

**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD
August 19, 2021**

Members Present Via Phone:

Heather Bedi
Adam Cutler
Arthur Frank
Rafiyqa Muhammad
Allison Robinson
Horace Strand
Tom Torres

**Non-Members Present Via Phone
(Commonwealth Employees):**

Allison Acevedo, DEP
John Brakeall, DEP
Bhagwan Aggarwal, DOH
Abbey Cadden, DEP
Brian Chalfant, DEP
Glenda Davidson, DEP
Justin Dula, DEP
Nicole Faraguna, DCNR
Laura Griffin, DEP
Stephanie Hasalini, DOH
Emily Hendrickson, DCNR
Anil Nair, DOH
Tammy Peffer, DOE
Bo Reiley, DEP
David Saunders, DOH

Non-Members Present Via Phone:

Contrena Baltimore
Pete Baltimore
Shamaine Daniels
Steve Early
Bethan Ayers Fisher
Madison Goldberg
Jamien Harvey
Pat Henderson
Charles Hurst
Glendon King
Art Leopold

Nathan McCray
Claire Maulhardt
Christopher Nafe
Winnie Okello
Christine Proctor
Brad Sims
Ethan Story
Basir Vincent
Dave West
Robert Zorbaugh

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 20, 2021 meeting.
Hearing none:

**Arthur Frank moved to approve the Minutes of the May 20, 2021 meeting.
Rafiyqa Muhammad seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.**

OEJ Updates:

Allison Acevedo

Ngani Ndimbie has been hired as the EJ Regional Coordinator for the western region beginning August 23. Most recently, Ngani was an Executive Policy Specialist at PennDOT. She is a native of Pittsburgh, and she will bring a wealth of policy, organizing, and community

engagement experience to OEJ. A formal meet and greet with EJAB and community organizations in western PA is being planned.

The agencies participating in the EJ Interagency Workgroup have been surveyed to understand the resources, grantmaking, and terminology around EJ used by agencies and help identify common terms, policies, and resources. As information is obtained, the group will determine if there are places where the agencies can provide uniformity around EJ policies and practices and have EJ tools, resources, and policies contained in one place so they can be accessed by the agencies and by the public.

OEJ has been participating in discussions with the Department of Health's Office of Health Equity around dismantling systemic racism and health equity.

The Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) will review the RGGI regulations at its September 1 meeting. DEP will disseminate a survey about the RGGI investment process and will continue to engage EJAB and the public about the investment process through public comment and public hearings. DEP conducted a survey to identify grantmaking barriers, and the information will be shared with EJAB once it is reported and tabulated.

John Brakeall

Internally, OEJ has been working to integrate EJ into all DEP grants. OEJ has been meeting with all the grant programs within DEP to discuss EJ and determine whether the grant should consider EJ. Many DEP grant programs are providing preference and scoring based on EJ, which will allow for electronically tracking the percentage of grants awarded in EJ Areas and allow OEJ to develop analytics and reporting to incorporate into its annual report.

OEJ has been working with an interagency workgroup to address equity within grantmaking. Recently a survey was sent out to thousands of entities to identify the barriers and challenges faced when applying for Commonwealth grants. The workgroup will review the feedback and identify steps to remove barriers from a Commonwealth-wide perspective.

Allison Acevedo

DEP is moving forward internally with developing a language access plan and a Commonwealth-wide language access plan is being developed among agencies. Justin Dula has been leading the work. Language access coordinators have been designated within Policy and Communications since those Offices are the most engaged around language access questions.

A committee of DEI staff from various offices are participating in a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) Committee at DEP. One of the focus areas involves examining DEI considerations among DEP advisory committees.

Abbey Cadden

A survey regarding DEI in DEP's advisory committees was sent out and was to be completed by the end of August. So far 156 responses have been received. Those interested in submitting information should complete the survey. The data will be assembled, and a summary will be provided to the Department and advisory boards.

