

Interagency Environmental Justice (EJ) Committee
Draft Meeting Minutes
November 22, 2023

Note to reader: These are draft minutes were compiled by staff from the Agency of Natural Resources. If you would like to see any changes to these draft minutes, please reach out to karla.raimundi@vermont.gov.

Meeting Information:

Date: November 22, 2023

Meeting Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

Location: Virtual only via Teams Meeting

Attendance:

- **Interagency Committee Attendance:** Michele Boomhower, Isaac Kaplan, Neuvic Malembanie, Claire McIlvennie, Karla Raimundi, Amy Redman, Jenny Ronis, Elizabeth Schilling, Stephanie A Smith, Gretel St. Lawrence, Grace Vinson, Abbey Willard
 - **Agency of Natural Resources staff:** Emily Rogers, Katelyn Ellermann, Phoebus Potter
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Agenda:

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| 10:00 AM | Welcome and introductions
Consenting to Community Agreements
Prior Meeting Minutes Approval
Review and Approve November 8, 2023 Agenda (this document) |
| 10:15 AM | Update on legislative priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- per diem and due date extensions- Review expectations for covered agency deliverables that are due before any statutory extension would take effect (i.e. due before July 1, 2024) |
| 10:35 AM | Partnering with the Advisory Council to help advance their charge to engage / represent directly-impacted communities, and advise state policy based upon those communities' expressed needs / requirements of the EJ Law. |
| 11:00 AM: | Public Comment |

11:10 AM: **Update on engaging agency staff and preparing for implementation:** Circle process: challenges/successes, or questions/offerings for the group

11:50 AM: **Review of next steps / wrap-up**

Minutes:

Opening:

- Introductions
- Review of Community Agreements
- [Minutes from prior IAC meeting](#) adopted
- [Agenda for current meeting](#) adopted

Topic: Updates on legislative priorities

1. Complaint reporting

Karla: CR complaint reporting stems from CR law, while EJ complaint reporting stems from EJ Law - no guidance on what an EJ complaint entails, so we need to figure out what that is so that guidance can be created to capture intention of law

Elizabeth: Do we have a timeline for that guidance?

Phoebes: Do not expect to have data from this coming March report - take stock of what agencies have or do not have to inform reports moving forward. AC receives reports and provides feedback on how to respond to complaints in report.

Amy: Let's work together how do we do that for the long term? Resonates deeply. Looking at complaint systems that already exist and do they have capacity to capture EJ complaints too? Colorado has EJ complaint system set up due to similar law - might be willing to do learning session if we come up with list of questions before that to address in such a meeting. Use an app through salesforce to have complaints submitted and routed to the right responders.

Elizabeth: centralized system seems like a great idea

Claire: Happy to bring Qs from her agency, which has a complaint system in place already for general complaints.

Katelyn: good suggestions and aspects of this reporting. At basic level, as a starting point - decent spreadsheet for capturing information is better than nothing for those agencies/departments without existing systems in place for complaint taking and compilation.

Elizabeth: bigger Q is defining what the complaints actually are - law is unclear on what they entail so this group needs to provide that

2. Per Diem

Phoebes: Per diem law exists (**Act 134 of 2022**) - have to get up to date on that and may enable the change to take place without it being a legislative ask.

Elizabeth: Spoke to ppl at commissioner office - folks doing budgeting should know

Phoebes: not support at governor's level for increase across the board in SOV, so we need to compose an ask for this group specifically

Karla: convos with Sec. Moore based on premise that agency is part of other boards and councils therefore advocating for one off increase for one particular board is not quite sound due to the look of favoring one over others. Need consistent, fair, equitable approach. What is recommended approach - AC advises that the AC should make recommendation to the state through letter to SOV from AC and signatories from covered agencies

Jenny: NRB is very interested in Act 134 due to commissioners being a large majority of who NRB works with. NRB is supportive of any efforts to seek higher than \$50/per diem, but not ready to support an across the board raise of this minimum.

Michele: as member of IAC I rep secretary, not within my authority to make rec to council that is not in alignment with broader recs from my agency/secretary. What are the fiscal implications, what entities would be impacted and how would recommendations be made to AC and the legislature?

