

Transcript

October 25, 2024, 4:39PM

● **Barrett, Kim** started transcription

BK **Barrett, Kim** 0:09
And you all confirm you can see the screen.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 0:13
Yes.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 0:14
Yes.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 0:14
Alright, thank you.
OK.
So I'll just jump in really quickly and go over some of the questions, but we wanted to provide a space for you all to share kind of what your process has been thus far and you know how you want to approach moving forward.
And implementing the Vermont EJ law.
And so our first question is, how is your agency preparing to implement the upcoming EJ law deliverables?
And then which deliverables or areas of influence are you working on currently?
Or thinking about, you know, trying to plan for and then what system structures or practices would be helpful?
What have you learned from this year's public meetings?
That question, I think, resonated with us because even with the last two or three meetings, I feel like we've had some great conversations.
So curious what lessons you all are taking from those meetings?
And then how have these meetings informed your work at your agency, and what obstacles have you faced in implementing the Vermont EJ law at your agency?
And how are you working to overcome them?
So feel free to just popcorn or take some time to think.

And you can go in any order you like, but I'm going to kind of take a step back and let you all.

Yeah.

WG Wray, Gabbie 2:28

I can just go ahead and, oh, go ahead.

DB Donohue, Bob 2:29

I'll I guess I'll start.

Oh, OK.

Go ahead.

No. Go ahead, Gabby.

WG Wray, Gabbie 2:32

I was just gonna start and say I'm not normally at these meetings. I am in Agency of Commerce and community development.

I'm the environmental specialist for the Department of Housing and Community Development. Normally Grace, who's the environmental officers here.

And I'm kind of stepping in and we'll be taking over some more responsibility as the representative for the ACCD.

With that being said, I don't think I could answer any of these questions since I'm very new to this.

I'm still learning.

She couldn't be here today, so she said.

Just coming to this meeting and just listen and and observe and and see what I can take away. So I just wanted to start with that.

That'll probably be just here, mostly for listening, and I appreciate you guys letting me be here and listening to these conversations.

DB Donohue, Bob 3:28

I guess I'll I'll speak for the Agency of Education again.

This is Bob Donahue.

We have been well intended to make strides along all the tasks and deliverables that were being asked to to look at, and our biggest challenge I'm sure is.

Almost cliché, and I'm sure all of us are feeling it, but particularly for the Aoe, you

know we've had our our interim Secretary of education.

Had.

Has left the Aoe Zoe, who was appointed by the governor and then subsequently not.

I guess the Senate decided not to confirm her for that position.

So she is replaced as the interim deputy secretary. So then.

There's been organizational change such that now my boss Jill Briggs Campbell is now the interim deputy secretary.

We're going to be losing our director of educational finance, so there's just been a lot of upheaval and as such.

We really are distributing workloads and just not able to focus on much to do with the environmental justice.

So in terms of what are we working on, we keep bringing up discussions that we need to start focusing on how we're gonna tackle this, how we're gonna figure out what resources we need to pull into it, to move it forward. And I think it's on everybody's.

Mind. But we've also had multiple schools that couldn't start up this year needed support from the AOE, and then we have.

Legislative working group that are going on so.

We're pulling together always information for them and then being part of those working groups and task force groups.

So any efforts that I've had towards say, doing something to help work through all these different things, ultimately we're like Gumby and we get pulled off on other things.

So it's not through lack of desire. It's really through lack of time and the commitment to be able to stay dedicated to doing this kind of thing.

So we revisited that earlier.

Last week and are are going to have internal meetings to just try and see how are we going to crack this nut and and devote the resources in time to try and figure out what we're.

What we're gonna do.

So that's Full disclosure.



McIlvennie, Claire 5:54

I can go next.

Player would definitely echo challenges with capacity.

To really focus on a lot of different moving pieces with various with intention, I guess is what I would say.

We have, I think when Act 154 was passed originally, we set up quarterly meetings with all with our leadership team as a way to like start thinking about implementation.

That was our Commissioner and all our divisional directors, and that was really. Those conversations are really helpful for kind of keeping all the divisions and leadership up to date on what was happening and where deliverables might be coming.

