

**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD
July 16, 2020**

Voting Members Present Via Phone:

Adam Cutler
Arthur Frank
Jenn Baka
Allison Robinson
Heather Bedi
Nebraska Hernandez
Hazem Hijazi
Gary Horton
Jerome Shabazz
Tom Torres

Non-Members Present Via Phone:

Allison Acevedo, DEP
Hayley Book, DEP
John Brakeall, DEP
Shannon Crooker, Sustainable Energy Fund
Abbey Cadden, DEP
Glenda Davidson, DEP
Justin Dula, DEP
Joycelyn Pickens, Sen. Casey's Office
David Saunders, DOH
Alice Wright (for Horace Strand)

Introduction of New Member

Secretary McDonnell recently appointed Nebraska Hernandez to EJAB. Nebraska is from Johnstown and is a senior studying geography at Penn State. He has extensive experience in GIS and geospatial data analytics.

Members of the Public

Joycelyn Pickens is a legislative aide in Senator Bob Casey's office. Senator Casey is a member of the Senate Environmental Justice Caucus and is interested in learning more about EJAB and environmental justice priorities in the Commonwealth.

Shannon Crooker is the Director of the Sustainable Energy Fund, a nonprofit in the Lehigh Valley.

Call to Order

Chairman Cutler called the virtual meeting to order at 1:00 PM with a quorum.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Cutler solicited additions or corrections to the Minutes of the May 21, 2020 meeting. With the addition of Jerome Shabazz to the list of Board attendees, Chairman Cutler requested a motion to approve:

Arthur Frank moved to approve the Minutes of the May 21, 2020 meeting. Allison Robinson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Review of Action Items

Letter from Edith Abeyta

The Board's letter regarding Merrion Oil & Gas was sent to DEP. Since the last EJAB meeting, local hearings were held on the matter in East Pittsburgh and the Board's letter was used as evidence in that case. There has been no immediate response from DEP because the permits are still under review. Allison Acevedo will provide the Board with any updates. No timeframe was given.

May 21 Public Comment (Freda Tepfer, Melissa Troutman)

Melissa Troutman offered comment at the May EJAB meeting. OEJ followed up with staff in DEP's Northcentral Regional Office and determined that there had been longstanding discussions between that office and Ms. Troutman regarding the documentation she was seeking. OEJ responded to Ms. Troutman offering assistance if additional help was needed. There has been no further communication from Ms. Troutman to OEJ.

At the May EJAB meeting, Freda Tepfer, a resident of Erie, addressed several EJ issues: requesting information about Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS), asking that RGGI documents be more accessible to communities and seeking additional information about public participation for the Bayfront Parkway Project. As a follow-up to Ms. Tepfer's comments, the OEJ provided links to RGGI information, submitted info about DEP's position on MATS. Also, OEJ planned a meeting with Ms. Tepfer. Gary Horton and staff from DEP' Northwest Regional Office.

Gary Horton asked the EJAB members to assist with ensuring that PennDOT projects undergo environmental assessments. Gary Horton also mentioned a meeting that focused on developing a plan for a possible meeting with Wabtec, which purchased General Electric, around community engagement. Another matter discussed at the meeting was BASF. Gary stated that BASF is closing their plants in the next year and the EJ groups want to know what environmental impact the company will leave and what effect that will have on their health. The groups are in search of support or advice. OEJ will continue to meet with Ms. Tepfer and Gary Horton about these matters.

EJAB Recommendations About RGGI

Heather Bedi and Tom Torres drafted a letter to the Governor expressing support for RGGI and it included a list of recommendations for how RGGI can best support EJ communities. Discussion ensued about the purview of the EJAB to write a letter addressed to the Governor. Abbey Cadden, DEP Policy Specialist, suggested that EJAB send the letter to DEP Secretary McDonnell and the Governor's Secretary of Policy & Planning. Abbey will provide the Secretaries' contact information to OEJ.

Hayley Book, Special Assistant to the Secretary, provided more information about RGGI, described the preliminary allocation of funding and noted that no formal decisions have been made on reinvestments. She encouraged the EJAB members to provide concrete examples and specific recommendations about investment allocation. Hayley also mentioned that DEP is engaged in conversations with other government agencies about assisting communities and workers who may be affected with workforce transitions at power plants.

