

June 2024 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Allan Maas, Chuck Jensen, Barbara Menne, Sue Lepore, Ginny Lohr, Jason Berkowitz, John Doherty, Elly Claus-McGahan. This ZOOM meeting screen was enhanced with closed captioning.

Announcements

Annual Potluck Picnic
Wednesday, July 17, from 5:30 to dusk
Point Defiance Park

Families welcome! Social gathering only, not a business meeting

Bring: a potluck dish to share, table service, a folding chair, and your own drink (or enjoy our provided lemonade or water.)

Directions in the park: do the loop past the Pagoda, past the garden entrances, and just past the Rose Garden, look for the **CCL** sign in the open area to the left under the big trees. We will be about 40 yards from the road, at the picnic tables.

Save the Date!

Don't Miss the Boat! Sunday Aug 18

Let's get a CCL Tacoma group to take the FREE Port of Tacoma Boat Tour

Once a year the **Port of Tacoma** gives free tours to the public on a particular date. To see photos and a video, click here. They do sell out very quickly, so we need to get our group organized! It would be a nice social and informative outing.

Tickets become available on **July 8**. There are six different times ranging from **9 am to 4:30 pm**. If you would like to take the tour with our group, email John Doherty by **July 7** so he can coordinate its time and registration.

Tabling

Our next tabling event is the Tacoma Ocean Fest, **Saturday, June 29** from **12-5**. It will be the standard set-up with a full booth, with emphases on electrification and the "Vote No on I-2117" effort. If you'd like to help, please sign up for hours on the sign-up sheet on **SLACK**. Or just stop by and say hi! It's a very fun event. The committee will meet **Monday, June 24** at **7pm** on **Zoom** for final planning.

Good News in Local Efforts—Elly Claus-McGahan

--**Steilacoom has four mature trees at Sunrise Beach** and recently a resident across the street asked them to cut them down because it "disturbed their view." In a break from past practice, local council members searched hard in the code for a way to **deny** the permitting—concluding that it would "violate public interest" in the shoreline and that mature trees have many benefits.

--**Grants for electric school buses**--**Tacoma School District** has purchased 14 electric school buses although there is a problem with manufacturing delays. They have put in charging infrastructure to take up to 28 buses, but there are also issues with that. So there are several bumps in the road, not to be seen as a reluctance on their part. Keep encouraging them!

--**The Port of Tacoma** has applied for a \$.5B grant to continue electrification for their cargo loaders, drayage trucks, and shoreline power. It was designated a "Priority 1 Hub" by the President for its "Clean Freightways" program. The **Port** is really making strides, in large part due to **Kristin Ang's** leadership.

CCL Call [clip](#)

Meet the new **CCL Executive Director, Rachel Kerestes**. "A trained biologist and public policy analyst, Rachel Kerestes' career spans the worlds of public affairs, advocacy, marketing and communications." (Starts at minute 33 of the clip). There's also a [meet-and-greet call](#) with her on **July 2 at 5 p.m. PT.**

Guest Speaker--**Ryan Spence**, [Manufacturing Industrial Council of S. Sound](#)

From their website: "The **South Sound Manufacturing Industrial Council (MIC)** is a core strategic program of the **Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce**. The **MIC** is committed to the preservation of industrial land, strengthening existing business, and expanding manufacturing, industrial, and maritime opportunities in the **South Sound**. The **MIC** is aligned with the **State of Washington's** goal to double manufacturing capacity and workforce, with an emphasis on green innovation and commitment to women and minority-owned businesses."

A long-time **Tacoma** resident and **University of Puget Sound** graduate, **Ryan** has been owner of a small manufacturing design and product development work incubator in **South Tacoma** for the past ten years. As the director of the **Council**, (which is a program of the **Chamber of Commerce**, not the government) he engages in advocacy, outreach, and education around manufacturing, industry, and maritime uses in the area. He covers all their government affairs, working with the city and a wide range of partners. The members are mostly small to medium-sized businesses.

Q-John—Typically corporations and businesses are primarily motivated by profit, is it conceivable that such organizations can pay attention to environmental concerns, especially if that results in lower profits?

A-Ryan—Corporations are motivated by their customers, and we live in a world now, especially in our region, where customers have very high expectations of corporate partnership in environmental stewardship and accountability. (Based on a long legacy of this in the area). Industry has been a major partner in most of the large-scale environmental action in our region including habitat restoration and land remediation (for example the **Port**). A nice thing about the private sector is that they have the dollars; non-profits need them as partners to get things done. There are lots of solutions and experience in the private sector, so be sure they know our

concerns and consider partnering with them for all kinds of environmental action (like increasing tree canopy, land restoration..) Partnering is essential, not just accountability. **The City of Tacoma** just received an award from the **Puget Sound Regional Council** and recognition from the **Governor** for their **Green Economic Strategy**. He's been on the advisory group for that—along with representation from government, schools, utilities, [Communities for a Healthy Bay](#),--a wide range of people looking at a green future.

