in to the process include the prerecording of guest speaker presentations, the implementation of small breakout groups, and the transition to a Zoom Meeting format to accommodate the breakout groups. Participants will be allowed to observe the small breakout group discussions to allow for transparency, but conversation will be limited to task force members until Public Comment. Next, we will need to approve meeting minutes.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** Christopher Ramirez from Together for Brothers had mentioned that CNM and UNM had passed the cost of bus passes onto students. I did check in with CNM and found that they use the revenue generated from parking tickets to pay for bus passes. Student who only use the bus system as their only form of transportation can use the resource for free. Correction to be made to Meeting Minutes 11.04.20.
- **Meeting Minutes 11.04.20 were approved by the task force.**
- **Meeting Minutes 10.27.20 were approved by the task force.**
- **Meeting Minutes 10.20.20 were approved by the task force.**
- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** One of the additional things we asked of task force members is to complete homework surveys to gather additional comments and recommendations. It allows an opportunity to give thought for reflection. If you do not usually complete the homework survey, we encourage you to check it out. Erika will now present on the feedback from last week's homework survey.

Homework Results

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Does anybody want to describe their experiences with the homework surveys?
- **Sharon Hausam:** The surveys are super quick to complete and a great way to reflect on the conversations had during the meeting. I can also see how these surveys can be helpful to prioritize and shape future conversations.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** I would also recommend taking the surveys if you have the time. Scheduling time to complete the homework surveys after each meeting has been helpful for me. I do not always use the right words and the surveys help me to better articulate my thoughts.
- **Erika Robers:** I am the lucky staff member, who gets to read your comments each week and there is a lot of rich detail that we are able to capture each week through the homework surveys that will be included in the final report.

Transportation strategies supported by the Climate Task Force members:

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- Expand access to free or affordable public transit especially in low-income areas of the city and increase number of routes as well as frequency
- Increased public transportation funding through taxes or grants
- Better biking and walking infrastructure, especially in frontline communities like south valley and international district
- Opportunities for car/ride share
- Increase access to EV for poor communities
- Increase safety measures on public transportation

Areas left out of the transportation discussion:

- Regional transportation plans/coordination
- Public transit safety strategies
- Strategies to fund free fares
- Mitigation of heat islands
- Public perception of mass transit
- Economic development ties to transportation
- Community-based solutions and climate education

Major task force themes in recycling/zero waste:

- Community based recycling and compost hubs within front line communities
- Promotoras or liasons within each neighborhood as coordinators/coaches
- More public education on what and how to recycle/compost
- Job creation through reuse and recycling (ie: green new deal)
- Community gardens or victory gardens
- Support green businesses and fix-it clinics

Areas left out of the recycling and zero waste conversation:

- Opportunities for school involvement in composting, recycling, and teaching about sustainability
- Strategies to hold corporate/industrial and institutional polluters accountable
- Concerted efforts to debunk climate change deniers/myths and education around climate change efforts

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Another thing we wanted to follow up on was that Xavier Vallejo had a chance to check in with several task force members who had missed a couple of our meetings. One of the points that came up was that it would be helpful to clarify the parameters of the recommendations provided by the task force. When Ryan Mast joined us for the first meeting of the task force, he invited us to get creative. While the recommendations presented by the task force will not carry the weight of legislation, the recommendations will provide city government with a strong guide when addressing climate change and climate equity. If recommendations do not violate law, we have a lot of room for creativity.
- **Kelsey Rader:** It is important to recognize that laws change and that there is a process by which they change. If the task force identifies systemic issues perpetuated by local laws, this task force can advocate for those changes in law. The city is willing to advocate for issues that the citizens support.