The draft letter will be revised and recirculated to the EJAB members for review and consideration. A poll was taken for unanimous consent to proceed. No dissent was noted.

DEP and OEJ Updates

David Saunders-DOH

David has been heavily involved in the COVID-19 health equity response team. David shared that eleven groups convened regularly to develop recommendations for vulnerable populations. The recommendations were delivered to the Secretary of Health and to the Lieutenant Governor,

and were prioritized and ranked, and implementation of those recommendations can now begin. The number of COVID-19 cases are increasing again, so the recommendations should be implemented when there is critical need.

Allison Acevedo

Allison shared that the OEJ is still hoping to fill the Western Regional Coordinator position.

Allison also stated that the office has been working with DOH and the EJ/Environmental Health subcommittee on the EJ map and gathering data specific to EJ communities. She also noted that DEP has started a Diversity Committee led by the Secretary to discuss and addresses anti-racism within the agency – an effort that goes beyond EJ. Additionally, the OEJ continues to meet with DEP’s internal EJ Workgroup attempting to reinvigorate conversations around engraining EJ into different parts of DEP’s work. Allison continued with updates and shared that DEP awarded over \$430,000 in environmental education grants for 55 projects across the state. The information will be updated at the next meeting about grants to EJ communities. The OEJ has continued to meet with other agencies, including DOH, DCNR, PennDOT, AGR, and DCED to discuss interagency planning . Wrapping up DEP updates, Allison stated that DEP staff are continuing to telework and the Department has moved to virtual public hearings for the indefinite future.

Eastern Region Updates

Justin Dula announced that the first virtual EJ Roundtable will be held with participants from the Lehigh Valley on July 22. This was originally scheduled for late March but was postponed due to COVID-19. Justin noted that a Scranton Roundtable is in the planning stages for October.

Central Region Updates

John Brakeall shared that in Shamokin, a consultant prepared a brownfields inventory and site prioritization for the city. An end of project meeting was held last week.

Policy Updates

Abbey Cadden mentioned that DEP's first virtual public hearing for a regulation received a significant amount of public participation. Over 200 people signed up to provide testimony over the three-day long hearing. She stated that DEP will continue developing and executing the regulatory process for all regulations in the queue.

New Jersey Legislation

Allison stated that there is currently an EJ bill before the NJ legislature that would mandate permit applicants to address cumulative impacts in EJ communities in the permit process and justify why a facility will not add to cumulative impacts. A hearing is scheduled for next week. OEJ will send around information about the hearing.

August Meeting

Justin Dula stated that the August EJAB meeting will be virtual and will focus on presentations and topics from local organizations and about topics local to Scranton. Discussion will include abandoned mine reclamation, community, development, and community education. Speakers will include the Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Earth Conservancy, DEP staff from the Bureau of Abandoned Mines and the Mine Subsistence Insurance Program. The meeting is scheduled for August 11 from 2:00-7:00 PM.

EJ Symposium

The EJ symposium has two planned events. The first event is the [Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues](#) which will be hosted by Dickinson College and supported by EJAB member Heather Bedi. The date is October 14 at 7:00 PM, and Heather will provide the Zoom link. She asked the EJAB members to develop key issues or ideas for panel members to address. Heather asked that EJAB members email questions or comments to her and requested to allow time on the August meeting agenda to discuss in more detail.

The second event will be the 2021 EJ Symposium. The symposium is planned to bring together EJ organizations in PA to discuss and learn about environmental justice issues and critical information. The symposium will also help produce a record of an EJ event/conference to help enable groups plan around EJ in Pennsylvania and reach beyond the single event. The idea is to partner with higher education universities working on EJ issues and sustainability.

EJAB Committee Updates

EJ/Environmental Health Subcommittee

Allison Robison noted that the subcommittee met recently. Presentations were offered by Charles Lee and CREATE Lab from Carnegie Mellon. Key issues discussed included geospatial and temporal data for storytelling, policy development and who should be included and engaged around mapping and deciding appropriate scope and scale.

Nebraska Hernandez noted that he is creating an environmental justice mapping tool as a student at Penn State University. He is selecting the health and environmental layers/indicators, finding data sources, and then determining how to aggregate that data.

Adjournment

Chairman Adam Cutler requested a motion to adjourn the conference call.

Gary Horton made a motion that the meeting be adjourned, which was seconded by Allison Robinson. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.