

Council transcript

Linda Birnbaum: We have a little less than an hour now for time for some discussion, and I thought that we would start talking a little bit more about having Rick lead us in some discussion of the strategic plan, thinking of some of our... kind of our big mission and vision ideas, and I was just going mention to you some of the things that you heard me say just to keep in the back of, maybe the back of your thought process that, you know, I do believe that we are about prevention. I do believe that we are the part of NIH that has a real public health mission. I do believe in one NIEHS, which means that I think it's important for the different parts of the institute to dialogue and work together when appropriate to achieve our mission.

I do believe that there are areas in environmental health that we should be really moving forward in. I do believe that we need discussion about what we mean by the environment. And that may be very important in terms of what our mission is. The environment can be defined very, very broadly or more narrowly, and I think that that is something we may want to talk about. I do believe that in times of tight budgets we would still want to do, we have to do, absolutely the best science, but maybe we can't do everything. And that it's going to be important for us to think about what we can do and what we should do and what maybe other people can and should do as well.

So just with that, I really want to use the next hour to listen to your ideas and Rick will make a couple of points first.

Rick Woychik: Over lunch, I asked Linda to perhaps make a few comments, a few provocative statements. I think you made quite a few provocative statements, which would serve us well to get some discussion going. Again, what I'll emphasize is the whole strategic planning process is going to be about the factoring all of the comments that Linda just made, but it's also recognizing that the budgets aren't going to be doubling any time soon, and that we're going have some tough tradeoffs that we have to make.

I think this is part of the discussion we had this morning. What are the priorities and so if there is not enough money to fund everything, and I suspect that will be the case, then what are the top priorities that, for example, Gwen and her colleagues can be looking at in DERT? And to know that these are priorities that are the result of a very rigorous and a comprehensive strategic planning process.

So, let me open the discussion by simply asking to go around the table and any one and everyone can make comments around some of the more provocative statements that Linda just made. And we're taking minutes on all of this, so this input will come back to the strategic planning process.