Legislative Update:

Greg Kauffman, DEP Legislative Director

There has been a great deal of effort to advance the RGGI rulemaking. The Department has been tracking two bills that would prevent the rulemaking from going forward and prevent any action on regulating carbon pollution: HB 637 by Representative Struzzi and SB 119 by Senator Pittman. IRRC is set to consider the rulemaking on September 1. Chairman Metcalfe has already scheduled a House Environmental Resources & Energy (ERE) Committee meeting on September 2 to run a concurrent resolution to disapprove the regulation. Both the House and Senate ERE Committees have sent a letter to IRRC notifying of their intention to report a concurrent disapproval resolution.

Senate Bill 15 by Senator Comitta and House Bill 1565 by Representative Harrin are versions of the RGGI Investment Act that would provide more flexibility for the use of proceeds from the allowance auctions. Both have pretty significant provisions related to EJ: 37.5% of the proceeds going to the Energy Communities Trust Fund, with one-third being dedicated to EJ communities, and 12.5% of proceeds to the newly-created EJ Communities Trust Fund, with EJAB nominating six (6) appointees to that board.

EPA Federal EJ Updates:

Angus Welsh, Daniel Isaacs, Samantha Beers, Reggie Harris

The team provided updates on Executive Order 13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government) and 14008 (Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad), an overview on Interim Guidance on the Justice40 initiative, the American Rescue Plan of 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, and other EJ initiatives in Region 3. A discussion including Q&A followed.

Regulatory Update:

Laura Griffin, DEP Regulatory Coordinator

A general overview of DEP's regulatory review process was provided, several new rulemakings were discussed. A discussion including Q&A followed.

Abbey Cadden, DEP Executive Policy Specialist

Key rulemakings that might be of interest to EJAB will be identified and discussed in subsequent meetings. EJAB members should notify the Policy Office about regulations of particular interest.

EJ Policy Review:

Following discussion of the extensive EJ initiatives to be included in the new draft EJ Policy, the floor was opened for feedback. After lengthy dialogue, the EJAB members were asked to review the policy again and provide additional comments to the OEJ by late September.

Interagency Updates:

David Saunders, DOH Director of the Office of Health Equity

DOH is largely focused on reducing hesitancy and vaccine uptake. The Department, along with the Governor's Office, developed a grant to be facilitated by the United Way with about \$4 million available for hyper local vaccination clinics and outreach. Individuals ages 12 and up can now get vaccines, so DOH is encouraging teenagers to talk to peers about the importance of vaccinations. Additional funding has been received from the federal government which will

enable the Department to have 30 community health organizers throughout the state focusing on COVID mitigation and vaccinations.

Nicole Faraguna, DCNR Policy Director

A grant equity workgroup was developed from the EJ Interagency Workgroup that is focusing on grant equity and making sure the grant process is equitable and identifying where the process can be made easier, more accessible, and work to eliminate unnecessary barriers. A survey was developed to reach out across the Commonwealth agencies to engage stakeholders and evaluate the accessibility and availability of the Commonwealth grantmaking process. EJAB members were encouraged to complete the survey emailed to them by Michele Devaney of DEP and submit by August 30.

DCNR hired a Tree Equity Specialist that will be working with communities, particularly under-resourced communities, around urban and community forestry.

Subcommittee Updates:

Heather Bedi's students are returning and will be working on the EJ in PA storymap summarizing the symposium that was held in May. A draft version of the storymap will be shared with the EJAB at the November meeting. Members with questions or thoughts about the storymap were invited to reach out to Heather.

Public Comment:

Art Leopold

Mr. Leopold is a supporter of RGGI. He provided written comments on the rulemaking and plans to speak at the upcoming IRRC meeting on September 1 to voice his support.

Pat Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition

The Coalition may have broader concerns about the EJ policy that will be conveyed to the Department later. In the interest of brevity, Mr. Henderson outlined the Coalition's concerns about the proposal to include oil and gas as trigger permits in the policy and urged DEP to remove O&G permits from the list.

Southcentral EJ Initiatives

Heather Bedi is an Associate Professor at Dickinson in the Environmental Studies department. She has been particularly valuable in helping EJAB, OEJ, and DEP consider EJ around RGGI because of her background in justice issues within the energy sector. She developed a Civics course at Dickinson to evaluate meaningful engagement and public participation around the RGGI program and completed a report in May of 2021 entitled "A Just Regional Greenhouse Gas: Meaningful Engagement and Air Quality Benefits in EJ Communities."