We those have been stop and start. I think with the pace of this work in the subcommittee.

Where I'm starting to move with thinking about implementation is trying to break it down by the most. I think near term and kind of relevant deliverables. So we. I'm.

Starting I have a first meeting on our schedule, a community of practice around public engagement at the department. Knowing that you know this is something with the core principles.

Now finalize that, we will hopefully start working on our Community engagement plan.

You know, even if it has a long runway and also knowing that this is something that a lot of divisions are wrestling with kind of in silos in the department and we have like ad hoc conversations, but we don't really have.

An intentional staff level space for sharing best practices. Trying to coordinate build relationships so that I feel like is kind of one of the more concrete things we're working on.

Again, I just literally scheduled our first meeting and it's a mix of leadership and staff who are working on this. But I'm hoping that that will be a helpful space to focus on that one kind of area of work under.

Act 154 and although not intentionally.

Created two specifically for support the development of our community engagement plan.

Definitely hope that kind of by building this like baseline understanding of what everyone's doing and where we're trying to be more diverse in our outreach that that will really help inform that process.

And then.

That's. I mean, that's kind of the primary focus right now, although I am also like, since I've been participating in the environmental benefit Spending Task Group beginning to have some conversations primarily with leadership still at this point around kind of how we might start thinking about preparing both.

To provide feedback on materials coming out of the task group for review, but also kind of preparing ourselves to.

Tackle that because I think potentially be a a good amount of work, so again.

Kind of starting at the leadership level, but hoping that that will filter down to staff level conversations.

So really trying to tackle the lack of capacity, particularly in myself, by spreading across others where possible.



Willard, Abbey 9:21

This is Abby.

I'm happy to go on behalf of the Agency of Agriculture.

Similar to what Claire shared many months ago.

I don't even remember when, probably years ago.

Now we share. I shared sort of high level information around ACT 154. Some of our deliverables and timelines with our agency leadership and division directors and actually had.

I did it in.

Kind of partnership with.

EJ staff and it was just a nice presentation about kind of just like running through what was passed, what was expected at that time. What we had for timeline and deliverables.

Since that time.

We have created.

An internal agriculture EJ committee at the agency, which has two staff representatives from each of our six divisions plus our legal counsel.

We met once in May to kind of just like, establish the group again. A very similar presentation that was shared with agency leadership and division directors was shared with this group of 12 people.

As just sort of like a A level setting, kind of.

And then.

I sent an e-mail in September.

So just about a month ago that included the updated timelines.

And.

And some of the upcoming activities and deadlines.

I also included the civil rights and environmental Justice Advisory Committee recommendations, feedback that says that felt like a real, tangible action item to share with our committee.

And said we'll meet again in December, January partially based upon my schedule, but also thinking at that time, it may be you know appropriate space to focus on.

Any improvements that we wanna make to our complaint process for civil rights and environmental justice?

Complaints. Maybe thinking about our community engagement plan process.

And the environmental environmental benefits spending report process, if we happen to have at least the draft guidance for that three-year look back.

I think our group sort of like felt like we were off to a quick start and then with like some upcoming rapidly approaching time deadlines. And then I think everyone sort of kind of taken a bit more of a back seat, myself included just based on capacity.

Sense the deadlines have been extended by two years.

So I think there's a little bit of.

Engagement within our agency.

And not a lot of action at this point.

RK

Raimundi, Karla 12:38

Abby, I I am intrigued. Is the I think this is fantastic, that you have this task group.

And has the task group.

Started to discuss the creation of the Community engagement plan at all.

WA

Willard, Abbey 12:57

No, they really haven't done anything yet other than I think become familiarized.

With the EJ requirements and kind of have and I'm happy to share the e-mail that I sent about a month ago. If it's helpful and valuable for others to share something similarly or maybe others have even done a better job then then I did and trying to just.

Sort of capture the changes that happened from Act 181.