Q-Barbara—Please discuss the environmental business awards that the [MIC](#) recently gave out?
A-Ryan—This was along with the **Port** and **Communities for a Healthy Bay**, and the main point was to bring people together and raise awareness that a lot of great environmental stewardship is going on in the private sector here and has been for 40 years.

The Innovation Award went to [Aquagga](#), a startup doing containerized treatment for PFAs (forever chemicals). Remediating contaminated drinking water is a big challenge nationally. They want to build here, but then export their technology to the world.

The main award runner-up was [LRI Services](#), with a wide range of waste initiatives including the capture and repurposing of greenhouse gases from landfills; large-scale composting of city waste.

The main award went to [Radius metal recycling](#) (formerly **Schnitzer Steel**), one of the largest industrial recyclers in the country. Metal is very resource-intensive to harvest and return to productive use, but we can't meet our current demand for steel and other products without robust recycling from companies like **Radius**.

Q-Barbara--What does the business sector feel about **I-2117**?

A-Ryan--The **Chamber** is working on what their position will be on that. We are not partisan but do take positions on issues from time to time and provide access to information and perspectives. The division across the business community on **I-2117** is not so much on the goal of environmental sustainability itself but more about how the [Climate Commitment Act](#) is structured. Funding for our road and transport infrastructure is so tied to it that repeal would be devastating for critical projects. Some members are focused on the gas tax part as a regressive tax that hits people differently. Generally, there is widespread support for keeping the **CCA** intact. The options for the **Chamber's** position are "*for, against, neutral or no comment.*" They will probably go with "*neutral.*" (His own personal vote would be "*for*"--the **CCA** is very beneficial and should stand for a lot of reasons, although coupling it with transportation has led to problems. There are many issues with the way the legislation was written.)

Questions on **Electrification efforts**:

His personal approach is that it's popular and relatively easy to talk about electrifying consumer vehicles--cars, but it certainly lacks for scale and from a resource management standpoint, it's a lot of input to build those networks (of chargers) for a relatively small gain. At first it would be better to start big regarding economies of scale, i.e. to move container ships to shore power vs their diesel generators. The **Port** can reduce emissions by 80% that way, since our electricity is 98% carbon-free. Increasing that infrastructure should be our first priority, then the next best move would be the **Port** vehicles (cranes, forklifts, drayage vehicles), and then electric rail to

connect our manufacturing centers. (Rail is problematic: warehouses don't want it; their tenants prefer trucking as a general rule for logistics. Rail is old-school and all its adoption processes are challenging.) It is significant that **Tacoma** does have those 3 new electric locomotives and some workforce transitional training to service those ([Workforce central](#) a very important source for such transitions.)

Efforts to use electric school buses are well on their way, but city buses will be more difficult. We have to do what we can with what we have now. And it's going to take huge amounts, several city's worth, of electric power to cover all of this. Big, combined, cooperative projects work better in getting state and federal dollars vs permit by permit, company by company. That takes creative partnership.

Ginny offered a book, [Solutionary Rail: a people-powered campaign to electrify America's railroads and open corridors to a clean energy future](#), by **Bill Moyer** of the **Backbone Campaign**. Her husband is one of the team of authors, the foreword is by **Bill McKibben**.

Q-Barb--How can a group like ours help with such opportunities and partnerships?

A-Ryan—Cities are people--all kinds of different groups are needed including the community at large; the networking and input of various opinions and information are what makes things happen. Thanks for all the work that you do. Please send me information and resources, at ryans@tacomachamber.org

Other miscellaneous comments from the conversation:

-- I'm confident that if we'd had more proactive engagement with the **S. Tacoma Mega-warehouse** from the start, we could have gotten more tree canopy plus public access to the wetland space there. They increased the proposed tree canopy 30%, partly due to wetland restoration but partly because of community input. There are ways we could have leveraged other monies to amplify tree canopy further by broadening the partnership and working together.

--Stepping back is a useful tool in solving problems. For one, the partnerships get bigger, there's more and more people, resources and piles of money. Stepping back also asks "what is the problem we are trying to solve?" instead of beginning with the assumed solution. For instance, the problem of poor air quality in the **Tideflats and S. Tacoma Subareas**: if you start by looking at recent (2023) studies of the sources of harmful particulates, you find that it's only 2% industry, 17% transportation, but 60-75% woodsmoke for heating! This is astonishing, nobody believes it. These low-lying areas concentrate the pollution in winter, no matter the source.

--I see a huge amount of consensus on environment in WA state between government and business.

Ryan expressed an interest in returning sometime in the future to continue this discussion. We appreciated his taking the time and talking with us.