

## Overview of the Climate Action Council 26 May 2022 Meeting Recording

The May 26, 2022 Climate Action Council [meeting \(recording\)](#) included an update on the public hearings and comments received. This document is a guide to the speakers on the recording and my notes on the points they made. This documentation only covers the Update on Public Hearings and Comments agenda item. It is intended that this be used as documentation for articles about my impression of the meeting.

### Update on Public Hearings and Comments

The original schedule for this meeting only allocated 90 minutes. This agenda item alone took 75 minutes. The discussion started at 14:36 in the [video recording](#). Every speaker went out of the way to laud the organization, format and logistics of the public hearings so I am not going to include that in the summary points of the comments.

Sarah Osgood, Director of the Climate Action Council, gave the overview update on the public hearings (15:25 of the [recording](#)).

- Around 700 people spoke at the hearings.
- In general, most were in support of the direction of the plan but she explained that there were more themes within that support.
- She said many speakers addressed the importance of environmental justice and equity.
- There were requests for more financial incentives and concerns about lack of funding.
- They also heard concerns about potential job losses, affordability of electricity in the transition and the use of green hydrogen.
- She noted that more speakers addressed public health impacts Downstate while reliability and EV implementation concerns were more of a concern Upstate.
- Speakers noted the importance of public awareness and community outreach campaigns.
- Finally, she said that there were requests for comment period extensions.

Basil Seggos, Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation also offered his thoughts (19:50 of the [recording](#)).

- Public engagement
  - He said that what came out of the public engagement that was when they got out into the public that they gained a better appreciation of the scale of the challenge.
  - Then he said it is tough to communicate and there is lots of “misinformation and misunderstanding but also lots of excitement and support”.
- Disadvantaged Community Hearings.
  - He was concerned that there hasn’t been a large turnout for the disadvantaged community public hearings.
  - He said that they are important because they are taking up the criteria that defines a disadvantaged community which “is of course at the heart of the climate law, right the 35 to 40% investment and benefits mandate that we have”.

After the Council leadership provided their overview of the comments, they asked other members to speak

Paul Shepson Dean, School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University (22:05 of the [recording](#))

- Talked about misunderstanding and misinformation.
- Loss of livelihood
  - The misunderstanding implication is that the impacts would be immediate
  - Transition will be gradual giving lots of people lots of time to adjust and re-train and so on
- Mis-representation (23:39 of the [recording](#))
  - “Mis-representation I see as on-going. One of you mentioned the word reliability. I think the word reliability is very intentionally presented as a way of expressing the improper idea that renewable energy will not be reliable. I don’t accept that will be the case. In fact, it cannot be the case for the CLCPA that installation of renewable energy, the conversion to renewable energy, will be unreliable. It cannot be.”

Donna DeCarolis, President, National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation (26:32 of the [recording](#))

- Importance of reducing emissions was common theme
- Lack of consensus around the time frame
- Regional differences
  - Electrifying in a cold climate
- Labor union concerns about feasibility
- Affordability, reliability, resiliency and experts at the table
- Industrial users are concerned

Roberta Reardon, Commissioner, New York State Department of Labor (30:17 of the [recording](#))

- Addressing climate change is important to everybody. They may not agree how to get there but there is very little disagreement that we must get there
- Common sentiment that we need a clear plan to protect workers
- CAC should be first and best source of information on the Scoping Plan to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of each option

Robert Howarth, Professor, Ecology and Environmental Biology at Cornell (32:52 of the [recording](#))

- Universal enthusiasm for climate change action
- Fear and confusion based on mis-information
- We have information to counter that and help ease the fears
- I think reliability is one of those. Clearly one can run a 100% renewable grid with reliability it needs to be done carefully.
- Another area for misinformation is heating electrification. Heat pumps in cold climate work. Anyone who says otherwise is just misinforming
- There are forces out there that are working to counter the messages with misinformation

Anne Reynolds, Executive Director, Alliance for Clean Energy New York (35:02 of the [recording](#))

- Overwhelming support for climate action
- While this may be rapid by historic standards, we are talking about 28 years
- There fears are real so we respond with facts

- Justice support and equity
- Real disagreement only for a couple of issues
  - Pace of transition of natural gas system
  - The role of Methane from waste and hydrogen
  - So, it is good we have subgroups to tackle those questions

Raya Salter, Lead Policy Organizer, NY Renews (37:27 of the [recording](#))

- Noted pervasive enthusiasm for concerted climate action
- Need for increased education and engagement
- Claimed that there are two lobbying groups: Paid advocacy community and the paid misinformation community
- Well-funded efforts to spread the misinformation
- There is no voice challenging it
- Paul is saying we should be correcting misinformation

Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates NY (39:42 of the [recording](#))

- Speakers represented the average New Yorker and showed a can do spirit
- Speakers talking about how they are making money in the clean energy economy
- Comments in favor were greater than those who expressed concern
- Need to do more outreach
- People of color are “on the front lines of this climate crisis” and need us as a state to act
- We need to live up to the intent and inspiration of this law

Robert Rodriguez, Acting Secretary of State, New York State Department of State (43:25 of the [recording](#))

- Need to communicate the plan to disadvantaged communities
- Need to communicate directly with homeowners and rate payers about what this means
- The misinformation campaign listed four different numbers for home electrification
- Hyperbole for the impacts on senior citizens
- PR campaign and conversation around consumer finance what this means to the individual and why this is important and how we are supporting them in this effort
- Opponents can distort the message in the plan
- EJ people involved to date have ties to environmental advocacy organizations so we need to get to the others
- Recognized that many people don't follow the environmental issues and are unaware of this action

Rose Harvey, Senior Fellow for Parks and Open Space, Regional Plan Association (46:52 of the [recording](#))