That I felt like were important for members of our group to be aware of, not the nitty

gritty details, but to know that there were, you know, two year extensions.
We, umm, are now allowed twelve meetings per year instead of the previous eight.
And that there had been some back and forth engagement around civil rights,
environmental justice complaints.
But again it to me it feels like we're still on the stage of keeping people generally
informed and engaged, but not a lot of action.
Discussion like even to the piece that you described Claire of, like a community of
practice conversation around a task like work, we're not even yet that like.
Micro focused on a particular activity. At this point, more just general information
sharing.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 14:22

And what do you think would be helpful to?

To go to the next step.

Like Lar mentioned, just having focused conversations around particular deliverables
to meet deadlines.

I'm just wondering whether there's something that we could do to support.

Those conversations.

That work.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 14:53

That's a good question. I guess I'll say.

One piece.

Given that we're in a room of state employees, we did submit to the administration a
request for a position for.

Environmental justice.

Dei work and kind of accessibility efforts.

I know that that wasn't necessarily submitted by every agency kind of subject to.

EJ, but we made that decision based upon the limited capacity that that I have or that
we have within our agency to do this work without without an additional position.

I don't know what the administration's reaction will be.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 15:37

Yeah.

Capacity.

WA

Willard, Abbey 15:44

I think that just having having some support is like a critical piece so far. That kind of like front of mind that comes up.

But also say given that we are an agency and a dominant culture, you know, deeply imbued in kind of that white supremacy culture, like nothing is urgent as of right now.

And so people are focused on other, more urgent needs.

I'm not excited or proud of that or nor do I think that's like a replicable.

Kind of model that I would love to see either continued or.

In other agencies and departments, but I think that's kind of the current reality, so. I think.

Maybe different sessions that so something that could be helpful would be maybe to like take one of the deliverables. One of the areas and sort of like talk through kind of like what may be required to achieve something.

So maybe it's when the environmental benefits.

Guidance is available to just start there and spend some time kind of talking about that.

Topic at a time.

Or maybe something around community engagement.

Planning.

Or maybe hearing from other agencies about, you know, their intentions around updating civil rights and EJ complaint processes based upon the feedback that's been received.

So I guess one at a time engagement I think would be helpful.

RK

Raimundi, Karla 17:24

I think Abby, the fact that you have this group, 12 people I'm thinking and you know, I would like to hear from other agencies what you're doing and answers to these questions.

But I was thinking, Abby, that well. I have a concern that we are under the illusion that we have time.

And frankly, when we look at the deadlines, you know you will see that they're all due.

Around the same time.

And these are tasks that take a lot of time to complete.

So for example, for a community engagement we we need to talk about language access and developing a language access plan and public participation schemes.

So I'm concerned that we are under the illusion that we have time when really we have barely enough time to do this work the way that it should be done.

And then additionally, since you already have this task group, I was thinking that perhaps.

It may be helpful to break out the task group in subgroups and take deliverables.

And assign them to like subgroups within that group to start identifying how to get to the deadline.

In a way that is efficient given the capacity.

Concern and issue.

I think you know this longer runway may allow us to get to.

Times in a more deliberate way.

And if we wait until it's crunch time, then capacity issues will become will exacerbate.

You know the stressors, Claire.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 19:13

Check that.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 19:14

I just wanna quickly say.

We have until 105.

South, continue sharing whatever we don't get to share. I would ask that folks e-mail and just share your experience that way. Thanks.

SA **Smith, Stephanie A** 19:32

I'll. I'll be quick.

I have my hand up next.

I'm jumping in, but I Abby. I think part of what you were getting at, which is what would be so incredibly helpful for me.

Well, first, if you could send that e-mail that would be great.

That you shared. I would love to see that. I think in these meetings being able to use them as a time for us to work together on figuring out what we should be doing would be incredibly helpful. And I don't know how to get us there, but it.

Feels very ethereal and we have these conversations and I want it to be like a deadlines in our face.

Here's what we need to do.

Like, let's strategize together would be significantly beneficial.

For me, because I'm also dealing with some incredible capacity constraints and like massive flooding response work still from the last two years that it's there are so many closer alligators as my boss would say.

