

**Public Meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice (EJ) Interagency Committee  
(IAC)  
Draft Virtual Meeting Agenda  
November 18, 2024**

**Note to reader:** These 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 [anr.ejcoordinator@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.ejcoordinator@vermont.gov)

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**Meeting Information:**

**Date:** November 18, 2024

**Meeting Time:** 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM EST

**Virtual:** Click [here](#) to join meeting

**Meeting Information:** [Meeting Materials](#)

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**Attendees:**

**Advisory Council:** Xusana Davis, Mariana Sears, Zoraya Hightower

**Interagency Committee:** Stephanie Smith, Dave Pelletier, Gabbie Wray, Amy Redman, Elizabeth Schilling, Bob Donohue, Jenny Ronis, Claire McIlvennie, Karla Raimundi

**State of Vermont:** Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Bridget Phillips, Emily Rogers, Grace Vinson,

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1:30 PM

**Welcome & Introductions:**

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
  - Principles read and consent obtained. No comments
- Approve [July 8, 2024 Minutes](#)
  - Minutes approved. No comments.
- Approve [November 18, 2024 Agenda](#)
  - Agenda approved. No comments.

1:35 PM

**Painting the Picture: What does implementing the VT EJ Law require?**

- Juliet Birch: The Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit drafted a document that details some of the potential tasks covered agencies would need to take on in order to implement deliverables under the VT EJ Law. By discussing what needs to be done to implement deliverables, this can give a clearer picture of what support covered agencies still need to complete work under the Law.
- Kim Barrett: Introduces discussion questions:

- Are there ways that implementing the EJ Law feel not in alignment with your work?
- What is the span/scope of your operations?
- What would completing the tasks required under this deliverable look like for your agency?
  - Which departments/units need to be engaged?
  - What are the challenges?
- Are there any capacity-building actions that can be taken? What tools can facilitate the work?
- Grace Vinson: For the Environmental Benefits Baseline Spending Report, the scope of Grace's position doesn't allow for a lot of authority. How does your role inform the way that you will collaborate with others to collect information?
- Bob Donohue: For the Environmental Benefits Baseline Spending Report, how should agencies approach the issue of nondiscretionary funds? Further clarity is needed on what constitute as environmental benefits and environmental burdens (re-evaluating definitions). How can the implementation of deliverables under the Law impact the implementation of projects under other statutes covered agencies are expected to implement? How can we implement these laws well when capacity is so limited?
- Jenny Ronis: Lack of definitional clarity is a point of frustration.
- Juliet Birch: The Advisory Council, as representatives of the communities intended to benefit from the law, are the primary individuals for revising definitions under the law. Deliberation time for this revision is limited to public meetings, which means that more time will be required for this to be done intentionally. There are other things that can be accomplished by the covered agencies without having the definitions revised under the law.
- Juliet Birch: This discussion is intended to help us get an idea of what implementing these deliverables will require in terms of time, capacity, and resources so we can begin to strategize to address the needs.
- Bob Donohue: In the absence of specificity, covered agencies need to interpret the law to the best of their ability, undergo a rigorous process of review, and be upfront about how they engaged in reporting.
- Juliet Birch: Doing the work without the specificity of revised definitions is reliant on transparency regarding rationale and methodology.
- Karla Raimundi: Supports the approach that Bob mentioned. Hoping to have a conversation with Advisory Council members regarding the expectations of the Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance and Baseline Spending Report process.
- Claire McIlvennie: Echoes Bob's comment regarding the challenge of capacity and staffing. It feels like there is a lack of ability to organize amongst the agencies to do something to advocate for more capacity and support. Would it be beneficial to approach capacity-building as its own deliverable with a task group? Or should covered agencies take an independent approach to this? Collective advocacy would be helpful.
- Bob Donohue: Presenting a collective document that summarizes the agencies' challenges in approaching this work would create a budgetary reality. If there is

not a response to the budgetary reality, a concession has to happen to acknowledge the realities of the resources and funding.

- Karla Raimundi: Additional layer of complexity is that the VT EJ Law is being implemented alongside other laws that impact EJ or that the EJ Law will have an impact on.
- Gabbie Wray: How do we achieve internal coordination on the Law's work within our agencies?
- Claire McIlvennie: Working with leadership to ensure directors and commissioner are aware and informed on requirements and upcoming needs for the implementation of the law. Preparing working groups to build more capacity on this work.
- Dave Pelletier: Deliverables of the Law are already in alignment with a lot of the work that the Agency of Transportation does. AOT is working on updating a public involvement guide.
- Juliet Birch: ANR has an Environmental Justice Network with a working group and set of liaisons. The Liaisons are made up of one staff member from each division in the agency and EJ is part of their work each month. Mostly used for information dissemination thus far, but will be helpful when covered agencies are called to start implementing deliverables.
- Karla Raimundi: The Environmental Justice Working Group at ANR has been helpful in informing what is or is not feasible in the planning phase of the Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance.
- Claire McIlvennie: There is a lack of resources but there are a lot of innovative solutions that different agencies are using to move through lack of resources.

2:25 PM

### **Public Comment**

- No comments.

### **Break**

2:30 PM

### **Developing a Collective Approach**

- Kim Barrett: Continuing the conversation about innovation and how we can structure our work together to support each other and come together on collective needs.
- Claire McIlvennie: Department of Public Service started their group on community engagement through one-off conversations between people with shared interests and expertise who were siloed. By creating the group, this highlighted that there was more capacity in the agency to work on this than was apparent before.
- Karla Raimundi: Interested in a governance structure for the Interagency Committee to allow for more efficient responses to needs and asks. Steering Committee as a potential idea.

- Bob Donohue: Thinks a collective ask needs to come from and be supported at the Secretary/Commissioner level for each covered agency as priorities come from that level.
- Juliet Birch: From this conversation, do Interagency Committee members think it would be helpful to have a Steering Committee? Would it be helpful to develop a summary report of the priorities and challenges in implementing the VT EJ Law from each covered agencies' leadership?
- Bob Donohue: In favor of a summary report, but doesn't feel like he could be involved in a Steering Committee.
- Karla Raimundi: Unfunded mandates are a regular concern. We need to make a strong argument to depict the challenges of implementing this law under the current circumstances.
- Elizabeth Schilling: Also agrees that unfunded mandates are a problem. But there are also inherent issues in the way the statute was written. More clarity in the law would be helpful.
- Juliet Birch: The vagueness of the law could be helpful in allowing the covered agencies to interpret the law.

3:00 PM

### **Wrap Up & Close Out**

Minutes Submitted By: Juliet Birch, Agency of Natural Resources

Minutes Approved: