

January 2025 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Barbara Menne, Sue Lepore, Elly Claus-McGahan, Linda Cohan, Allan Maas, Linda Whipple, Suzi Crawford, and Peggy LovellFord.

Tabling, Linda Cohan—New information is available for the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) rebates for home electrification upgrades. The **Department of Commerce** is calling for implementers for **WA** state by **March** and the money will be available in **May** at the earliest. You have to apply, get a coupon, select a contractor from an approved list, and then the program pays for your upgrade. Lower income recipients will get 100% of the rebate, those who make more get less, on a sliding scale. As to worries about what the new administration will do—evidently the funds are “fully obligated,” hence safe.

One of the first steps to take is to get a home energy audit, and there is a severe shortage of home energy auditors. The Department is offering training (post-retirement gig?)

Tabling opportunities coming up include the [South Sound Sustainability Expo](#) on **Saturday April 26, 10-3** on the **UW-Tacoma** campus, and **Meridian Habitat Park in Puyallup** has an [Earth Day Celebration](#) on **Saturday April 12** from **11-2**. It’s well-attended, a good new venue for us. We are encouraged to bring a hand’s-on activity for kids. We may share the space with **Climate Pierce County**.

[Climate Pierce County](#) news, **Elly Claus-McGahan**—**Pierce County “Climate Conversations,”** which are forums of local electeds and staff, are really taking off, with more attendance and positive interest. **Countywide Planning Policies**, the **County Sustainability Plan 2030**, and the **Climate Action Plan Tacoma** are all due for updates so this is a good time for us to have input. (In the past we succeeded in having the **Plan** add an entire section on climate where there had been none.) **Dept. of Commerce** requires counties to put climate into their comprehensive plans by **2029**, another opportunity. The strongest climate protections we can get passed the better off we’ll be. We’re going to be working on the **Critical Areas Ordinance** which is directly related to climate-- if we are not taking care of our rivers and streams, wild lands, trees, and biodiversity, then we are doing poorly climate-wise; a healthy climate is a big system, not just about lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

We are very excited that **Jani Hitchen** is now chair of the **Pierce County Council**, and the replacement for **Marty Campbell**, **Bryan Yambe**, is also strong on climate. With **Rosie Ayala**, who came from **Metroparks**, and **Robyn Denson**, that makes four strong climate champions now on the council of seven--we should be able to get many things done! The **Tacoma City Council** is going to see a change in membership too--it’s not clear where they stand, we will keep an eye on it.

The next **Climate Pierce County** meeting is **Thursday, Feb 13, at 7pm**. **Jani Hitchen** will speak on the issue of large warehouse spread in **Pierce County**. The situation is bad, a drive around the county reveals so many going up, all pavement with no thought for heat island effects or mitigation such as trees or solar panels. This is an issue she is passionate about, especially with water usage and stormwater runoff.

Meeting with County councilmember Robyn Denson, Sue Lepore—At the “coffee with Robyn” Jan. 14, one takeaway was that she often relies on the public to keep her informed about what goes on in the area (for instance when informed recently by **Suzi Crawford** of **Gig Harbor** that some trees were being cut down illegally, she responded promptly and effectively). She is a climate champion, very focused and proactive. She recently got an award from **Citizens for a Healthy Bay**.

There will be other open informal meetings of this type in the area with other officials, and as a chapter we need to seek them out and attend them in force, partly to show appreciation and build relationships, and partly to keep climate and conservation issues high on the list of topics. Be on the alert and spread the word for these opportunities, so we can attend.

Salmon and resident orca—

Q—another Southern Resident orca baby has died. Are removing the dams off the table?

A-(Elly) Opening fish passage to **Puget Sound**, an expensive project, is actively going on now in many areas, but taking down the **Lower Snake River** dams will take longer since there is no other power source to replace them and utilities need the power security. It’s a complicated issue—even after those efforts are fulfilled, will the water may be too acidified or too warm to bring the salmon back? See [Harbor Wildwatch](#) and [Save the Orcas](#).

Resilience group-- Every **Friday** at **Cutters Point 6th Ave 10 am**—The purpose of starting this group was to strengthen our community and support for each other after the recent election. We have had between three and eight attending each week so far and it has proved to be valuable in many ways! **Suzi Crawford** shared that at times it has been an “emotional lifesaver” to help us cope with today’s many difficult issues, and finds it an accepting, fun, and empowering group. **Linda Whipple** shared that having informal conversations with like-minded people helps us get new useful ideas; gives us “pathways to strengthen our commitment.” This is a weekday morning group in **Tacoma**--if a different time or location is needed, another group could certainly be started.