Lilly Irvin-Vitela Small Group Discussion

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- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Well it looks like we are now in our breakout group! We are going to take until 1:50 PM to discuss together what we learned from both presentations and lift what you think is most relevant to the communities you represent. The prompting questions we prepared include: What about green building and energy efficiency did Tammy Fiebelkorn from Southwest Energy Efficiency Project share that seemed most relevant to your community or neighborhood? What did you hear from PNM that seemed most relevant to your community? What, if anything, did you hear that caused concern? Is there anyone who would like to share first?
- **Alex Montano:** To start, I just wanted to clarify the comment I made last week about postponing the meetings. My suggestion was more in the context of us not being able to make the discussed changes to the meeting format. I agree with the sense of urgency and I appreciate this new format! We look at other states that seem to be leading the way and NM is playing catch up. However, NM has a huge opportunity to make big strides. Electrification of buildings and infrastructure and eliminating fossil fuels are the things we should be prioritizing. The more we electrify our needs, the more renewable energy we can use because solar and EV infrastructure go hand and hand. This also lends itself to basically creating many mini microgrids, without actually detaching it. When we look at a case study like California, they require all new construction to be 100% electric BUT they are also requiring renewable on every building. The latter is not the best solution b/c not all buildings are good for this. Community solar gardens, however, may be a good option. This will allow people who don't qualify for solar installation to still connect to this mini grid and have the benefits of solar electricity.
- **Erica Velarde:** In Tammy's presentation it is a little concerning that there were lots of actions presented that were framed positively that might not actually be that good. De coupling, for example, is a very big conversation. Additionally, with energy efficiency programs often consumers pay for them. It used to be that the Energy Conservation and Management made utility companies front the cost of energy efficiency programs, but just last year they made amended it so that consumers pay an extra 3 cents from our bills to go into this fund. Lastly, the Energy transition act is something that I encourage everyone to get into. This document shows that we have a commitment to go carbon free, but we sold a lot for that little carrot. I encourage people to look into [New Energy Economy](#), a group of individuals who work at the state level towards a renewable energy future and hold utility companies responsible.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** Regrettably, I did not look at PNM's presentation due to time constraints. Did they go into the energy transition act? Is the utility being held responsible for retraining their workforce in line with it?
 - **Sherrick Roanhorse:** Great question. I am excited to share the information on energy transition act, I will provide this later. Within the ETA there is a funding mechanism that allows communities to choose how to fund that transition. For example, I think communities will have almost \$20 Million dollars to spend on allowable transitional actions such as job retraining. This again, will be up to the community and will be transparent and public process.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** Stemming from Tammy Fiebelkorn's presentation, I think the most beneficial thing is to start is by looking at other cities for energy disclosure acts. Before putting something in place, these property owners implement these.
- **Josue De Luna Navarro:** I would like to introduce energy democracy, into this conversation. The Energy Transition Act will be good for the environment because of broad decarbonization, but it does not address social justice issues. We need to ask ourselves who gets to control that energy? Who ultimately benefits from this? Typically, what happens is renewable energy companies come in and develop in communities, and the money created goes into the pockets of these CEOs and out of our state. This should not be this way, especially for the frontline communities. When we talk about

these big energy transitions, we need to ask: How do we make it so that we prioritize a decentralized grid where communities can have battery storage? How can they be controlled by the communities and not the energy monopoly? It is a critical part in making this an action around climate to also be about climate justice.

- **Genesis Arizmendi:** The presentations described lots of initiatives and ways they are trying to move ahead. I liked the rebates and discounts for businesses and individuals because it helps improve citizen's outcomes with their electricity and utilities. But, mostly, I think we need to move forward with the Prosperity Works projects. This is an example of an existing project that is helping the frontline communities, those that are the most affected by Climate Change. When entering into partnerships with investors, I think we also need to be aware of who they are and what their purpose/goals are. Additionally, I think we should prioritize giving more of these incentives to small businesses because there is lots of energy expended at business, and unlike large businesses, they may not be able to afford to make those changes.
- **Theresa Cardenas:** I have a background in the energy transition act, in building and construction, and was involved in a number of developments in the city. Something that I wanted to bring to the group's attention is the process of the ETA. The development of this legislation took 7 years, and there was a lot that happened in those 7 years. Further, when it finally passed there were pieces that were missing. I had to personally re-frame how I viewed this document and I see it more like a roadmap that doesn't have all the answers. We need to create our own roadmap, tailored to our community that may incorporate some of the many inventions that are coming down the pipeline. I believe our charge as members of the Task force is taking all these parts and pieces that have been thrown at us, prioritizing all of this to highlight what we really need to address. There is not going to be one answer and one industry will not solve the whole problem.
- **Josue De Luna Navarro:** I wanted to add that we should be aware of the Energy Efficiency programs on the federal level, specifically the Green New Deal for public housing. This could help prioritize frontline communities, so they do not have to upgrade their homes.

