

Adopted Minutes of the Environmental Justice Council

January 29, 2026

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](https://www.environmentaljusticecouncil.org/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:

- Tatiana Brown (Co-Chair)
- David Mendoza, joined at 4:26pm and left at 5:00pm
- Esther Min, joined at 3:47pm
- Todd Mitchell, left at 6:08pm
- Faaluaina Pritchard
- Running-Grass
- Maria Batayola, joined at 3:49pm

Council Members absent:

- Cristina González Torres
- Nichole Banegas
- Maria Blancas
- The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)
- The Honorable JJ Wilbur

Agency Ex Officio Liaisons present:

- Rowena Pineda for Jennifer Grove, Department of Commerce
- Lauren Jenks, Department of Health
- Nicole Johnson, Department of Agriculture
- Jerry Rivero, Department of Natural Resources
- Emilie Litsinger, Puget Sound Partnership
- Ahmer Nizam, Department of Transportation

- Millie Piazza, Department of Ecology

Council staff:

- Jonathan Chen
- Angie Ellis
- Christy Curwick Hoff
- Dana Myers
- Sierra Rotakhina

Guests and other participants:

- Cooper Garbe, Department of Ecology
- Martha Hankins, Department of Ecology
- Andy Hayes, Department of Ecology
- Tamara Jones, Department of Ecology
- Stephanie Potts, Department of Ecology
- Adrian Young, Department of Ecology

I. Welcome and Roll Call for Quorum

Tatiana Brown, Council Co-Chair, called the meeting to order. She announced that Council Member Raeshawna Ware has resigned from the Council after serving past the end of her term in order to support the Council while vacancies were filled. Co-Chair Brown thanked Council Member Ware for her service. She said Member Ware had suggested holding a “Theo Moment” at each meeting where a Member could share how they have affected change, witnessed good, or done something light and beautiful in the name of environmental justice.

Christy Curwick Hoff, Council Staff, facilitated roll call. At the time of the initial roll call, there were 4 voting members present, not meeting quorum (see table).

12 Members / 4 Vacancies / 0 Leaves of Absence / Current Quorum = 7		
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	Tribal Representative	Absent
Running-Grass	EJ Practitioner	Present
Faaluaina Pritchard	Community Representative	Present
Todd Mitchell	Union Representative	Present
Esther Min	EJ Practitioner	Absent
David Mendoza	Representative At Large	Absent
Cristina González Torres	Community Representative	Absent
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)	Tribal Representative	Absent
Tatiana Brown (Co-Chair)	Community Representative	Present
Maria Blancas	Community Representative	Absent
Maria Batayola	Community Representative	Absent
Nichole Banegas	Business Representative	Absent
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant

Note: The Council moved to the Legislative Session Update while they waited for a quorum of Members to arrive.

2026 Legislative Session Update and Possible Associated Council Actions

Christy Curwick Hoff provided a briefing on legislative session to date. She shared information about Governor Ferguson's proposed supplemental operating budget, including a proposal to reduce funding for the Department of Health's HEAL funding (including funding for HEAL implementation, the Environmental Health Disparities Map, and the HEAL Interagency Workgroup) and the EJ Council's funding by \$500,000 for the upcoming fiscal year. She also highlighted a few policy bills for the Council's awareness.

Public Comment

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Co-Chair Brown opened up the public comment period.

Maricela Santana-Walle, EJ Coordinator for ELLA, said they have been working with the Department of Health and have been using the Environmental Health Disparities Map for a lot of their outreach and as a tool to advocate for the community. There is a risk that funding for the project will be cut. They are hoping to increase the data used in the map to bring up the voices of farmworkers who face exposures from pesticides, chemicals, and environmental impacts from CAFOs. They are using the map in the documentary they are working on. Cuts in funding will pose a risk for communities. They asked the Council to advocate for the funding, so it is not cut in the budget.

Sierra Rotakhina, Council Manager, said the Council has submitted letters to the House and Senate budget committees advocating for funding to be included in the final budget. She said hearing personal stories from the community is very important. Co-Chair Brown thanked Maricela for sharing how the map is being used in new ways.

Continuation of Council Budget Values and Principles: Cover Letter

Member Batayola, Council Member, said the Budget Workgroup drafted a cover letter (see [meeting materials](#), starting on page 23) in response to Governor Ferguson's proposed supplemental budget and the proposed use of Climate Commitment Act (CCA) revenue to fund the Working Families Tax Credit. Sierra Rotakhina shared the letter on screen and there were no questions or comments from Council Members.

Sierra Rotakhina said they have heard from Tribes and communities that the terms "overburdened communities" and "vulnerable populations" are not preferred terms. She said they will often use the term frontline communities. Millie Piazza, Ex Officio Liaison, said they are

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terms of art that are statutorily defined and from her own experience, they do not align with how she or her community identify. The terms overburdened and vulnerable do not call out community resiliency. Lua Pritchard, Council Member, said those terms are still being used in her community and she has not heard any concerns. Jerry Rivero, Ex Officio Liaison, said in his past work in California (where the term “disadvantaged communities” is used) they acknowledged terms used in statute, and they would use language that highlights the strengths of communities. He recommended using the term frontline communities. Emilie Litsinger, Ex Officio Liaison, agreed that when using the terms, they should provide clarity that they are using legal terminology and added that they welcome the opportunity for communities to identify the terms they prefer. Member Pritchard said sometimes agency staff are afraid to use terms and they overthink things. Member Batayola said words will always be evolving and added that they need to think this through and consult with Tribes and communities.

