



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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SHAWN M. LATOURETTE
Commissioner

Environmental Justice Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2021

Via Microsoft Teams

Council Members

Present: Amy Tuininga, Nancy Griffeth, Jeffrey Perlman, Kim Gaddy, Melissa Miles, Jackie Park Albaum, Monique Griffith, Joann Held, Leilani Holgado, Meredith Taylor, Phyllis Reich

Absent: Ted Carrington, Gantry Fox, Kelly Francis, Andy Kricun

OEJ Staff: Kandyce Perry, Nadia Akbar

DEP Guests: Sean Moriarty, Michael Gordon, Frank Steitz, Ken Ratzman, Brad Bollen, Christine Schell, Anthony Findley, Frank McLaughlin, Emily Nanneman, Kerry Pflugh, Ryan Knapick, Elizabeth George

EJIC Representatives and State Agency Guests: Barbara Goun, Christa Fontecchio, Juliet Herndon, Leotis Sanders, Elizabeth Limbrick, Sarah Helble, Lauren Griffith, Chris Hillman, Adam Neary, Terri Goldberg, Karen Bussey, Melinda Haley, Julie Veffer, Jake Schmied, Crystal Pruitt, Chirag Patel, Melinda Haley, Gina Trish, Domenico Stockton Rossini, Barbara Vadnais, Francine Wright, Sara Pascale, Richard Wille, Franklin Dureke

Call to Order

The meeting opened at 10:03 am.

October Minutes

October Meeting Minutes approved provided corrections from Joann Held incorporated.

Air Working Group (Kim Gaddy)

Kim Gaddy opened the meeting to discuss the SIMS fire (later confirmed to be from EMR metals) in Port Newark. Kim expressed concern with how information was being communicated to EJ communities. Health impacts from the chemicals burned and cause of the fire (which was later confirmed to be from the automobile shredding residue pile) were questioned. The jurisdiction/relationship between DEP and emergency management (who are relied on for protection of environmental hazards) needs to be explored and there needs to be more transparency/coordination in the information being shared. Kandyce will follow-up on an improved communication process, who gathers the information and how it gets out to the community members. Need to come up with a system of real communication, real action. Discussion on Right to Know law and how that information can be used as part of the communication process. Tapping EJIC to get to the proper authority is another avenue. Although local emergency management has jurisdiction over this issue, air permitting and enforcement are expected to attend a future meeting to discuss.

Land Working Group (Jackie Park Albaum)

Three areas of focus:

Urban Agriculture: Exploring the possibility of land trusts, ensuring a proper definition of community based agriculture and creating an urban agriculture guidance document. Discussion surrounding

community gardens and vertical farms. How to quantify and value nutrition for families who do not have the transportation or other means to get to a farmers market; believe there is increased value for community gardens that are less than 5-acres. Need a better understanding of what is happening in the EJ communities so can focus on nutritional support. Rutgers is working with Department of Agriculture. Meredith is responsible for putting together an advisory committee/stakeholder group. Many are expected to be at the table not just DEP/EJAC but DOH and others across state government involved in the administration of food benefit programs and other issues related to food access work. Discussion surrounding EJAC involvement in the process. Hope to document and collect data to inform policy moving forward and those policies have to be shared jointly through appropriate agencies. Concerns expressed regarding shift in EJAC involvement when this originated as an EJ project. Kandyce will consult with Olivia Glenn on identifying EJAC involvement with the Department of Agriculture or otherwise shift focus of land working group to other efforts.

Reusing Brownfields: Looking to create a pathway from brownfields to greenfields. Thank you to Frank McLaughlin for helping to outline a process with available resources and how to bring them together, whether it be open space, a passive park, urban agriculture, micro-farming, etc. Discussion ensued regarding the importance of understanding contamination to determine classification, knowing what the contaminants are as well as the corresponding pathways to remediation. Information obtained while partnering with Natural Resource Conservation on a project in Elizabeth was invaluable and lessons learned can hopefully be transferred to other communities that might not have the same amount of resources or expertise to handle brownfields in their neighborhood. Challenges regarding financial infrastructure pathways were also discussed.

Solar Energy Siting: Discussion surrounding biggest hurdle which is identifying space. Limited land. Equitable distribution of solar in front line EJ communities should be prioritized.

[Fire drill at NJDEP temporarily interrupted discussion]

Calendar for 2022

Recommendation to consolidate dates and possibly combine work group meetings to save on time, or convening committee meetings every other month instead of every month. Suggestion to cancel meetings in August due to member availability. A draft schedule will be sent to all members for further input and approval.

Water Working Group (Nancy Griffeth)

No update, water working group was unable to meet

EEC Working Group (Meredith Taylor)

Primary objective is how to best disseminate important information and work product from working groups, whether via EJAC website or another portal. Requests feedback on how to engage with the public and what the appropriate role is for EJAC to be supportive of DEP. OEJ is working with communications on how best to integrate the information collection and sharing process. Suggestion to revisit GovDelivery.com as a means of recalibrating an updated list of interested individuals. Use of social media was suggested and leveraging assistance from volunteer student groups.

EJ Rulemaking Update (Sean Moriarty – Deputy Commissioner)

Rulemaking nearly finished and will undergo final review process with the governor's office and the commissioner's office. A rule proposal is expected to be published in the NJ register at the end of this year or early 2022. Will also publish the beta version of NJDEP's on-line tool which will allow the public to review the data and stressor layers for each of the block groups within the state (over 3500 block groups in NJ). An NJDEP guidance document will also be available outlining applicant expectations and a process for analyzing contributions to stressors as part of EJ impact statement.

Also discussed: combined stressor total methodology, warehouse sprawl and how department can indirectly assist if no major source permitting at that location; how EJAC will be involved in the AO

process and communications surrounding each public hearing that will be held. NJDEP will be finalizing a FAQ by the end of this week.

Announcements (Kim Gaddy)

- Tonight at 7:00 pm the South Ward Environmental Alliance will be having a town hall community meeting regarding the siting of the Amazon Hub (cumulative impact concerns with another warehouse facility) being located in Port Newark, specifically the south ward community.
- Tomorrow from 7:00-8:00 pm, Equity or Else is holding an EJ virtual town hall meeting to discuss EJ as a quality of life issue. Nadia will follow-up with additional information.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 12:04pm

Next Meeting

December 15, 2021 at 10am virtually via Microsoft Teams