

**Public Meeting of the Vermont Interagency Environmental Justice (EJ) Committee
(IAC)
Hybrid Meeting Minutes
November 12, 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

Meeting Information:

Date: November 12, 2025

Meeting Time: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Advisory Council (AC): Rich Holschuh, Trey Martin, Jennifer Byrne, Mariana Sears, Britaney Watson, Victor Davila, Xusana Davis

Interagency Committee (IAC): Karla Raimundi, Bob Donohue, Dave Pelletier, Abbey Willard, Janet Hurley, Elizabeth Schilling, Claire McIlvennie, Amy Redman, Xusana Davis

State of Vermont: Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Rebecca Walsh, Richarda Ericson, Sarah McIlvennie, Jenny Ronis, Marcella Dent

1:00 PM

Welcome & Introductions

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
 - Consent received, no comments.
- Approve October 25, 2024 [Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Minutes approved, no comments.
- Approve November 12, 2025 Agenda
 - Agenda approved, no comments.
- Kim B.: Please share name, affiliation (representative of ___, or covered agency), and what challenges you navigate in community engagement
- Rich H.: Challenge engaging various communities connected through VCNA, not very digitally engaged communities so they can be difficult to reach

- Mariana S.: Challenge with being overwhelmed or inundated with information, which makes engagement hard and can feel disempowering
- Victor D.: Challenge with observed public self-siloing as a means of seeking independence. Once community is needed to manage obstacles, rebuilding community connections can be difficult
- Trey M.: Challenge to reach meaningful engagement under strict statutory timelines, also difficult to reach people who do not have the time and bandwidth to take on more in the face of inundation and stress
- Jennifer B.: Challenge with lack of funding when it comes to fulfilling obligations for their council, translating language from “federal lingo” to community language and vice versa. NRCC has an ongoing community engagement process to inform state agencies on what the local community prioritizes
- Xusana D.: Challenge with credibility due to working in a system that is built on an perpetuates harm to the community. Challenge when it comes to boxing government employees and community members separately, when State of Vermont employees are also Vermont community members
- Claire M.: Agrees with Jennifer’s challenge on translating language to communities, also sees the bias towards technical or quantitative data over qualitative or anecdotal data as a challenge
- Amy R.: Challenge with being a state employee in a moment where the state is being very cautious
- Rebecca W.: Currently representing ACCD in place of Grace V., challenge as the technical language that is used by government. Hard for community members to jump into work that is unclear and difficult to understand
- Bob D.: Would like to see the bureaucracy of government allow the collective “us” to move faster. Budget does not reflect priorities
- Abbey W.: Challenge with government culture, not easy to be transparent about how feedback from community is applied when it does not align with leadership or established policies
- Janet H.: Ensuring that regional planning efforts are a result of meaningful community engagement, making community engagement a focus of the program’s work
- Jenny R.: Re-examining the work under Act 250 as removing focus from quasi-judicial role and now focusing on broader engagement

- Richarda E.: Outreach Program Manager at the Department of Public Service. Challenge with personal values being in conflict with the engagement work that is needed to be done. Personal values include authenticity, connection, and creativity. This is a challenge in state government
- Dave P.: Echoes all of the things folks have already said. Particularly agrees with the overwhelm around delivering and collecting information. Takes time for new practices to meaningfully develop and take root in agency practices
- Marcella D.: Challenge around making sure that the agency of Transportation does a good job in revising their Community Engagement Plan
- Karla R.: Challenge with budget and timeline constraints that limit opportunities for meaningful engagement. Advisory Council may be the best suited body to communicate these limitations to the General Assembly
- Sarah M.: Thinking a lot about how we use the term community engagement interchangeably with meaningfully being in relationship with communities. Responsibility of state employees to build cultures internally
- Juliet B.: Need to haves (legal minimums) vs. Nice to haves (developing a culture where we are in relationship with communities). Agency staff wants those nice to haves, but it is hard to achieve the minimum need to haves
- Kim B.: EJ Coordinator role is very versatile in terms of both internal action taken and maintaining relationships with you all on the Advisory Council. There are two newly appointed AC members that could not be in attendance today: Sean Moran (Mobile Home Communities) and Matt Lawless (Municipal Government)
- Britaney W.: Challenge with burnout amongst communities when there are not coordinated efforts amongst multiple entities who are doing similar work. Increasing distrust in government