Erika Robers Small Group Discussion

- **Erika Robers:** Now that we are all in the breakout group, are there any questions about what we learned from both presentations and lift what you think is most relevant to the communities you represent?
- **Kevin Bean:** Thank you for your presentation Tammy Fiebelkorn. In the presentation, you mentioned the need for civic support to develop better climate standards. Sounds like the city has opposed previously constructed proposals.
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** Unfortunately, decoupling, as an incentive, was approved in the 2008 Climate Action Plan, but it has not been approved since then. PNM did propose to utilize decoupling earlier this year, but the city did sign a testimony in opposition to the state law. This has been supported by various environmental and low-income groups.
- **Tony Spark:** Can you tell us why the city is in opposition to decoupling?
- **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** I do not know. If there had been decoupling in place, it would have been better for the city.
- **Sharon Hausam:** I did not get to do more research on decoupling. Can you explain how decoupling affects rates?
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** Under the current system, PNM and other orgs are monopolies that create revenue by selling electricity. Every time we create policies to regulate those monopolies, we force those companies to sell less of their product and for a less expensive price. Decoupling

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allows for the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to investigate rates to that limit the amount of revenue that can be brought in. If you sell more energy, you can make money. If you sell less energy, you can see a small surcharge. Energy use in residential areas has been increasing during the pandemic because people are staying home. The reason SWEEP has supported the decoupling system is that it creates an incentive for these utility programs to implement more green programs.

- **Tony Spark:** It sounds as if we must address peak demand. I read an article that highlighted how we not only need to address the peak demand but also lower it, to reduce environmental impact. This concept should be applied not only to the individual homeowner, but to corporations as well. I think that needs to be the primary discussion.
- **Amy Carpenter:** Tony Sparks, do you have the link of that article? (Article is called Walking the Line). Tammy Fiebelkorn, are there resources for us to better understand decoupling as an issue?
 - **Tony Sparks:** The article was recently published in the Albuquerque Journal. [Walking the Line](#).
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** A good resource is the [Regulatory Assistance Project](#) (RAP). The organization has several decoupling projects focused on what regulations should be there, what those regulations should look like, and what are the pros and cons. To add to Tony Spark's comments, I do think it is an important issue. There is a lot of discussion about closing down coal powerplants and what the replacement power would be. We think it is important to focus on efficiency first to reduce the amount we have to rebuild. Before a person puts solar power on their house, they should make it efficient. There is no use in overbuilding utility generation, if we can not manage it with energy efficiency.
- **Tara Trafton:** Were the resource for this week mostly focused on decoupling and energy efficiency? Or were there technologies that were also discussed?
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** In my presentation, I covered several codes, policies, incentives, etc. Our city could improve codes and create a better baseline on building emissions. In the presentation, I also discussed policies I thought would be helpful. I was only talking about residential energy efficiency and incentives, which is where decoupling was highlighted. I think the most important piece of information to note is the direct installation process for low income households and disadvantaged communities. There is a current project in the South Valley that is great at addressing these issues and should be looked at to receive support from the city.
- **Sharon Hausam:** The direct install is important. One of the things that stood out to me was the emphasis in new construction. But it seems to leave out the energy used by existing structures. If you are rehabilitating homes that are low income, there are equity benefits with that. Incentives involving new appliances can be challenging. I had a PNM perform audit and the one area that I thought would be beneficial for energy efficiency – improving my insulation – was not offered. Instead they offered me a rebate to get a new refrigerator that I did not need. I feel as if some of these incentives are not very effective. There are gaps in some of the existing programs. I want to look more into the Prosperity Works model.
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** The PNM Energy Efficiency Program has to be very specific to meet state law requirements and get the approval of the PRC. The only programs that offer utilities for free are the low-income programs. They must go through the PRC to get anything approved. Regarding your comment on existing buildings compared to new buildings. While the codes I recommend are for new buildings, the policies I suggested for city are all for existing buildings. We do not want to build new buildings that are not efficient, but we also want to do something for the people in existing buildings. Almost all of the utility energy efficiency programs are for existing buildings.
- **Helga Garza:** On existing buildings, here in the South Valley, we are doing work with the South Valley Main Street. We have a lot of existing buildings – old family businesses and land. We have