But I the deadlines need to be in our face. We need to have a plan for what we're gonna do. And if we can do that together instead of feeling like we're on our own, that's gonna be incredibly valuable.

And there were so many other things that I was thinking when Abby was talking.

One other update I'll give for Vermont Emergency Management is that the there was a bill passed last year, Act 143 that required Vermont Emergency Management to create a working group around language access services for emergency communication.

Specifically, I haven't been in those conversations, but getting updates from my director on where that's going, there's some decent challenges that they'll be at least proposing what it would take to get us there through that process.

So that's one big piece on the language access side that is at least moving. So it feels like something's moving.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 21:12

Mm hmm.

So it seems to me, Stephanie, that what you are proposing is perhaps like an identification of.

Of things that all of the agencies could do.

Perhaps I put together like a work plan that may be implemented by each of the agencies.

And.

SA **Smith, Stephanie A** 21:54

Being able to see the timeline and like where we need to be when and even like creating some, even if they're artificial, like infernal steps along the way that we can all be tracking towards and make sure that those deadlines are front and Center for us would be.

Incredibly helpful, but being able to use this group as a sounding board to develop that and make sure we're on the same page about where we need to go and how we're gonna get there, that would be really helpful.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 22:16

And that. Yeah. And that's in addition to the documents that we've already shared that established the the deadlines and sort of like the interim deadlines, right? Like the the things that need to get done, something more specific and perhaps.

SA **Smith, Stephanie A** 22:32

Yeah, part of my problem is I can't put my finger on that document right now. If we could share that again, that would be awesome. I was trying to find it prior to the meeting.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 22:42

And do you think?

SA **Smith, Stephanie A** 22:43

And I and that's that's on me because I'm really struggling to find time for any work right now.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 22:51

K.

Thank you, Claire.

You have your hand up.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 22:55

Amy, how's her hand up first?

So I can go.

I've also already spoken.

RA **Redman, Amy (She/Her)** 22:58

OK.

Oh my goodness, thank you really quickly.

I'm thinking about the areas of influence and one of the things that we're doing right

now is trying to actually move into implementation stage with the Community engagement guide.

So trying to do some level setting and like what is community engagement based on the core principles?

Happy as always, to share any of the materials that Vdh has been working with, developing and working with.

So the other area of influence I feel like I have because.

Because Abby inspired me last time we talked, was creating a small group. I don't think it's gonna be the same size.

But I think just like a small EJ group and I'm even wondering like, are there any A/C members? I know we talked about this buddy system, so I'm really thinking about like, how do we how do we be more emergent instead of just do it, you know like.

Not that a task group, a task group would be so beneficial, but like, what's the relationship to the A/C members?

So holding that I'm just trying to put ideas down on paper for a small group.

Other area of influence I'm wondering about is vdh has this Community resilience index the Agency of Human Services, the GIS and DATAVIZ team has made that I'm connected to. So I'm wondering in the interim before the mapping tools made, can that play some kind of role and I?

Just lastly, say that I think I don't know if it's a barrier, but I want to explicitly say that the work.

Like when a timeline comes up, there's motivation.

So we are moving in tandem with.

The timelines and with the coordination from from from the A and R team.

So I just wanted to name that explicitly like it gets quiet and then when something is due, so the benefit spending guide is gonna be really helpful 'cause once we get that, then we can start to kind of like work work on that piece. Thank you. OK, CLA. You're so, so patient you go.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 24:54

Oh, that's OK.

I already spoke so I wanted to hold, but I was just going to.

I think maybe build off what Abby and Stephanie said is. I do think having.

Space in these meetings or IAC focused meetings so I know we can have some purely by our own to talk in depth about how the agencies are planning to meet

specific deliverables would be really valuable. And I'm particularly thinking about that in the community engagement space because it.

We have the.

We have the timelines and we're certainly ourselves thinking about how we can meet that, but I would love to hear like from the other agencies like where are you starting from in this process.

Like like with Amy and Health like, it sounds like you guys are already pretty far along.

