

Adopted Minutes of the Environmental Justice Council

01/30/2025

Virtual ZOOM Platform

Due to limited staff capacity, Environmental Justice Council (Council) staff are working to streamline the Council meeting notes. The notes now include only very high-level points and the final decisions made along with voting records. The full meeting recordings can be found on the Council's website: [Environmental Justice Council Meetings | WaPortal.org](#). However, it is important that meeting notes are useful to the Council Members and the public. Please share feedback with Council staff on how we can make these notes most useful to you by emailing envjustice@ejc.wa.gov or by calling 360-584-4398.

Council Members present:

- Nichole Banegas - joined at 4:15pm
- Maria Batayola (Co-Chair) - joined at 3:48pm
- Maria Blancas
- Tatiana Brown
- The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)
- David Mendoza
- Todd Mitchell
- Faaluaina Pritchard
- Running-Grass
- The Honorable Monica Tonasket
- Raeshawna Ware
- The Honorable JJ Wilbur

Council Members absent:

- Cristina González
- Rosalinda Guillen (on leave of absence)
- Esther Min

Agency Ex Officio Liaisons present:

- Lea Anne Burke, Puget Sound Partnership
- Jennifer Grove, Department of Commerce
- Lauren Jenks, Department of Health

- Nicole Johnson, Department of Agriculture
- Eliseo (EJ) Juárez, Department of Natural Resources
- Ahmer Nizam, Department of Transportation
- Millie Piazza, Department of Ecology

Council staff:

- Jonathan Chen
- Christy Curwick Hoff
- Dana Myers
- Rowena Pineda
- Sierra Red Bow
- Sierra Rotakhina

Guests and other participants:

- Melodi Wynne, Executive Director for the Spokane Tribal Network

I. Welcome and Roll Call for Quorum

The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson, Council Co-Chair, called the meeting to order and asked for an initial roll call. At the time of the roll call, there were ten voting members present, meeting quorum (see table).

14 Members / 1 Vacancy / 1 Leave of Absence / Current Quorum = 8		
Nichole Banegas	Business Representative	Absent
Maria Batayola (Co-Chair)	Community Representative	Absent
Maria Blancas	Community Representative	Present
Tatiana Brown	Youth Community Representative	Present
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)	Tribal Representative	Present
Cristina González	Community Representative	Absent
Rosalinda Guillen	Community Representative	Leave of Absence
David Mendoza	Representative At Large	Present
Esther Min	EJ Practitioner	Absent

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Todd Mitchell	Union Representative	Present
Faaluaina Pritchard	Community Representative	Present
Running-Grass	EJ Practitioner	Present
The Honorable Monica Tonasket	Tribal Representative	Present
Raeshawna Ware	Community Representative	Present
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	Tribal Representative	Present
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant

II. Discussion: Emerging Issues

Maria Batayola, Council Co-Chair, said Presidential Executive Orders have had an impact on communities, and she would like to ask staff to convene the Council to receive briefings on the impact. Co-Chair Erickson said we want to be aware of state or federal changes that affect the Council's work. Tatiana Brown, Council Member, said cuts at the state level would be good to know about and asked for staff to share in a centralized document, suggesting the Council can write a letter in support of those programs. EJ Juárez, Ex Officio Liaison for the Department of Natural Resources, said the agencies are gathering a lot of information about these changes, so agencies may not be able to respond to Council requests in a timely fashion.

III. Approval of Agenda by Council

Sierra Rotakhina, Council Manager, facilitated adoption of the [agenda](#).

Motion: The Council adopts the agenda.

Motion/Second: Lua Pritchard/Todd Mitchell. No objections noted. **The Motion passed.**

IV. Approval of November 21, 2024 Meeting Notes by Council

Sierra Rotakhina facilitated adopted of the [meeting notes](#), see page 9.

Motion: The Council adopts the November 21, 2024 meeting notes.

Motion/Second: Lua Pritchard/Raeshawna Ware. No objections noted. **The Motion passed.**

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V. Consider Approval of the 2025 Council Meeting Schedule

Council Members discussed possible dates and locations for a full day, in-person meeting.

Motion: The Council adopts the proposed [2025 Council Meeting Schedule](#), see page19, with any changes agreed upon by the full Council at the January 30, 2025 meeting.