Campus outreach, **Michael Humkey** has spearheaded this—what he heard from **UW-T** is that we are welcome to table at their outdoor **Volunteer Fairs** and **Involvement Fairs** at the beginnings of each quarter. Next would be in early **April**. We are also welcome to give them a flyer to post describing volunteer opportunities for students (tabling with us, writing postcards or letters, managing social media...) on their internal volunteer board. There doesn’t seem to be a climate-focused student club on campus currently.

Climate Advocacy in the 2025 State Legislative Session, Jan. 13-Apr.27

The **2025** “long session” opened on **Monday the 13th** and continues through **April 27**. Besides keeping the [Climate Commitment Act](#) funding strong and transparent, here are some of the top environmental priorities this year:

Recycling

- **WRAP Act – reintroduction of comprehensive recycling bill**
- **Right to Repair – Digital/Electronics & wheelchairs**
- **Recycling EV batteries**
- **Food waste**
- **Reclaiming Refrigerants**

Built Environment

- **Home Energy Labeling**
- **Weatherization & Home electronics**
- **Thermal Energy Networks**

Energy Policies

- **Community Solar**
- **Right to Energy**
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We have an opportunity during this time to support the most effective legislation addressing these climate issues. Is public input effective? It has been remarked by elected officials that communications from even a few of their constituents can make a big impact on their decision-making. So let's make our voices heard! And remember to encourage your friends and family to do so too, tell them how easy it is.

Start by signing up for **“easy action alert” links** with state organizations that find and assess bills, monitor their progress, and facilitate community input (“public testimony”). Just to name a few:

[Washington Conservation Action](#)

[350wa.org](#)

[Tahoma Bird Alliance](#)

[Sierra Club WA](#)

[The Nature Conservancy WA](#)

Once or twice a week during the session you'll get reminders and easy links to add your voice in support of the pending bills they prioritize. You can do this multiple times for the same bill as it (hopefully) passes through the process to becoming law. When you click the link, you will receive descriptions and ID numbers of bills and the deadline by which to submit your position PRO or CON. You can see an example of an action alert link [here](#) Just follow the prompts—you'll put in your name, address, etc. (If they ask for “organization” leave that blank. Rarely, they also ask for a comment, but in that case, there is usually a suggested paragraph or two that you can use or paraphrase. You don't have to come up with an original comment, the language is done ahead.) When you are done, hit “submit” and that's it!

We will continue to give guidelines for this advocacy in future meetings, chapter newsletters, and our [website](#) as the session goes on.

It's helpful to identify your state legislative district's **Representatives** and **Senator** if you don't know them already. Find through <https://app.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder/> When it gets to be

later in the session and there are key bills that need support, the most powerful way is still to write your own letters or emails directly to your elected officials.

Q--Could we as a chapter create a template or guidelines as a tool to encourage others to take action? Perhaps get together as we did for post-carding last year, this time to write letters together?

Thursday, Feb 6 is [Environmental Lobby Day in Olympia](#), coordinated by **Washington Conservation Action**. You can [sign up](#) to go the Capital and meet representatives and staff in person, but there's an online option too. To coordinate carpooling to Olympia, contact [Chuck Jensen](#).

Future meeting ideas, Barbara Menne --

Venues—where can we meet in-person? Library meeting rooms close early and are in high demand, must be booked 60-90 days ahead. If we coordinated with the library to get a speaker and make it open to the public, that's a possibility.

What about a community center such as the **STAR Center, 3873 S 66th St.**?

What about a field trip/meeting at that locale?

Field trips-- Getting out in the community will spark interest and give us ideas for further action. The [Tacoma Tool Library](#) is on the 2nd floor of **Tacoma Public Main Library, 1102 Tacoma Ave S Ste 201** and there is plenty of room for us to have a meeting afterwards there, too. It has evening hours. **Barbara** volunteers there, maybe set up for the **March** meeting? Some cross-laminated timber buildings are being planned in Tacoma. Field trip or speaker?

Topics, speakers—Could be either on Zoom or at meeting place. Green hydrogen? Cross-laminated timber? Heat pumps/ home energy upgrades?