

Vision 2032 Subcommittee Meeting #7

Remote Meeting

August 20, 2020

MEETING NOTES

Attendees

1. Leah Bamberger, City of Providence
2. Veronica Berounsky, University of Rhode Island, Graduate School of Oceanography (URI GSO)
3. Laura Blake, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP)
4. Rachel Calabro, Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)
5. Sara Canuel, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC)
6. Michaela Cashman, U.S. EPA Atlantic Coastal Environmental Sciences Division Laboratory (EPA ACESD)
7. Alicia Eichinger, Salt Ponds Coalition
8. Ron Entringer, Save the Lakes
9. Laura Erban, EPA ACESD
10. Richard Friesner, NEIWPC
11. Walt Galloway, Rhode Island River Council
12. Tim Gleason, EPA ACESD
13. Peter Hanlon, URI GSO
14. Dave Janik, Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management (MACZM)
15. Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
16. Lealdon Langley, MADEP
17. Regina Lyons, U.S. EPA Region 1
18. Paul Mathisen, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
19. Nate Merrill, EPA ACESD
20. Kate Michaud, Town of Warren
21. Kate Mulvaney, EPA ACESD
22. Romell Nandi, U.S. EPA Headquarter (EPA HQ)
23. Ken Payne, Charlestown Citizens Alliance, Easting with the Ecosystem, Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership, RI Food Policy Council, and Systems Aesthetics LLC
24. Kenny Raposa, NBNERR
25. Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon
26. Tom Uva, Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC)
27. Katherine Altamirano, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
28. Julia Bancroft, NBEP
29. Mike Gerel, NBEP
30. Gaby Placido, NBEP
31. Courtney Schmidt, NBEP
32. Julia Twichell, NBEP

Introduction

Mike Gerel called the meeting to order at 10:10am. He welcomed the group and led introductions. The subcommittee approved the June 18, 2020 meeting notes with a motion and a second. Mike Gerel framed the day by noting that we will begin with two environmental justice presentations and then move on to an update on the new Vision 2032 website and upcoming launch Vision 2032 Workgroups.

Environmental Justice Presentations

Provided below are highlights of the two presentations and the following discussion. This pioneering work offered to inform NBEP's commitment to bring a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion lens to the development and implementation of *Vision 2032*. Copies of each presentation can be accessed by Ctrl-clicking on the name/affiliation/title of the presenter below.

[Sara Canuel, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Education Director](#)

- *New Voices at the Water Table* is a program of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC, www.wrwc.org) that seeks to engage frontline communities in capacity-building/leadership development for climate resilience. Want to make sure targeted communities are being heard and have a better understanding of how climate change, flooding, and related issues impact them.
- WRWC selected Olneyville, a dense frontline neighborhood in Providence bordering the river, that is disproportionately affected by flooding, heat, and legacy pollution. The area faces especially high stormwater runoff potential under a changing climate with more frequent storm events and resultant flooding. Massive 1000-year storm events may occur as often as 30 years in areas like Olneyville—such a storm hit in 2010.
- The goals of the program include:
 - Residents of all ages, races, and socio-economic statuses are “water literate,”
 - All these residents are knowledgeable about neighborhood concerns related to stormwater, flooding, and resiliency, and
 - Via a school-based and community environmental education and training program, student and resident leaders develop an understanding of inter-related issues like stormwater and flooding and build leadership skills to be empowered agents of stewardship in their community.
- Partnering with organizations in the community is key to success. The summer before *New Voices at the Water Table* started, a partnership with One Neighborhood Builders in the Central Providence Health Equity Zones was used to share resources and gauge their awareness and capture their perspectives on climate change from residents. Price Rite gift cards were used as survey incentives for participation. WRWC found in-person was best way to reach people.
- Some results included:
 - 50% knew little to nothing about climate change.
 - 2/3 felt climate was changing in Olneyville.
 - Flooding and illness were viewed as risk.
 - 75% felt a climate disaster would impact them.
- Some engagement tools deployed to respond to results included:
 - Hazard preparedness film.

- Spanish language resources for flood/emergency preparation.
- Story Maps created by environmental leaders in high school to be shared with community.
- Signage on green infrastructure—nature is playing a role in managing water.
- Five desired outcomes of the program include:
 - Support the Climate Justice Plan
 - Engage youth to continue to work on climate resilience topics
 - Connect residents with decision-makers
 - Increase community involvement and voice on environmental concerns
 - Encourage community to be prepared for environmental emergencies
- Discussion:
 - Paul Matheson noted that WPI is interested in using Story Maps to tell climate stories in his area.
 - Ken Payne noted that this work is fulfilling the dreams of Fred Lippitt when he envisioned improving nature in blighted neighborhoods in Providence.
 - In response to a question, members of the team were paid \$100/hour as it is vital to value peoples time and experience.