been working with them regarding the upgrade. These are businesses that do not want to move. They want a chance to upgrade. There are entities such as Prosperity Works and South Valley Main Street that we need to work with to strengthen the strategy and join forces with to address equity.

- **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** I was asked to talk about residential energy, so I did not include commercial energy efficiency in my presentation. If I had, I would have highlighted the Albuquerque Energy Challenge, a program designed to help small businesses. It is a great program that would benefit greatly from additional funding.
- **Tony Sparks:** I wanted to address PNM incentives and their prescriptive nature. It is possible to submit more open-ended performance-based incentives. Its very hard to roll out a program without making prescriptive incentives, but we should still look to make incentives broad, rather than make incentives prescriptive.
- **Tara Trafton:** Rental units have split incentives. Is there anything that exists today that addresses split incentives? The split often leads to fewer landlords implementing action steps.
- **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** That would require that a piece of property to be brought up to a standard code regardless of who benefits from the incentives. The idea is being implemented in a lot of other jurisdictions. It is really effective.

Large Group Discussion

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Welcome back everybody. We are going to give each other quick recaps of our small group discussions.
- **Erika Robers Small Group Discussion Summary**

Tara Trafton: One of the things we talked about was the need for more city and state support for higher efficiency standards. One of incentives we talked about specifically was the decoupling program and what we can do to possibly include that into the Climate Action Plan. We talked about grid stability and Tony Sparks shared the resource. Tammy Fiebelkorn said she would share more information on decoupling and recommended we checkout the Prosperity Works project in the South Valley. We also discussed that a lot of the information provided was focused on new buildings, rather than existing buildings. Similar to rebate programs, there was some additional discussion on pulling away from prescriptive rebates and offering custom performance-based rebates. There are some potential gaps in rebate offers. Then we had some discussion on the South Valley Main street and their work to upgrade older businesses and the Albuquerque Energy Challenge.

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela Small Group Discussion Summary**

Erica Velarde: We start the conversation with energy efficiency in the corporate sector and electrification. We also discussed the Energy Transition Act, and energy independence and democracy to promote affordability. We also talked about energy disclosures with renters.

Theresa Cardenas: The discussion was mainly focused on energy democracy and prioritizing all of these complex issues to have the largest impact. We discussed how to address climate change with the prioritization of frontline communities. One of the ideas brought up was community solar gardens. We talked about the need to understand where different community needs are across the city.