Members discussed and agreed to add language to the cover letter to reference statute for the terms “overburdened communities” and “vulnerable populations” and they edited the cover letter. They discussed how the letter was trying to articulate three points about the CCA funding and how they are in line with the Council’s adopted values and principles. Todd Mitchell, Council Member, said the cover letter gives context to the values and principles.

Proposed Motion: The Council adopts the cover letter for its Budget Values and Principles as submitted on January 29, 2026, with any changes agreed to by the full Council.

The Council directs staff to combine the cover letter with the table of contents and the values and principles and submit to the appropriate committees of the Legislature, the Governor, and the Office of Financial Management to inform the development of the 2026 supplemental budget.

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The Council will follow its procedure for “Advocating for the Council’s Budget Recommendations” adopted by the full Council on November 21, 2024 when advocating for positions outlined in the adopted cover letter.

Motion: Second: Todd Mitchell/David Mendoza

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.

12 Members / 4 Vacancies / 0 Leaves of Absence / Current Quorum = 7		
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	Tribal Representative	Absent
Running-Grass	EJ Practitioner	A
Faaluaina Pritchard	Community Representative	A
Todd Mitchell	Union Representative	A
Esther Min	EJ Practitioner	A
David Mendoza	Representative At Large	A
Cristina González Torres	Community Representative	Absent
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)	Tribal Representative	Absent
Tatiana Brown (Co-Chair)	Community Representative	A
Maria Blancas	Community Representative	Absent
Maria Batayola	Community Representative	A
Nichole Banegas	Business Representative	Absent
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant

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Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant
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Approval of Agenda by Council

Co-Chair Brown, facilitated adoption of the [agenda](#).

Motion: The Council adopts the agenda.

No objections noted. **The Motion passed.**

Approval of December 4, 2025 Meeting Notes by Council

Co-Chair Brown facilitated adoption of the meeting notes (see [meeting materials](#) on page 10).

Motion: The Council adopts the December 4, 2025 meeting notes.

No objections noted. **The Motion passed.**

Discussion and Possible Adoption 2026 Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 Council Meetings

Co-Chair Brown said they hoped to adopt a March 2026 meeting date and to use that meeting to discuss the Council's workplan and if adjustments are needed. She said the Council encourages Tribes, community members, and agencies to reach out to the Council with their priorities to inform the Council's discussion in March. Members discussed different dates for the March meeting.

Motion: The Council adopts the following tentative meeting dates: March 13, 2026 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm and March 10, 2026 from 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm, with the final date to be determined based on member availability.

Motion/Second: Maria Batayola/David Mendoza

No objections noted. **Motion Passed**

Sierra Rotakhina shared considerations for possibly co-convening the Council's in-person meeting with the Health Disparities Council and the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and

Accountability Committee. She asked the Council to share their goals and priorities for the in-person meeting.

Member Pritchard, offered the Asia Pacific Cultural Center in Tacoma as a meeting venue. She said she favored meeting solo to focus on EJ Council business. Member Batayola liked the idea of having shared time with the other Councils. She said it is important for community to understand how the Environmental Health Disparities Map is being used. Running-Grass, Council Member, said that in this political and fiscal environment, he encouraged opportunities to partner with natural allies. He supported having space to maximize sharing, even informally. Nicole Johnson, Ex Officio Liaison, said she also serves on the Health Disparities Council, and she supported cross-connection to identify communities that haven't been engaged across the work, and alignment of priorities. Millie Piazza, Ex Officio Liaison, suggested involvement with other partners like the Office of Equity and a need to focus on goals and metrics and how to hold agencies accountable to process as well as meaningful longer-term metrics. Co-Chair Brown said she wanted to know more about how to determine if we're yielding benefits for the communities we're serving. She said she'd like to have a conversation about how the Environmental Health Disparities Map could be used to track health disparities outcomes. She said they could focus a day on the map as a tool and another as a forum, along with having some dedicated EJ Council time. Sierra Rotakhina proposed working with Council Members who volunteer to be on a planning group.

EJ Council Community Connect

Jonathan Chen, Council Staff, shared that the scheduled presenter was unable to make it.

Briefing on Climate Commitment Act (CCA) Projects

Co-Chair Brown introduced the agenda item. Jonathan Chen encouraged Members to think about how these CCA projects could be included in upcoming work planning. He introduced staff from the Department of Ecology: Cooper Garbe, Martha Hankins, Adrian Young, Stephanie Potts,

Andy Hayes, and Tamara Jones, who shared a [presentation on CCA projects](#). The presentation covered the Air Quality in Overburdened Communities rulemaking, the Emissions-Intensive, Trade-Exposed Industries (EITE) report that was recently submitted to the Legislature, and the future of Cap and Invest program linkage.

Sierra Rotakhina said it was helpful to see the areas where they would be looking for EJ Council input in 2026 and asked if they could share timelines so the Council knows when their engagement would be needed. Member Running-Grass asked if there was research to estimate impacts on health that could be gained from reductions in air pollutants. Martha Hankins talked about the well-established link in the scientific research and said they would be able to analyze the cost-benefit of their proposal as a part of the regulatory analysis. Council Members discussed and shared suggestions for how this information should be shared with communities in plain language to encourage critical thought and meaningful engagement so communities can best advocate for their needs. Tamara Jones said they now had a dedicated position for community engagement.

IX. Discussion: EJ Council Update to the Public, Governor, and Legislature

The Council did not have time to discuss this item.

XI. Public Comment

No comments were shared during this agenda item.

XI. Appreciation and Adjournment

Co-Chair Brown adjourned the meeting.