12:00 PM

Re-Orientation to the Community Engagement Plans

- Kim B.: We will review what is required for the Community Engagement Plans and review the Core Principles of Community Engagement (CPCE)
- Kim B.: Statutory requirements. Community Engagement Plans must:
 - Describe how each covered agency will engage EJFPs as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs
 - Describe how each covered agency will provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI

- Be informed by the CPCE
 - Be developed in consultation with the Advisory Council (AC)
 - Statutory deadline: July 1, 2027
 - EJFP will be discussed further in upcoming Joint Meeting
- Kim B.: Reviews AC role:
 - Advise state agencies in the development of the community engagement plans
 - AC members to provide advice and input on the CEPs in public meetings
 - AC members can participate in a CEP Working Group
 - AC members can't vote to approve or disapprove each agency's CEP
- Kim B.: Reviews IAC role:
 - Coordinate the development of the State agency community engagement plans
 - IAC members participate in public meeting working sessions
 - IAC members or covered agency staff can participate in a CEP Working Group
 - IAC members facilitate work internal to their agency
- Kim B.: Reviews what community engagement is
- Juliet B.: Reviews why community engagement is important for covered agencies to do -- Civil Rights requirements and Vermont Environmental Justice Law
- Juliet B.: Reviews what a Community Engagement Plan is not
- Juliet B.: Reviews CPCE with group

12:10 PM

IAC Meeting Highlights

- Juliet B.: Asking IAC members to share out on some of the things that were learned, some takeaways, some challenges, etc. That came up during the 11/06 public meeting of the IAC
- Dave P.: Resources came up last week, as well as the fear of developing plans that we cannot necessarily follow through on in full. Interested in discussing common content across each covered agencies' community engagement plans, knowing that this will support accessibility.
- Abbey W.: Acknowledging the limited experience, expertise, and capacity that state agencies have when it comes to conducting meaningful community engagement efforts. Acknowledging that this expertise often exists outside of the agencies and exploring with the AC how they can support the building of expertise

- Amy R.: IAC did start to brainstorm common components of the community engagement plan during the 11/06 meeting. Want to continue exploring the deeply relational element of community work
- Janet H.: Acknowledging that even when agencies provide all of the things that they should to make engagement physically accessible, it is still hard to temper agency communications to meet the communities where they are
- Claire M.: An idea has come up to have a small working group to work on this outside of public meeting, AC members would be welcome to join and greatly desired!
- Jennifer B.: Sharing the attorney general state guidance on environmental justice. Sharing a recently signed executive order which pertains to civil rights.
- Karla R.: ANR Office of the General Counsel has been identified to continue interpreting Act 154 and has been working closely with the attorney general. We can continue discussing this as a group during the 11/17 joint public meeting when our Associate General Counsel is present to provide legal advice
- Juliet B.: More information on executive session will be provided during the 11/17 meeting!

12:20 PM

Public Comment

- No comments

12:30 PM

Break

12:40 PM

Unstructured AC-Led Discussion

- Kim B.: Summarizes the purpose of this section of the agenda:
 - AC members will offer insights and pose questions in response to the IAC share-out
 - AC members will have what they need to contribute equitably to the following Working Session
- Trey M.: Noticing the incredible dedication to this work amongst the IAC, but also noticing that there are barriers to making meaningful engagement happen. Is this

correct? If there is a gap between what people want to do vs. What they are able to do within their bounds, what can the AC do to support?

