**Community Engagement Committee**

Materials for February 16, 2016 EVAC meeting

The Community Engagement Committee accepted the task of helping the Clean Energy Partnership design a process for engaging the people of Minneapolis. Our committee included several members of EVAC and the Clean Energy Partnership Planning Team.

Our committee began our process by setting goals for community engagement. The City of Minneapolis’s Climate Action Plan, which was written in 2011, set out a path for achieving several goals by 2025. We pulled out four goals from the “Buildings and Energy” section that we believed were important to our work:

* Achieve 15 percent energy efficiency in residential buildings from the growth baseline by 2025.
* Increase electricity from local and directly purchased renewables to 10 percent of the total consumed by 2025.
* Help 75 percent of Minneapolis homeowners participate in whole-house efficiency retrofit programs by 2025, ensuring the distribution reflects the current percentage of low and moderate income home ownership in the city.
* Help 75 percent of Minneapolis renters and rental property owners participate in efficiency retrofit programs by 2025, with a distribution that reflects the current percentage of low and moderate income rental housing in the city.

The ambitious nature of these goals inspired us to develop a process that would help build the capacity of the Partnership to engage all communities in Minneapolis. We are under the impression that the Minneapolis residents who have participated in energy efficiency programs provided by the city and utilities to date have disproportionately been white and middle- or upper-income. In order to achieve the goals set out in the Climate Action Plan for an even distribution of program participation across the city, we believe the Partnership should not take a “one-size-fits-all” marketing approach, which targets every Minneapolis resident in the same manner, because we believe it would only continue to reach the same subset of people who already participate.

Rather, we believe the Clean Energy Partnership should design targeted community-specific engagement plans that meet residents where they are and related to their needs. We considered the idea of arbitrarily creating engagement tactics that the City and Utilities could undertake this year in different communities, but quickly decided that we did not have a great enough understanding of the conditions in each community to make good decisions about how to target communities.

In that spirit, we designed a Community Engagement Process (Appendix A) that could be used by the Partners to develop targeted community engagement plans. We designed this process to focus on the unique traits, assets, and needs of each community that would influence how they would best be engaged in energy opportunities. While there may be many shared assets and challenges across multiple communities, there are also many aspects of individual communities that must be understood if the Partners wish to authentically engage them in the aspirational goals of the Climate Action Plan.

We also identified that our committee did not have the resources to actually use this process to create the community engagement plans that are needed. We were limited not only by the ability for committee members to contribute additional volunteer hours, but also by the limited community expertise on the committee. Although we believe EVAC members can and should play a role in developing community engagement plans, we do not have adequate representation of Minneapolis’s many diverse communities to responsibly claim an understanding of their assets and needs.

In order to meet the aspirational goals set out in the Climate Action Plan, we are asking the Clean Energy Partnership to invest time, energy, and money into developing targeted community engagement plans for multiple communities in Minneapolis. We recommend, as a starting point, that the Partners commit the resources to contract with one or several entities (selected through a competitive RFP process) to design the initial pilot community engagement plans for 2-4 Minneapolis communities in 2016. Our full recommended timeline can be found in Appendix B.

We recognize that the process we have designed may be more methodical, and therefore more expensive, than the Clean Energy Partners have anticipated. However, we believe that the dividends will be much greater in this process than those from a “one-size-fits-all” approach or an experimental “see what sticks” approach. The communities of Minneapolis are incredibly diverse, but we believe their differences can be a major asset for the City and Utilities if we invest in an effort to understand them. The results of this process can be used to improve many other processes at the City and Utilities.

At the Q1 EVAC meeting, we seek to get feedback on the following questions:

1. Are we on the right track with this process?
2. When we are selecting 2-4 Minneapolis communities to pilot the engagement planning process, what should we prioritize?
   1. Communities where we believe we can have a big impact on energy and climate emissions in the near-term, and/or
   2. Communities where we believe we can learn the most about community engagement, and/or
   3. Communities where we believe we can serve the greatest unmet needs (including social or economic needs) of residents
3. Are there any committee members interested in participating for the next 3 months in the process of refining our community engagement process and selecting 2-4 pilot communities?

We look forward to discussing this proposal.

*The EVAC Community Engagement Committee*