Karla: Need to assess across agencies whether the raise to \$250 makes sense for all boards and councils is necessary first step. We could all start working toward this first step as the IAC.

Topic: Partnering with the Advisory Council

Agency Buddy System - AC members paired up with IAC members in order to create cross group understanding

Phoebes: what are your reactions and what should we be thinking through for such a system?

Claire: really like idea and the challenge of putting what our agencies do in plain language. Inviting AC members to implementation meetings but its hard because we are still in preliminary convos due to shifting due dates and needed further clarification and foundational work

Amy: need relational piece of getting to know AC members as people and am excited about this idea to allow for that

Claire: like idea of Agency members having specific buddies but don't want to reinforce silos that already exist through the buddy system

Abbey: critical friends exercise - to get conversations going about problems within agencies with AC members, rely on core group to problem solve and work through issues; **accountability partner system** as a more remote option but still helps build relationships across group

Phoeb: good suggestions - why we need to get sub working groups going in order to start establishing the structure for these relationships

11:00 AM – Public Comment period – none given

Topic: Update on engaging agency staff and preparing for implementation

Challenges and needs report out:

Grace/Stephanie: behind, need more structure and to set up team of reps from departments/divisions to do scoping work of needs

Neuvic: DOE missing key positions at DOE which impacts capacity for work on EJ

Abbey: AAFM a few tasks have been initiated but not a ton of activity. On 9/11 did presentation to leadership and directors on EJ work - provide awareness around deliverables and deadlines. How does this align with Justice40, current grants, etc. Wanting to know impact of AAFM's work on EJ - how much of an investment should agency be making in the work? Decided not to ask for additional position for EJ for FY25 based off IAC convos and the like. Have not set up cross-agency group but wouldn't be hard since leadership meets already once a week and could add this as agenda item. EJ has not captured directors interest though

Michele: AOT has funding to support this work so there is great potential. Personnel to carry work will need greater capacity to steward the work, possibly part-time temp position to help determine the long term need for that position. Model in the buddy system for work between agencies. Excited to move to next stage - divisions informed of process, now we need to deliver guidance to established groups to do work

Jenny: NRB is nimble - has reporting page for EJ and title 6 concerns, no complaints yet received, but staff are aware of it. Enthusiasm for this work within NRB, practical front daunting task is LAP everything we do is written or in person (interpreters at public meetings). Not looking for additional position for the work, dispersing to all staff

Elizabeth: comprehensive memo on law, deliverables and deadlines for leadership and staff. Leadership was receptive, staff had a lot of questions. Not thinking about needing additional staff at this point.

Claire: two meetings with leadership to present overview of law, deadlines, thinking about questions and compiling needs. Have meetings on the books moving forward to enable further conversation. Requested two new positions to do this work. Federal funding opportunities may help to fund these. Digging into benefits spending guidance to the guidance. Ongoing public engagement effort is informing plan moving forward for Act 154 CE

Amy: VDH has committed some funds to EJ work by extending Amy's position. Thinking about who needs to be at table to do benefit spending work. Want to set up cross department group to start

building long term network to do work. The Sum of Us book recommendation to get away from zero sum thinking within agencies when it comes to EJ work

Karla: hiring for new EJ coordinator - advancing 4 candidates to 2nd round in first week of Dec. pre-offer out second week of December. Internally at agency - shifted from policy documents to operationalizing those documents. Working LAP and implementation plan and grievance procedures. Setting up training for all staff on public engagement with legal department with sessions focused on CR and EJ. Two distinct networks of staff with reps from all departments set up and working on foundational structures for those bodies to support CR/EJ work and coordination between the two areas. Looking forward to making this m=work more tangible for more people.

Review of next steps/wrap up

- Phoebis will follow up with request for plain language summaries of your agencies, and what aspects of environmental justice your agencies has influence over. This is intended to provide Advisory Council members with information needed to more effectively advise covered state agencies, and to facilitate the buddy system idea.
- Dec. 18th 9am-12pm meeting scheduled with time at end to mingle in person - hold if you can