Rafiyqa Muhammad is a life-long resident of Harrisburg and has been a central figure in the community for many years. She is a member of Harrisburg's Environmental Advisory Council and Cofounder and Artistic Director of Ngozi, Inc. focusing on urban agriculture, cultural outreach, and nonprofit strategic planning. She recently won the National Coalition of 100 Black Woman Tribute to Trailblazers award and has been leading the Let's Get Dirty program in Harrisburg for some time.

Rafiyqa introduced Harrisburg partners she has been working with around EJ issues:

Jamien Harvey, Executive Director, Camp Curtin Branch/YMCA East Shore Branch

Jamien Harvey discussed The Cornerstone, a \$1.5 million grant funding project which built four new, affordable houses, and is now moving to a new phase of construction.

Claire Maulhardt, City Beautiful H2O Program Manager, Capital Region Water (CRW)

Claire Maulhardt discussed the Community Greening Plan, a green infrastructure master plan to address combined sewer overflows, climate resiliency, aging infrastructure, and localized flooding.

Steve Early, Community Outreach Manager, CRW

Steve Early stated that CRW is committed to educating the youth and finding folks committed to improving the City. CRW has community ambassadors representing different parts of the City and different cultures who help inform CRW's decision making.

Pete Baltimore, Harrisburg Resident

Mr. Baltimore discussed the indifference to the conditions in Reservoir Park and the need to educate the community on the proper planting of trees to soak up groundwater. He believes the creation of a memorial garden in the Park will provide a way for folks to grieve the loss of loved ones.

Contrena Baltimore, Harrisburg Resident

As an educator, Mrs. Baltimore discussed the importance of teaching children about farming, about growing plants to eat, and skills to survive. She believes the community should take responsibility in creating an environment conducive to learning.

Basir Vincent, President, Young Professionals of Color

Basir Vincent discussed the Harrisburg Comprehensive Plan, green infrastructure, and the mission of the Young Professionals of Color, which is to thrive within the community.

Winnie Okello, Co-Founder, Harrisburg Comprehensive Plan Community Working Group

Winnie Okello discussed what transportation and restorative justice looks like in the context of EJ issues: public health and safety initiatives; equitable inclusion for folks in decision making; and strategic community planning and funding.

Christine Proctor, Chair, City of Harrisburg Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)

Christine Proctor addressed three initiatives among the EAC: Harrisburg's Local Climate Action Plan; community engagement and outreach; and urban forestry.

Robert Zorbaugh, CEO, Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority (LCSWMA)

Robert Zorbaugh discussed upgrades that were done to the Susquehanna Resource Management Complex facility in Harrisburg to be more of an asset to the community and minimize emissions. LCSWMA has participated in litter cleanups, is a supporter of the Harrisburg Mural Fest, a sponsor of the Tour de Belt, has developed trails that connect the Capital Beltway, and is involved with TheBurg magazine.

Shamaine Daniels, Chair of the Parks and Recreation, Harrisburg City Council

Shamaine Daniels discussed the reforesting of Reservoir Park with plants that are food-producing plants, the updating of playgrounds to incorporate stormwater management and upgrading equipment for safety purposes by CRW, the need to upgrade home maintenance regulations related to weeds and pollinators, and molds in low income homes with resulting respiratory problems.

Dave West, Director, City of Harrisburg Public Works Department

Public Works has created its own Sanitation Enforcement Department to clean up illegal dumping and catch and prosecute illegal dumpers. Meetings have been held with local judges who are on board with cleaning up the City. The City is looking to hire another enforcement officer next year, preferably one who is bilingual and can operate some of the Public Works equipment.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The November 16 meeting will be a combined meeting with the CAC and will be offered both in person and virtually.

Adjournment:

Chairman Cutler requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Arthur Frank moved to adjourn the meeting. Rafiyqa Muhammad seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.