

# EC4 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, May 27, 2015**

(RIDEM, Room 300)

## **In attendance:**

Sheila Dormody (Chairwoman)  
Frederick Presley (Vice-Chair)  
Brigid Ryan (Secretary)  
Tina Shepard  
Andy Andrade  
David Caldwell Jr.  
Amy Rainone  
Dr. Gregory Wellenius  
Paige Bronk  
Al Dahlberg  
Christopher McNally

Sheila Dormody (Chair) opened the meeting at approximately 3:35PM. She offered opening remarks for the inaugural meeting of the EC4 Advisory Board, welcomed members of the public, and asked each member to offer some background about themselves and any key organizations they may be representing as part of the EC4 Advisory Board. Barbara Cardiff and Steve Larrick were not present, and Chairwoman Dormody indicated she would ask them to provide a similar summary of their work and organizations at the next meeting.

Chairwoman Dormody briefly discussed some of the climate impacts RI has already seen to date:

- Sea level has already increased nearly 10 inches at the Newport tide station since 1930.
- Average annual precipitation is increasing at a rate of more than an inch every 10 years – such that RI is seeing about 10 inches of more rain each year than in the 1940s/1950s.
- In Narragansett Bay, winter sea surface temperatures have increased approximately 3°F since 1960.
- Lastly, it is believed that climate shifts are a contributing factor to changes in Rhode Island's fishing sector - winter flounder and lobster are declining and we are observing increases in important commercial mid-Atlantic species such as black sea bass.

Chairwoman Dormody summarized the legislated purpose and duties of the Advisory Board. Reading from a PowerPoint slide which highlighted the exact legislative language, she offered the following:

(1) Advise the council on all matters pertaining to the duties and powers of the council, including evaluating and making recommendations regarding plans, programs, and strategies relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation;

(2) Assist the council in improving public access to, and understanding of, the best available scientific, technical, and other information about climate change, mitigation, adaptation, etc., so as to build public support for, and participation in, initiatives to make communities more resilient;

(3) Serve as a conduit for communicating information from the council to communities and constituencies, as well as vice versa, for input from the community level to the council;

(4) Assist the council in meeting its own transparency and accountability obligations;

(5) Report to the council at each regular council meeting; and

(6) Prepare an annual report, to be included in the annual report of the council, that specifically addresses the state of public awareness and engagement; the effectiveness of mitigation, adaptation and public information programs from the community perspective; the ability of the council to attain its goals and objectives, including effective interagency coordination and public-private partnerships; and actions that would further the purposes of the council and this legislation.

Elizabeth Stone (RIDEM) then provided a presentation on the Resilient RI Act of 2014 and the work of the EC3/EC4 between February 2014 and the present. Entitled "*Preparing for the Future - RI's Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4)*", she highlighted the history of the climate dialogue in RI since the early 2000's, who sits on the EC4 as member agencies/offices, the mandate of the EC4 (legislative and policy) as outlined in the 2014 Act, and the implementation priorities of the EC4 as established in the summer of 2014.

Al Dahlberg and Brigid Ryan commented that they would like some direction from EC4 Chair Janet Coit and other members of the EC4 about what tasks they would like the Advisory Board to tackle. Similarly, it was asked if the Advisory Board could provide input on the GHG Scope of Work being prepared for RFP in early summer. Paige Bronk suggested that the Advisory Board identify both "low hanging fruit" and longer-term action items as they collectively set their priorities.

Fred Presley asked about the breadth of agencies involved in the EC4 and to what extent other agencies, besides DEM, were undertaking work on priority tasks outlined in the EC4 report. He commented on the need for additional staff at DEM to undertake climate work if DEM was really the lead agency of the state's climate agenda. The Advisory Board then engaged in a discussion about what other agencies and organizations could and should be brought into the state's dialogue on climate priorities – it was suggested that the RI Marine Trades Association should be engaged. It was suggested that the EC4 and the Advisory Board attempt to avoid "doom and gloom" messaging about climate change in RI. Rather, the message needs to be forward looking and action oriented.

Chairwoman Dormody highlighted the work that Jen West (of the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve) has been doing on how to effectively communicate with the public about the science of climate change. Similarly, Dr. Wellenius highlighted the work Julia Gold (HEALTH) has been undertaking at HEALTH and with impacted sectors of the public (e.g. senior population). He stressed the need to embed the larger discussion about climate change and resiliency into everyday, ongoing conversations and not just when policies are being targeted for change. Brigid Ryan seconded that point and stressed the need for the Advisory Board to develop its own messages about resiliency.

Upon request, Elizabeth Stone indicated she would share the November 2014 update to the EC4 on priority implementation items with the Advisory Board members and attempt to determine how long each members length-of service to the Advisory Board will be (e.g. 1, 2 or 3 years).

The members discussed upcoming meeting dates/times and how regular the Board wanted to meet. It was determined the group wanted to meet again sometime the week of June 15<sup>th</sup>. Chairwoman Dormody recommended bi-monthly meetings post-July. Most members indicated that meeting first thing in the morning or towards the end of the day would be most helpful for the purpose of having a quorum. It was noted that the next full EC4 meeting is taking place on June 26<sup>th</sup> at 9:30AM (at RIDEM).

At the call of Chairwoman Sheila Dormody, a vote called for the election of a Vice-Chair and Secretary of the Advisory Board. Fred Presley was unanimously elected as Vice-Chair and Brigid Ryan was unanimously elected as Secretary.

Chairwoman Dormody opened up the floor for public comment:

Timmons Roberts commented that the Advisory Board members should read all of the EC3 report, including the list of specific recommendations, and suggested including NGOs as a list of interested parties in Elizabeth Stone's EC4 overview presentation.

Peter Galvin commented on the GHG goals in the Resilient RI Act indicating he thought they were too low. He also commented that the Advisory Board would benefit from some presentations on basic climate science. He also announced the upcoming June 10<sup>th</sup> Sierra Club rally at the State House.

Jan Reitsma commented that he felt the Advisory Board shouldn't waste time delving into priority issues and recommended not over-lapping with the work that the full Council is doing. He advised that the members think about what the EC4 can and cannot do, and the need for state government to show leadership on climate priorities. He impressed the need to help create climate conversations in all municipalities across RI, the need to make climate change an "economic" priority and the need for vulnerability assessments.

Ken Filarski briefly discussed a project happening in Portland whereby everyday citizens were involved in climate conversations and how the public was able to make real-world connections to the climate that was changing around them.

Jennifer McDermott from the AP introduced herself and announced that she would be following the future conversations of the EC4 and the Advisory Council.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:00PM.

*(Notes prepared by Elizabeth Stone, RIDEM)*