And for others who aren't like, how are you thinking about approaching it if we're going out to engage with communities, should we be collaborating over that instead of all doing our own separate community engagement? Have others already, like, done things that?

We can learn from, so I feel like that.

That kind of cross pollination as we develop milestones would be really helpful for us like because the department we do have a budget to bring someone in to help develop a Community engagement plan. And I have been wondering like the extent to which we would be moving to.

As agencies along a similar timeline, or whether that's something like we should just develop the departments perspective, so I think.

Some of that cross pollination could be really helpful.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 26:30

It's 105.

I'm kinda.

I have maybe like several seconds like 30 seconds.

I think, Claire, what you mentioned made me think that, you know, similar to the network that I put together and.

We also have a network that was created for civil rights and then another network created for EJ. And that structure is a working group and then liaisons that are embedded in each of the divisions.

At the agency, and they're mirror networks for civil rights and environmental justice. And perhaps it would make sense for the IAC to do the same and then identify which agencies are ahead of others in certain areas of influence, and then perhaps use that expertise and experiences and lessons learned to help us advance deliverables.

The one.

The one caveat is that some of our agencies do more of certain deliverables than others.

And then, you know, making sure that as we move forward as a collective.

That we are actually, you know adding benefit rather than detracting from the process because of how distinct we are, how different we are from each other.

So, but put forth thought, thank you so much.

And Kim?

BK **Barrett, Kim** 28:10

Yeah. The other group is taking a little bit longer, so feel free to just chat or if you wanna take a preemptive break, you're you're welcome to do that.

But eventually Juliet will bring us back.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 28:25

I would just, sorry, I just I totally agree with you Carla.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 28:25

OK. Yeah.

Clear.

MC **McIlvennie, Claire** 28:29

I I like. I think we we definitely are all very different structure the how big we are, where we are in these processes.

But it it feels like having dedicated space within these meetings to talk about that and identify it and then move in our own ways would be just helpful.

Just to make sure we're all we're learning from each other, but also not duplicating efforts that others have already done. I feel like is where it was coming from.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 29:01

Definite, especially as it pertains to community engagement, because I anticipate that in the development of a Community engagement plan for the agencies, there will be touch points with communities.

So duplicating their may not be a good practice.

Someone else had their hand up.

BK **Barrett, Kim** 29:24

Yeah, that's me.

I was just gonna ask.

If there are specific things that you've taken away from the last couple of meetings, those who have been there, just wondering what any reflections may be, if anything.

RK **Raimundi, Karla** 29:43

If I may take a minute here to talk about what the Agency of Natural Resources has been doing in an attempt to share information along the lines of what Claire suggested.

So.

As you know, from conversations with had in the past.

And I mentioned earlier, we created a network.

Maybe a year and a half ago for environmental justice and created.

A network for Civil rights 2 1/2 years ago, and so we rely on the working group and the working group has representation from each of the departments at the agency and the Secretary's office. And what we do is we look at the body of work.

Generally, and then identify priorities taken into consideration.

Hard deadlines, both for civil rights and environmental justice.

And then we carve out a path and then identify interim steps that need to be completed for us to be able to meet a deadline that's, you know, several years down the line and how we're creating capacity and the ability to do that.

Is we are having conversations with the departments and divisions with the department.

That we believe have special expertise in the deliverables.

So we've for the environmental benefit spending guide, we've met several times with business Office staff just to check in and ensure that the conversations that we're having resonate with the way they conduct business for community engagement with met with several divisions within the agency to ensure that we.

Understand what they believe to be important elements.

Of community engagement and to assess what level of engagement the agency has doing.

So it's so we've been having.

Conversations to assess where the agencies are with regards to the deliverables, even

though they're due many years down the line.

And so right now for EJ, for the EJ working group, we are working towards.

The two deliverables.

That are Next up are the ebsg and then we started having conversations around community engagement and so that working group will be.

Developing approaches to do the report the the look back.

And then they will develop a working a working plan and then they will tap into delegations who are embedded in the divisions to gather the information.

That's.

● **Barrett, Kim** stopped transcription