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- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Tammy Fiebelkorn and Sherrick Roanhorse, is there anything mentioned by the task force that you would like to respond to?
- **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** I want to point out one of the topics that was brought up in the group I was not in. I heard there was discussion on electrification and that is a really important issue and poses as one of the leading solutions to address carbon emissions. We want to begin to provide incentives for people to begin to switch to heat pumps and heat pump water heaters. That is an important area that might warrant more discussion.
- **Sherrick Roanhorse:** There is a lot happening. The biggest thing for PNM is to be 100% 0 Carbon by 2040. As we continue these discussions, we will share more information with you.
- **Erica Velarde:** Are there going to be any changes since PNM was bought out by Avangrid?
 - **Sherrick Roanhorse:** We are in the process of the business merger with [Avangrid](#). Over the next 3 to 4 years, we will not see many changes. Their goals align with the goals of PNM. We are still on track to meet our goal of complete energy efficiency by 2040. Avangrid has been known to work towards renewables.
- **Kevin Bean:** Sherrick Roanhorse, about how many PNM rate paying customers contribute to the Good Neighbor Program? And second, if you have figure on energy use among different income levels?
 - **Sherrick Roanhorse:** I do not have those numbers with me, but I will work with my colleagues to get that information for you.
- **Alex Montano:** Tammy Fiebelkorn, in your presentation, you talked about how Albuquerque financed programs to enable them. The legislation that was passed was specific to commercial renewable energy. There has been some progress, but no one seems to be taking the lead on the issue. When we talk about small commercial and residential, we talk about rebates and incentives, but that is a small piece of is. We need to realize that even with discounts, there is still a base cost that people must pay. Is there something we can focus on to make that process better and encourage the city to put funding forward?
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** PACE was originally passed by the state and included energy efficiency. When it was revised, they dropped energy efficiency from the bill. It did not make sense to have a program where you could get a low interest loan for solar panels, but not replace your air conditioner with a heat pump. It would be helpful if the city was a leader within the state on these issues. This could be led by this group and would be very beneficial. For those that do not know, PACE is a program that provides loan for improving energy efficiency, but the investments stay with the home. Without the program, people may not otherwise qualify for the loans needed to invest in energy efficiency.
 - **Alex Montano:** This is so important in the corporate world because their companies only look ahead of time 3 years or less. That is a very small window and if you truly want to drive efficiency in buildings, the issue is that these private businesses do not want to take out loans with 10-year commitments. With PACE, the companies can take out loans and those loans stay with the property, so if they decide to sell the property in 3-years, those prices stay with the building. In New Mexico, we have legislation in place, but no one is acting on it.
- **Daniel Beaman:** The county is involved with commercial loaning. I hear some discussion about residential investments, but we only grant PACE for companies. I do not know how many jurisdictions are implementing the program in the state, but it is a relatively new program for us.
- **Alex Montano:** Has Bernalillo County had any successful PACE projects move forward?
 - **Daniel Beaman:** We have not. We have a third-party vendor oversee the program. When the pandemic began, it was while we were looking to begin to implement the program.