Leah Bamberger, City of Providence, Director of Sustainability

- The Industrial Revolution began here, attracting immigrants to Providence and other booming industrial towns. Industrialization brought centuries of harm—natural resource extraction, altered landscapes, slave trade, and resilience on cotton and the wealth it generated. Today, Providence also faces the impact of sea level rise and extreme weather events due to climate change.
- In Providence, frontline communities of color are disproportionately burdened by crises of ecology, economy, and democracy. These communities include parts of South Providence, Washington Park, Olneyville, Manton, Silver Lake, Wanskuck, and the West End. Impacts manifest in public health, including higher levels of asthma and lead in frontline areas.
- Providence has made an important shift in tackling these issues. The City’s past sustainability planning feel short in climate justice. These are problems created and felt by humans, so it is important to bring in more voices to get at the root causes and potential solutions. Beginning in 2004, Rhode Island and the City of Providence took action to bring in more voices around climate and environmental justice, culminating with the release of the City’s Climate Justice Plan in 2019 (<https://www.providenceri.gov/sustainability/climate-justice-action-plan-providence>).
- In building the plan, the City employed “targeted universalism,” which looks to solve a problem by starting with those that are most vulnerable. In other words, start with low income families in the city and solutions will trickle up from there. This is not the way we traditionally address problems. They partnered with a local Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC) to apply the “Just Providence Framework,” to complete peer-led interviews to ask basic questions (what makes you sick?, how do you stay cool?), create stories about what the future could look like, and follow-through by building responsive policy in the form of the Climate Justice Plan.
- Some next steps include continuing and expanding collaborative governance like the REJC, creating Green Justice Zones, and supporting Community Choice Aggregation. The Providence

Sustainability Task Force meetings continue this work and are open to all. See this link: <https://www.providenceri.gov/sustainability/environmental-sustainability-task-force/>.

- Discussion:
 - In response to a question about how Providence defined environmental justice communities, Leah stated that the City is still working on it but it is best to speak to community have them self-identify and then compare to census data.
 - Leah responded about what would happen with the change in Mayoral administrations that a lot of community support what about continuing the work after this mayor and emphasized that building community is important.
 - In terms of engagement, she noted they favored deep and local engagement over big meetings when the document was done.
 - Leah also noted that many times people disregard potential impacts on poor people when pursuing goals like 100% renewables—we need to be thoughtful and seek input and balance in these circumstances.

Public Comment

No public comments were provided.

Vision 2032 Website

Julia Twitchell provided a tour of the new www.Vision2032.org website. Below is a screencap of the front page and some highlights from her talk.

- NBEP collaborated with a local Providence design firm, Tanager Creative (<https://tanager.org/blog/introducing-tanager/>) to create the new site.
- Uses a new, separate domain from NBEP.org to have its own inviting, inclusive, community-oriented identity. It can be accessed directly or via NBEP.org.



- Some components of the website:
 - Maps to help people orient themselves and find their place.
 - A concise Promise Statement: "We promise to energize our partnerships to elevate justice, equity, humanity, and heritage in the Narragansett Bay region."

- Inspirational quote at bottom of every page
- Pre-crafted social media posts that anyone can share—emphasis on partners sharing via social media, since partners have an audience that we don't right now
- Get involved section where people can learn how to learn more, participate, and provide input. Want folks to bring their own audiences and ideas, especially those that are new to NBEP.
- Page for audiences that want to deeper that highlights the four focal areas we are currently building the plan around.
- Discussion:
 - Participants expressed positive feedback on the content and design of the site.
 - Ken Payne suggested creating more of a connection to commercial fishermen in Vision 2032, and that he would be happy to facilitate. Mike Gerel noted NBEP has begun engaging with commercial fishers (noted Sarah Schumann work and meeting with Newport fisherman, but this has slowed since COVID). Any assistance would be appreciated.
 - Ron Etinger stated he had ideas for partners who be interested in engaging with the website to collect perspectives.
 - Another question was how we will know when we have enough input for the plan. Mike Gerel stated we will seek to get to “saturation” where we begin to hear the same input from the same “types” of respondents. The more input the better until we find we are not learning anything new and/or the timeline necessitates we move forward. Opportunities for more formal public comment will be provided on the final drafts.

Vision 2032 Workgroup Launch

Mike Gerel noted that workgroups formed around the four focus areas of capacity for action — water quality, wildlife and habitat, and quality of life — will be used starting this fall to draft the goals, objectives, and actions to be pursued in *Vision 2032*. He said the full subcommittee will also continue to meet, allowing time for reporting of workgroup progress and discussion of broader planning issues. The reasoning he shared for the smaller groups was that they:

- Break up the massive task of building *Vision 2032* into manageable pieces,
- Enable shared identity, decision-making, and goals,
- Provide a venue for those who don't thrive in larger groups,
- Helps us attract and keep subject-area specialists, and
- Support greater peer-to-peer learning.

More specifically, the four workgroups will:

- Be coordinated by an NBEP staff member,
- Use standardized processes and tools to build off objective areas to create SMART goals, objectives, and actions plans that will form the core of *Vision 2032*,
- Pursue targeted outreach to interested public,
- Report out to subcommittee, and
- Lead review action plan drafts.

Mike noted that anyone who has attended a subcommittee meeting has volunteered or been assigned to a workgroup. A breakdown of workgroups and membership is here: <http://nbep.org/01/wp->

<content/uploads/2020/08/Workgroup-Membership.pdf>. NBEP staff will be in touch with participants to schedule the first workgroup meetings.

Action Items

1. Julia Bancroft will post the environmental justice presentations on the NBEP.org website.
2. Participants should provide any feedback or ideas arising from the *Vision 2032* website to Julia Twichell.
3. NBEP staff will be in touch to set up workgroup meetings in October-November.

The meeting adjourned at 12:09pm.