

**Maine Climate Council
Buildings, Infrastructure & Housing (BIH) Working Group Meeting
November 14, 2023
Virtual via Zoom**

In attendance:

Working Group members: Michael Stoddard, Kathleen Meil, Rozanna Patane, Tom Twist, Representative Dick Bradstreet, Dan Dixon, Representative Chris Kessler, Don McGilvery, Jesse Thompson, Ellen Belknap, Pat Stanton, Dan Burgess, Ania Wright, Naomi Beal, Dale Basher, Todd Rothstein, Andrew Barrowman, Steve Hudson, Kristin Martin

Staff: David Plumb, Molly Siegel

Welcome

- BIH co-chairs Kathleen Meil and Michael Stoddard welcomed the group and introduced David Plumb, facilitator with Consensus Building Institute
- Overview of the meeting goals: to build a shared understanding of the working group's (WG) tasks and timeline, and review existing *Maine Won't Wait* (MWW) strategies and Equity Subcommittee (ESC) strategies
- WG members introduced themselves and shared the expertise or lived experience they bring to the group.

Setting the Scene- Overall Maine Climate Council Update Process

- Molly Siegel from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) provided a walkthrough of the work that has been done since Maine's first climate action plan was published, and the process that the WGs are now embarking on to update *Maine Won't Wait*.
- WGs are charged with recommending updated strategies by June 2024 for the Maine Climate Council (MCC) to consider
- New this year, WGs are asked to consult with priority populations; this work will be supported by GOPIF, which is hiring a consultant/organization to assist with designing and setting up engagement opportunities. WGs are also tasked with considering equity recommendations and incorporating equity goals/targets into the climate action strategies
- GOPIF is procuring an emissions consultant and has some capacity to conduct additional research and analysis if needed
- Additional information is available in the slide presentation here [link].

Taking Stock- Buildings strategies to date

- Progress towards achieving buildings, infrastructure and housing strategies in *Maine Won't Wait* includes:
 - Exceeding Maine's 100,000 heat pump goal and setting a new target of 175,000 heat pumps by 2027

- Significant federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to expand low and moderate income weatherization, energy efficient affordable housing, and tax credits for energy efficient home upgrades
- Maine Technical Building Codes and Standards Board is adopting the new 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)
- MaineHousing leading by example and requiring passive house equivalency in all new construction by 2024
- Additional equity recommendations from the 2023 ESC report include: increasing weatherization and heat pump installations in low-income households, increasing enrollment in energy bill assistance among low-income households, incorporating energy efficient technologies into affordable housing, and preparing people and businesses in disadvantaged communities to participate in the clean energy/energy efficiency workforce
- Additional details are in the presentation here [link]

Discussion

- Several members stressed the importance of focusing on affordability concerns and costs when analyzing strategies such a potential updates to new building codes. Similarly, building codes should be considered the baseline performance, and not require subsidies to address affordability concerns.
- Attendees highlighted the need for training code enforcement officers and contractors on the new building codes
- Technological advances in heating systems, as well as building products such as cross-laminated timber have happened since the last climate action plan. More “lead by example” or demonstration projects can help to advocate for new technologies and break down “chicken and egg” barriers around availability of materials and demand for those materials.
- A WG member asked that the group consider other alternative fuels such as renewable natural gas and hydrogen fuel cells
- Co-chairs pointed out that we will need to use the grid more than we did in the past, and that devices connected to the grid can be turned on and off (this is called “demand management”). This issue will need to be addressed with other WGs such as Energy and Transportation.

Next Steps

- The WG will discuss choosing which issues to focus on with the limited time of this WG process
- The group will discuss how to approach cross-cutting issues in collaboration with other WGs
- GOPIF has a webpage for submitting comments to the BIH working group (select “Buildings, Infrastructure and Housing Working Group” in the drop-down menu):
<https://www.maine.gov/future/initiatives/climate/climate-council/contact>