Public Meeting of the Vermont Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Council (AC)
Virtual Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2025

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

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Meeting Information:
Date: July 10, 2025
Meeting Time: 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Advisory Council: Rich Holschuh, Jennifer Byrne, Victor Davila, Mariana Sears, Angela Lasso-Jimenez (ORE)

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Karla Raimundi, Emma Ramirez-Richer

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11:00 AM

Welcome & Introductions

- Consent to Community Agreements
  - Agreements read and consent obtained. No comments.
- Approve April 18th, 2025 Meeting Minutes
  - Quorum not achieved. To be revisited in next public meeting.
- Approve April 23rd, 2025 Meeting Minutes
  - Quorum not achieved. To be revisited in next public meeting.
- Approve July 10th, 2025 Meeting Agenda
  - Agenda approved. No comments.

11:15 AM

Agency of Natural Resources' Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Unit (CREJU) Presents to AC

- Kim B.: The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is in a public comment period on the Environmental Benefits Spending Guidance (EBSG). This public comment period will run from July 1 – August 11, 2025. ANR is hosting a virtual public comment meeting on July 11, 2025 and would like to share the presentation they will give during that meeting with the Advisory Council for feedback.

- Kim B.: Provides a high-level review of the public comment presentation: Addresses the purpose of the public comment, comment guidelines, schedule, brief overview of the VT EJ Law, and a review of the EBSG reporting process. About 50 minutes of public comment built into the meeting.

11:25 AM

AC Provides Consultation to CREJU

- Angela L.: Are the covered agencies currently reporting on environmental benefit investments? How are they doing this reporting now?
- Karla R.: This is a deliverable under the VT EJ Law, and so this is a new reporting ask. Agencies have not done this kind of reporting before.
- Kim B.: We should clarify that in the public comment presentation
- Jennifer B.: It looks like the baseline spending report reporting period captures 2022-2025, but does not capture 2020. Will the pandemic data not be captured in the report?
- Karla R.: This question has come up before and ANR's legal team has searched the VT EJ Law and the legislative records to determine if some intent to capture the pandemic was recorded. The legal team did not find any record of these conversations. Additionally, the pandemic funds were one-time emergency funds and so, when it comes to assessing the proportionality of ongoing spending patterns, one-time funds are not illustrative as they are not recurrent and therefore do not create an observable pattern by which agencies can redistribute.
- Mariana S.: Can we include a timeline visual in the presentation to the public about EBSG? Noting that the AC has not been involved in the creation of this law. Advisory Council should be involved in the redefining of parts of the law. In general, the content of the EBSG is very technical and takes time to digest. Also the meetings on the flyer are listed out of chronological order.
- Kim B.: Yes, a visual could be helpful. We should also be building relationships with folks in advance so they are comfortable in the public comment space
- Rich H.: Perhaps including an example in the presentation could be useful for people to understand how the guidance could be applied?
- Kim B.: Yes, an example can be created
- Karla R.: Having a limit on length of comments allows time for all folks present to participate equitably. Depending on the number of folks participating, the time expectations can be managed differently, but we want everyone to have an opportunity to speak.
- Karla R.: We appreciate these improvement suggestions. Some may not be possible to do because we have limited time to finish the public comment period,

create a responsiveness summary, and improve the EBSG itself in attention to comments received.
- Juliet B.: We have materials on the EBSG translated into materials other than English and we can accept comments in languages other than English as well

12:10 PM

Public Comment

- No comments.

12:15 PM

Unfacilitated AC Planning Time: Public Comment Period

- Kim B.: AC members are encouraged to use this time to work together or independently to build awareness around this public comment period and get organized.
- Rich H.: Appreciate time to do this during the meeting. Will work by sending emails to network. Email template is helpful.
- Kim B.: Return at 12:30
- Jennifer B.: What is this session for?
- Kim B.: To build awareness around this public comment period and get organized. This could mean sending emails, making phone calls, reaching out to people to support them in making a written comment or attending a public comment meeting.
- Jennifer B.: Document is too technical to send out to most people
- Mariana S.: I am not sending the document outright. I am providing a high-level explanation of this material and providing the supplementary materials via email
- Karla R.: Noting that the materials for the EBSG public comment period were sent to this group well in advance of the start of the public comment period. Timely feedback is important for the planning process.
- Jennifer B.: Could be helpful to review documents like these during public meetings
- Victor D.: Can the Council come up with standards around messaging – such as, what does a flyer require? That could be covered in a single work meeting and then documents from there forward would be informed by those standards
- Jennifer B.: AC could be used for consultation on how to do community engagement well. Didn't know "we were in the middle of something we couldn't change"