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- **Erica Velarde:** From my experience, the biggest problem with PACE in New Mexico is that it serves as the first lien holder on a mortgage. That has been the biggest issues when implementing in counties.
- **Tony Sparks:** Who represents energy efficiency and PACE at the legislative level? Do we have representatives from the city or other entities within the state that are pushing those issues forward?
 - **Kelsey Rader:** When it comes to negotiations for legislation, that comes out of the Mayor's Office and the legislation team. I can help to set up some side conversations if needed. The legislation team will typically work with field experts in various topics to address certain issues. We also have the attorney's office and the government relations team to work with the PRC. Several folks are typically involved in those conversations.
 - **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** The city is really lucky because we have the Department of Environmental Health, but other departments of the city do not have the same environmental outlook. We find ourselves at odds with the city on things like building codes and the PRC. It would be helpful if there was a spotlight shown on that.
- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Given your previous experiences and what you have heard today, what recommendations would you make?
- **Erica Velarde:** I know a solar tax credit was passed in the last legislative session. It has always been an issue to me because the only way to take advantage of it is to have tax liability. We should push a tax credit that would be more accessible to people who actually need the credit. We also need to consider how many trailers we have in New Mexico. Trailers are not energy efficient and you can not put solar on the roof on a trailer. There was this cool program I heard of called Solar on a Pole, where they invested in solar specifically for trailers and mobile homes.
- **Alex Montano:** Most utilities do not allow for the installation of solar panels if it is not a permanent installment.
- **Cassandra Miller:** What is needed to maintain these energy efficient products? I think we need to consider the long-term care needed to upkeep these technologies and who will be providing that care.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** For residential areas we need to focus on pressuring property owners to invest in upgrades. For commercial areas we need to focus on implementing culturally appropriate strategies when considering green building standards.
- **Josue De Luna Navarro:** I want to emphasize the importance of energy democracy. When you have solar panels, you can not be independent from PNM and the corporation wants to maintain the power of the grid. We need to consider how to change the laws of New Mexico to allow for community solar programs and establishment of microgrids. I personally think that is the critical point to focus on. We need to have the social justice piece in mind.
- **Theresa Cardenas:** We are going to have a new administration come in soon. A new stimulus package may be passed to provide funding. As an idea, we should look to prioritize frontline communities to receive this funding to invest in energy efficiency. Much of our workforce is now at home. We need to consider where people are during the day and we may be living in this new world for several years. We should push some of that funding to be utilized by frontline communities.
- **Kevin Bean:** Tammy Fiebelkorn mentioned that direct installs should be a priority.
- **Genesis Arizmendi:** I am on board with initiatives like Prosperity Works because they focus on frontline communities. Initiatives like this would benefit from additional funding, which is something we should check out. We should also focus some of these initiatives on small business.

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- **Tammy Fiebelkorn:** It is really important that we bring the benefits of this legislation to low income communities. We are in transition to have clean energy and energy efficiency, but we need to make sure these communities see those benefits. This is why initiatives like Prosperity Works are so important.
- **Kelsey Rader:** I wanted to raise awareness of something happening in our office. One thing that we should consider is the workforce development aspect of it. We are looking into creating training programs for people to learn and bring skills back to their communities. We are looking into what other cities are doing. This is something we are looking for feedback on.
- **Josue De Luna Navarro:** We need to think of climate action outside of corporate needs. The state must invest in our communities and do so in a way that can not be taken advantage of by corporations. We need do things with a social equity lens.
- **Molly Blumhoefer:** A part of this democracy needs to come from the companies we have here now, to reinvest in our communities. For example, CNM has a 1.3-MegaWatt solar facility and part of that project was to build a student training lab. A big part is making sure that community members know about the programs that exist. Marketing is a big component.
- **Tony Sparks:** We need to not only make the curriculum available, but mandatory. The curriculum has to be integrated into the mainstream science classes. It is a big pipeline and is has to start early.

Next Steps

- Please complete the task force homework survey. Use the survey to reflect and expand upon any of the things we talked about during the meeting. Please complete the survey by 5:00 PM on Friday, November 20, 2020.
- If you have not done so already, please provide a picture and small biography of yourself to be posted on the website, for the public to get a better sense of who each of you are. We ask that your biography be no longer than 3 sentences. We ask that you send these biographies to cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org.
- Any comments or recommendations can be sent to cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org, to be entered into the comment logs. You can access comments and other documents at <https://www.cabq.gov/sustainability/climate-action-plan/cap-task-force> or <http://nmfirst.org/event-details/climate>
- The next task force meeting will take place from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM on Tuesday, December 1, 2020.

Public Comment

- **Chrysa Johnson:** I wanted to echo Molly Blumhoefer and her comment on holding property owners accountable for energy efficiency. I see this to be largely tied to social justice issues and I would love to see some exploration on how the concept can be expanded on. The idea could put some power in the hands of the tenants to make sure that they are cared for and safe.
- **Susan Gorman:** One of the topics that was brought up was the idea of investing in community solar. I am curious as to why the idea has been so difficult to pass in the legislature.
 - **Sharon Hausam:** There is an active working group to discuss community solar legislation. A memorial is currently being written to explain the many moving parts of community solar, which will help to clarify where different groups stand on the issues. [Senate Memorial 63](#).