Motion/Second: Todd Mitchell/Lua Pritchard. No objections noted. **The Motion passed.**

VI. Convening Workgroup on How the Council Listens to and Supports Communities in Expressing Their Thoughts and Ideas and Development of Policy or Process around Anonymous or Confidential Public Comments

Sierra Rotakhina said the Council has accepted anonymous and confidential public comments in the past and that a process or policy is needed to guide staff and Members in how to navigate this. Co-Chair Batayola asked for volunteers to serve on a short term, ad hoc workgroup to draft a policy and/or process. The following Council Members volunteered to serve: Running-Grass, Maria Blancas, Tatiana Brown, Lua Pritchard, and Maria Batayola.

VII. Public Comment

Sierra Red Bow, Council Staff, opened up the public comment period.

David Bulindah, Wakulima USA, introduced themselves as an immigrant and a member of a community that is experiencing fear. They asked if there are recommendations the Council is making to the Governor's Office to support communities. They said that they are recipients of the HEAL [capacity grant] funding and they do not know if that funding will continue or not. David Mendoza, Council Member, said they feel anxiety and fear as well. He said as a body, they have not had time to discuss how their work will shift, adding that their state mandate has not changed, and they remain committed to doing the work. He said the Council made recommendations for continued funding for the HEAL capacity grants.

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Judith Gorman said she is impressed with the Council. She said Soap Lake has a boat dock process and Soap Lake is the first in the country to be recognized as an “outstanding resource water.” They said the process the Department of Ecology (Ecology) set up when it was approved as an outstanding resource water, required Ecology to ensure Tier 3B was implemented. They said Ecology has done nothing in the last year to study pollution, which is a simple conductivity measurement. They said they are upset about the lack of movement and implementation was dropped by the regional office. Co-Chair Erickson said his Tribe had a separate consultation with Ecology on this topic.

Maricela Santana-Walle, Environmental Justice Coordinator for We are ELLA, said they received a HEAL community capacity grant and have convened a multigenerational group and is actively engaging with state agencies, including the Departments of Health, Ecology, and Agriculture. They are learning about the HEAL act, the CCA, and sharing experiences with water and air contamination in the lower Yakima Valley. They said they have the following priorities: (1) clean water and air (particularly nitrate contamination), (2) air contamination, (3) lack of access and affordability to recycling services, (4) immigration rights (including lack of personal protective equipment and lack of health information), and (5) dog and cat shelters. They will raise awareness in the community in English and Spanish. They are preparing for Lobby Day where they will be meeting with Legislators. Co-Chair Batayola shared gratitude and Member Brown asked if she could share written materials.

VIII. Election of Council Executive Committee

Sierra Rotakhina, Council Manager, provided an overview of the Council’s bylaws regarding the election of Executive Committee Members and Co-Chairs. She shared the names of Council Members who have been nominated and who have accepted their nominations. Nominees shared statements about themselves and what they would bring to the Executive Committee. Given that

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five Council Members were running for the five Executive Committee seats the Council suspended the bylaws to simplify that election process for this one election.

Motion: The Council suspends the bylaws to elects the following Executive Committee Member nominees as a full slate: David Mendoza, Jarred-Michael Erickson, Cristina González, Tatiana Brown, and Maria Batayola.

Motion/Second: Lua Pritchard/JJ Wilbur. **The Motion Passed.**

A: Yes, I approve.

B: Yes, with reservations.

C: Not voting until we have further discussions.

D: I don't approve, but I won't block.

E: I block, have serious concerns.

F: I stand aside, recuse myself.

14 Members / 1 Vacancy / 1 Leaves of Absence / Current Quorum = 8		
Nichole Banegas	Business Representative	A
Maria Batayola (Co-Chair)	Community Representative	A
Maria Blancas	Community Representative	A
Tatiana Brown	Youth Community Representative	A
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Interim Co-Chair)	Tribal Representative	A
Cristina González	Community Representative	Absent
Rosalinda Guillen	Community Representative	Leave of Absence
David Mendoza	Representative At Large	A
Esther Min	EJ Practitioner	Absent
Todd Mitchell	Union Representative	Absent
Faaluaina Pritchard	Community Representative	A
Running-Grass	EJ Practitioner	A
The Honorable Monica Tonasket	Tribal Representative	A

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Raeshawna Ware	Community Representative	A
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	Tribal Representative	A
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant

The Council then voted to reinstate the bylaws.