- We can do and we should do spirit of people who want to do this right
- Recognized that information labeled as misleading might not be misinformation. It is a complex subject and it is easy to not understand everything
- Need communications plan. She admitted she doesn't understand everything Council members are saying. Specialized area that she thinks other council members understand

Kisha Santiago-Martinez, Deputy Secretary of State, New York Department of State (50:00 of the [recording](#))

- Discussed inclusive cost of not doing anything
- Supports energy and urgency to do something

Dennis Eisenbach, President, Viridi Parente (51:09 of the [recording](#))

- I was not going to say anything but I was starting to get concerned about some of the comments made by some Council members
- “It is almost like we are dismissing critical input maybe because we don’t agree with it or doesn’t flow naturally in what we are trying to do with the scoping plan document so that concerns me a little bit.” Because if there are issues that are out there brought up by the public or whoever brought them up that kind of like create a misunderstanding or misleading premise let’s develop a FAQ section of our plan.
- I don’t want us to be in a position that we are determining what is valid and what is not valid from the eyes of the individuals trying to provide input because if you want to shut down input this is a good way of doing it. Setting people up saying that you are misleading or purposely doing misunderstanding. I just caution on that, that’s all

After these comments by the Council members Sarah Osgood, Director of the Climate Action Council, (53:25 of the [recording](#)) gave a briefing on the status of the written comments to date.

- At the time of the meeting, they had received nearly 18,000 written comments.
- Obviously, those will take an enormous effort to review.
- Plan to deal with comments
- Every comment will be reviewed
- Reviewers will bin comments
- Staff will summarize and synthesize comments for the council and subgroups
- Discussion of controversial topics will be in public meetings
- Council will decide how to handle the comments
- Comments will be posted eventually

She also described the workplan designed to meet the end of year deadline

- Topics that need to be addressed (56:55 of the [recording](#))
  - Workforce development
  - How to frame the scenarios in the final scoping plan
  - Climate justice and equity
  - Awareness and education campaigns

The next discussion item concerned the request for an extension of the comment deadline. Doreen Harris, President and CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority introduced the topic (59:40 of the [recording](#)).

- Could cause issues with the Scoping Plan
- Opportunity to comment when regulations are proposed
- Gavin, Donna and Dennis asked for an extension
- Letter from the Assembly too

Gavin Donohue, President and CEO of Independent Power Producers (1:01:20 of the [recording](#))

- Why can't they do a parallel track of working on the comments while comments are coming in
- Does not think that extension will affect the schedule
- (1:02:45) Don't know how to pay for initiatives, we haven't identified zero-emissions technology to keep the lights on and replace gas and consumer cost studies
- Real meat and potatoes of the plan are missing

Donna DeCarolis, President, National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation (1:03:30 of the [recording](#))

- Vast majority of people are not even aware of this
- Large policy implications

Dennis Eisenbach, President, Viridi Parente (1:04:45 of the [recording](#))

- Comments included requests for additional meetings to understand what is expected
- Discussions in subgroups – there is one for gas transition but not one for electric transition
- PSC order on the system upgrades is a month after the vote on the plan

Paul Shepson Dean, School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University (1:08:06 of the [recording](#))

- Hard time following that we are moving too quickly
- It is not if are going to decarbonize we are required to decarbonize convert to 100% zero-emissions
- Massive level of effort going on in the background – but is it?

Sarah Osgood, Director of the Climate Action Council, (1:12:27 of the [recording](#))

- Why can't we be doing some of this work while the comment period is open?
  - We cannot summarize while they are still coming in
    - First step is classifying
      - Not doing this from the start is a sure sign that this is not being taken seriously.
      - Some comments certainly could rise to the level where the CAC should be talking about them now
  - Expect a large volume at the end
    - Doing some reviews and trying to keep up right now
    - Cannot say this the amount of people who are saying this or that
  - Difficult to respond to comments until you have the whole set of comments in
- Meetings to increase awareness on specific strategies
  - Valid and necessary
  - Does extension solve that
    - If you explain what you are going to do then people will comment
  - Public education after the fact
- Timing
  - One month to get a summary of the comments once the comment period closes
  - Extending the comment period impacts the schedule for revising the draft
  - Trying to balance the schedule and the comment period deadline
  - It won't be fair to the commenters if we don't spend time on their input

Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates NY (1:16:46 of the [recording](#))

- I don't support extending the comment period
- We gave them a lot of time and gave them an extension
- We are going to have a lot of comment periods so there will be other opportunities
- Non-binding directionality will be laid out in the scoping plan
- Establish criteria

Robert Rodriguez, Acting Secretary of State, New York State Department of State (1:19:16 of the [recording](#))

- Supports an extension
- Focus on heavily impacted sectors and communities

Tom Falcone (1:20:45 of the [recording](#))

- Many comments come in at the end
- Schedule needs to be realistic

Gavin Donohue, President and CEO of Independent Power Producers (1:21:49 of the [recording](#))

- Work plan has to get substance right
- Lot of people did not get heard
- No opportunity for comments on the subgroup presentations
- Get back to making this right

Raya Salter, Lead Policy Organizer, NY Renews (1:23:25 of the [recording](#))

- Does not support
- "It is not about extending the comment period it is about slowing the plan down"
- Gavin said that is not what he said
- You want to see the schedule slowed down and that is the context
- Wants to build the infrastructure to have broad based public information campaign

Doreen Harris, President and CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (1:26:40 of the [recording](#))

- We are committed to getting this right

Basil Seggos, Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (1:27:02 of the [recording](#))

- Costs (1:28:25)
  - We will not solve that in the Draft Scoping Plan
  - When the energy plan is developed those questions will be addressed