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From: Clark County <webmaster@clark.wa.gov>
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Clark County

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Subject

Public Hearing: Climate Change and Resiliency Public Participation Plan

Date of Hearing

Tue, 11/28/2023

Comment

My name is Douglas Tweet. I hold a PhD in Physics and was a research scientist in advanced semiconductor materials for 30 years and college instructor in physics and engineering for 5 years. Research areas included high efficiency solar energy. Recently I taught a Renewable Energy course for senior engineering students. I have been a resident of Clark County since 1997.

The previous March 2023 Public Participation Plan provided an inclusive, logical framework for the work to be done. The proposed revised "Climate Change and Resiliency Public Participation Plan" is unbalanced, rushed, and seems destined to ignore the real technical difficulties and challenges of addressing climate change, likely leading to a wasteful, expensive, and ultimately ineffective result. Furthermore, there are no concrete goals or targets given. The County Council should reject the newly proposed PPP and go back to their existing March 2023 PPP plan.

1) I object to the emphasis placed on a separate County-paid Environmental Justice Coalition (EJC) directing the entire process in the new PPP. The EJC is 1/3 of all the Advisory Groups, as well as given a prominent membership role in the Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG). Under the March 2023 plan, these EJC voices can apply to be included in a CAG, like any other unpaid community group or resident; there is no need for a separate, paid EJC. The other 1/3 of the Advisory Groups consists of paid Clark County staff. This proposed plan amplifies some opinions and omits and diminishes others.

I fear the voices of the various unpaid ordinary citizens in the CAG will be drowned out by paid consultants and staff; they will be reduced to mere token participants. I am concerned that such a process will end with expensive solutions that enrich certain groups (including consultants) and not make reasonable progress towards the goal of a reduction of carbon emissions. The proposed PPP process is headed toward forcing significant increases in the cost of living, housing, and transportation, which will hurt the most vulnerable populations in our society the most. This opposes the goal of resiliency.

2) This whole process is rushed. JLA admits they reached out to only 200 select people and groups throughout Clark County and received input from just 83 individuals. Out of a population of over 500,000, that is less than 0.017%. Needless to say, that is hardly a representative sample of the citizens of this county. Every business and resident in Clark County is a stakeholder. We need more input from ordinary citizens, and much less from County- paid special interest groups and consultants.

3) Climate change is a complex, global issue, with solutions also dependent on local conditions. Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) studies examine the carbon, energy, pollution, and environmental effects of a given technology (e.g. solar panels, electric vehicles, etc) from mining the required materials, processing, manufacturing, shipping, use and maintenance, to end-of-life recycling of the product. Published LCA assessments vary wildly in results, making it unclear if a given technology is truly “green”. There are also many local factors to consider in making recommendations for approaches to reduce Clark County’s “carbon footprint”. For example, forcing expensive solar panels on homes and businesses is likely to be pointless, given the cloudy climate during most of the year. It is unclear whether the panels will pay for themselves without heavy government subsidies. Furthermore, most solar panels are manufactured in China using energy from polluting coal-fired power plants, increasing global warming. Installation of such panels in Clark County for use just a few months out of the year may not offset the damage done during their manufacture. Technical and financial analysis is needed.

4) The goals are too vague: “Reduce”. By how much? By when? How is it determined? If the details are in the law passed by the legislature, it would be helpful to have them spelled out clearly.

Sincerely,
Douglas Tweet, PhD
Camas, WA