



## Policy Committee Meeting

### NOTES

Thursday, October 27, 2022 | 10:00am – 11:00am

**Members Present:** Rick Horton – Chair, Craig Engwall, Katie Fernholz, Pete Aube, Amber Ellering, Molly Jansen

**Members Absent:** Mike Kilgore, Keith Karnes, Jim Manolis, Bob Owens

**Staff Present:** Eric Schenck, Sadie Mathison

Rick welcomed the group, and since all present were acquainted, proceeded to the first agenda item.

#### **MFRC Update – Eric Schenck, Executive Director**

Eric provided an update on the Forest Science Coordinator position hiring process. Four applicants were interviewed. HR has asked that the top three be interviewed a second time. Eric hopes this will happen before the November Council meeting.

Anna and Eric are working the DNR contracting on the lifecycle assessment RFP, although there are delays, the goal is to have it out the first week of November.

Regional committees and IIC have submitted their biennial reports and MFRC staff are working on assembling the biennial report, which is due February 1.

Rick reported that Charlie Blinn has completed the 5-year logger survey and asked that Charlie be added to the November Council meeting agenda.

#### **Budget Proposal for Funding IIC – Eric Schenck, Executive Director**

Eric provided an update of the status of the IIC stating that they are basically not functioning at this time. Upon an earlier request from the P&F Committee, Eric performed a review of the history of the IIC and then developed Findings and Recommendations. Eric provided some background and shared the recommendations: revisit the idea of having an MOU with the DNR, assist CFANS to be more engaged with the IIC, reevaluate of the IIC Chair position, and include a member of the MFRC on the IIC. Eric stated that there has also been discussion of changes to the IIC role and authorities.

There was recommendation against any edits to the Statute to avoid unintended consequences. The current wording is not limiting. Addressing the budget for the IIC will naturally lead to more engagement by the IIC. There was a suggestion to approach the IIC Chair Chris Edgar and parties at the U around budget and engagement going forward. The Council should have a role in the maintenance of the cooperative structure of the IIC.

Eric then provided a history of IIC funding followed by a proposed FY 2024-25 Biennial Budget Change Item intended to provide ongoing funding for the IIC. This would fund a stream of project grants based upon information needs identified by the RAC and vetted by the MFRC. The cooperative of the IIC would develop the response to the request. This is a change from how the IIC has functioned historically and there is concern that the IIC will reject this change in function. A suggested solution is to maintain a base amount to continue the work outlined in the statute and set aside other funds for specific information needs.

There was a suggestion to request that the IIC review the statute and previous work and come back with a proposal for what they would need to meet the purpose going forward in an ongoing basis. Having the stability of the funding built into MFRC's base budget would give the IIC the ability to look long-term and plan several years out.

It was stated that the status of the IIC and MFRC's position on the IIC's existence should be included in the biennial report.

This Budget Change Item proposal is still in draft form and is months late for inclusion in this budget proposal and therefore not likely to be successful. Financial support via the DNR could remain a possibility.

Recommendation was made to converse with DNR or Governor's staff to find out if the budget change is even a possibility before bringing to the Council. If not, another strategy is to approach DNR to provide funding until MFRC is able to secure dedicated finding in the appropriation going forward.

The committee agreed that the IIC is worth saving and other venues for funding should be considered and pursued. This conversation should be brought to the Council because there are possible opportunities if a new administration is elected. Agreement from the Council is imperative to move forward.

### **Feb. MFRC Day at the Capitol – Eric Schenck, Executive Director**

Not discussed due to time constraint.

### **Rep. Igo Carbon Market Request – Rick Horton, Chair**

Rick recommended a conversation about this topic at a future meeting as this would likely be the first project that a renewed IIC would be engaged to tackle. This is a topic that was ranked number three in climate information need priorities by the Council. There was discussion of utilization of this

bill (with the FY edited to a future FY) as possible funding for IIC and the language should be maintained to name MFRC in the driver's seat.

Katie proposed that the Policy Committee present the bill to the Council, express support of the concepts within, and, while not specifically in alignment with this bill, recommend that staff spend time on further exploration of this space.

A vote was taken and all present (Rick Horton, Craig Engwall, Eric Schenck, Molly Jansen, and Pete Aube) voted in support of the proposal above.

Meeting adjourned.