- Kim B.: Plain language materials were created through consultation with the AC and the EBSG Task Group. What happens between the plain language materials and the engagement with networks? The technical nature of the document should not stop us from providing some level of outreach and connection with the public on these materials. Also, if folks are not feeling informed on the progress made under the VT EJ Law, I would like to know more about how to support AC members in getting the information better? What can we do to make sure you are seeing the emails coming through?
- Jennifer B.: Doing more work as a Council to come up with a council-based messaging schema or communications standard could be helpful. Usually a council runs itself. There are improvements that could be made to better engage the AC members
- Victor D.: AC would need to meet in between these public meetings for work blocks, build out a plan to implement these ideas, etc. This would probably require an additional 2 hours a month. Finding time can be hard, but meeting outside of this structure is necessary to build the mechanisms to do this work

12:30 PM

Public Comment

- No comments.

12:30 PM

Executive Session Overview

- Kim B.: As sent in an email, we would like to offer you the option of utilizing an executive session to view the Community Engagement Request for Proposal (RFP) to support the development of the Mapping Tool. The executive session will allow you to review the RFP while keeping the RFP private and protecting the competitive fairness of the procurement process. Protects fairness for potential bidders. Rachel Stevens will walk us through how an executive session works and why it could be helpful.
- Rachel S.: Provides an introduction to the executive session: Review of Open Meeting Law, executive session would allow a public body to meet without the public for specific reasons (including things like contracts) if premature public knowledge would place the public body or the public at a substantial disadvantage. Executive session could be helpful for the Community Engagement RFP because it ensures that no contractors have premature

information about the procurement process or has a competitive advantage by having the RFP circulated to them in advance.

- Rachel S.: If the council agrees that executive session is a good idea, Kim and Juliet can arrange a public meeting where, at that meeting, quorum would be needed to get a formal 2/3 affirmative vote before entering into executive session.

12:45 PM

AC Deliberation on Executive Session

- Kim B.: July 23 could be a potential option for the executive session
- Victor D.: Would be interested in the executive session.
- Rich H.: Executive session seems like the right way to go. Is quorum needed?
- Kim B.: Yes, quorum is needed.
- Mariana S.: I may be late on the 23rd
- Juliet B.: We'll probably open that meeting, if it is held, with another introduction to the executive session for those who missed this information in this meeting.
- Victor D.: Can quorum be achieved over email? Can we vote to go into executive session over email?
- Rachel S.: This is not 100% legally clear. Ideally there would be quorum on the day of the session.
- Victor D.: Can further outreach be done to get quorum?
- Rachel S.: No legal concerns there
- Kim B.: Yes, phone outreach can be done, but only for those AC members who have consented to calls or texts from us.
- Juliet B.: Reminder that the VT EJ Law has a 12 meeting annual public meeting cap and so if we did achieve quorum over email, that would be considered one of the 12 limited meetings.
- Kim B.: Maybe AC members can reach out to other AC members to encourage participation. Also, whoever makes a motion to start executive session during the meeting, a justification for the executive session will need to be provided as well. We can support you if you want help on developing a justification.
- Rachel S.: The goal of the justification is for it to be included in the minutes, because the rest of the executive session would not be recorded or included in the minutes.
- Mariana S.: Would support executive session unless there is another recommendation from another AC member.

- Mariana S.: What happens if we end up mentioning or talking about another thing in an executive session (besides the RFP)?
- Rachel S.: That is strictly prohibited in Open Meeting Law. The scope of the executive session would have to be explicitly and narrowly defined
- Jennifer B.: Would support an executive session

1:00 PM

Close Out

- Mariana S.: Would like to meet with Jennifer outside of public meeting
- Jennifer B.: Has a proposal for improvements to the AC
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