Motion: The Council moves to reinstate the bylaws.

Motion/Second: Maria Batayola/Lua Pritchard. No objections noted. **The Motion Passed.**

Sierra Rotakhina facilitated election of the Co-Chairs from among the newly elected Executive Committee members. No co-chair ticket received a majority of the votes (see Appendix A), so per the bylaws a run-off election was held between the top two tickets. Co-Chair Erickson and Member Brown won the election as the next Co-Chairs of the Council (see Appendix B).

Members shared a desire for the Governance Committee to discuss attendance requirements for Executive Committee Members and Co-Chairs.

IX. Presentation: HEAL Agencies Annual Update to the Council

Rowena Pineda and Dana Myers, Council Staff, shared a [presentation](#) (see page 24). Member Mendoza thanked the agencies, stating that he can see the culture shift happening in the agencies and that it is an encouraging sign. Millie Piazza, Ex Officio Liaison for the Department of Ecology, said they integrate environmental justice into work, whether it is a requirement of HEAL or not. Ahmer Nizam, Ex Officio Liaison for the Department of Transportation, said there is a substantial amount of work that goes into change management to achieve cultural change in the agency. Ex Officio Liaison Juárez said after an Environmental Justice Assessment is completed, staff use the assessment results to make program and process improvements.

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X. 2025 Legislative Session Update

The EJ Council did not have time to discuss this item.

XI. Discussion: 2025 Council Work Planning and Approach to Council Work

Co-Chair Batayola said this agenda is the start of a conversation on how the Council approaches its work in 2025. She shared some observations on how the Council has worked to date, including often low participation in committee meetings and starting and stopping of momentum on individual projects. Members shared their own observations including:

- Low participation in committees
- Starting and stopping of momentum on individual projects
- Less meeting time to formally take action
- Not having a visual of all work requirements and commitments
- Spending a lot of time on process
- Balancing statutory requirements and other projects
- Recognition of the value each Member brings (lived experience, technical expertise)
- Need to prioritize and set a workplan on what can realistically be accomplished with meaningful engagement
- Need to discuss and determine how much the Council wants to track implementation and accountability after a budget recommendation is funded

The following Council Members, staff, and Ex Officio Liaisons volunteered to develop a work plan proposal for the full Council's consideration: Sierra Rotakhina, Member Brown, Member Ware, Ex Officio Liaison Juárez, Ex Officio Liaison Nizam, Ex Officio Liaison Piazza, Co-Chair Batayola, Member Running-Grass.

XII. Community Connection

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Sierra Red Bow, Council Staff, introduced Melodi Wynne, Executive Director for the Spokane Tribal Network, who gave a presentation. Melodi shared information about their demonstration garden aimed at achieving tribal food sovereignty. The presentation also covered Network programs, environmental impacts, and future projects. Member Mendoza thanked Melodi for sharing the work they are doing.

XIII. Public Comment

No additional public comments provided.

XIV. Appreciation and Adjournment

Co-Chair Batayola thanked everyone for their participation. Lea Anne Burke, Ex Officio Liaison from the Puget Sound Partnership, shared a resource on their agency website for legislative updates: <https://psp.wa.gov/state-government-relations.php>. Co-Chair Batayola adjourned the meeting.

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Appendix A: Council Co-Chair Election Vote Counts

[illegible]

Todd Mitchell							1					
Faaluaina Pritchard							1					
Running-Grass		1										
The Honorable Monica Tonasket	1											
Raeshawna Ware							1					
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	1											
Total	3	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of Votes	23.07692308	38.46153846	0	0	0	0	38.46153846	0	0	0		

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Appendix B: Council Co-Chair Election Run-Off Vote Counts

	Chairman Jarred-Michael Erickson/ Tatiana Brown	Maria Batayola/ David Mendoza	Abstain	Absent
Nichole Banegas	1			
Maria Batayola		1		
Maria Blancas	1			
Tatiana Brown	1			
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson	1			
Cristina González				Absent
Rosalinda Guillen				Leave of Absence
David Mendoza		1		
Esther Min (through proxy)	1			
Todd Mitchell		1		
Faaluaina Pritchard		1		
Running-Grass	1			
The Honorable Monica Tonasket	1			
Raeshawna Ware		1		
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	1			
Total	8	5	0	0
Percentage of Votes	61.53846154	38.46153846		

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