- Elizabeth S.: AC could support with legislative advocacy
- Janet H.: LURB has their hands full up until the end of next year, at the very least. Serious capacity issues and no budget to do community engagement.
- Claire M.: Timelines and deadlines are out of our control, legislative reporting being one example. Tight deadlines detract from ability to focus efforts towards engagement
- Victor D.: How critical is the community engagement to which aspects of our deliverables? For the community engagement parts of the work, what does that actually end up looking like in implementation that makes it difficult?
- Abbey W.: Community engagement is added to the existing list of responsibilities for program staff. Regulatory requirements that have public participation as part of them have strict timelines that restrict opportunities for truly meaningful engagement. These are timelines that are set by statute and they are not flexible or inclusive of varied levels of capacity
- Karla R.: Compensation is also a big factor and limitation. In terms of Act 154, the covered agencies should be engaging members of communities through the AC. AC allows us to embed community into all implementation work under the Law
- Jennifer B.: Regardless of the lack of capacity or resources, this work is required by law. This is something covered agencies have to do, and it has to alter every agency employee and the way we do our work in the form of a systemic change
- Juliet B.: Definitely, we need to do this regardless of if there is funding. However, minimal compliance with the Law doesn't always lead to truly meaningful engagement outcomes.
- Mariana S.: There are people in all kinds of circumstances who come up with creative solutions to achieve their needs with or without the proper funding. We need creative solutions to the obstacles that have been posed.
- Kim B.: Let's take a pause since conversation is moving fast. IAC members please hold your comments until we've heard from all AC members.
- Victor D.: Have there been attempts to connect to point people from community groups? This could help make community engagement easier in terms of capacity and resources but also increase meaningful outcomes
- Claire M.: Having the capacity and time to develop community relationships is difficult, especially considering lack of pre-existing relationships. Definitely something to look to do in the future. The Climate Action Office has done a lot of good work on this.
- Elizabeth S.: PUC has previously reached out to Community Action agencies to develop a survey to get feedback from the clients they work with. They also held a virtual forum to hear directly from community members

1:15 PM

AC and IAC Working Session

- Kim B.: Moving into the working session and focusing on solution building
- Victor D.: Would it be helpful to create a modular checklist or outreach/community partnering tool kit?
- Karla R.: This was mentioned to some extent last week and is something we could include as a common component of the covered agency CEPs
- Sarah M.: Runs a Community Engagement Community of Practice internal to State of Vermont. Thinking about creating an internal engagement inventory. Could be related to some of the ideas that Jennifer Byrne is putting in the chat.
- Jennifer B.: Could be helpful to have a community engagement calendar that the AC can weigh in on in advance, as opposed to an inventory of past events.
- Karla R.: Thinking about next steps, AC legislative advocacy could be helpful
- Victor D.: Advocacy is really important, we need to figure out the best way to communicate with legislators
- Jennifer B.: Legislative advocacy would require more background research
- Claire M.: Having further conversation about how to coordinate consultation with the AC in the development of covered agency community engagement plans would be very helpful
- Abbey W.: Finding ways to give agencies opportunities to practice community engagement and brainstorming solutions of real examples, finding a way to apply and practice skills developed or required in the plans

1:50 PM

Debrief

- Victor D.: Victor and Jennifer would like to join the Community Engagement subgroup
- Jennifer B.: Could also be helpful to revisit the buddy system
- Kim B.: Last year, EJ Coordinators attempted to take on the majority of the responsibility for arranging the buddy system but it didn't gain a lot of traction. Would like to find ways to remove ourselves as the middle-man in the relationship between the IAC and the AC
- Jennifer B.: That makes sense. Can you share the resources that were previously produced on the buddy system?
- Karla R.: We can find those resources. This would be great as an AC-led initiative

- Sarah M.: Would be willing to give some capacity to the buddy system coordination to support the community engagement work
- Victor D.: AC could also use a complete contact list for all AC and IAC members

1:55 PM

Updates

- Kim B.: Community Engagement contractor Selection Committee is working to select a contract. For the GIS contractor, ANR is working with ADS to develop a contract to get Stone Environmental formally brought on.
- Kim B.: Next meeting, 11/17 update: Next meeting will discuss the Cumulative Environmental Burden Rulemaking deliverable under Act 154, and will also include an opportunity to enter into executive session to continue discussing the EJFP definition and legal implications surrounding it.
- Kim B.: We would like to schedule two more joint meetings in December. Meetings so far on December 3 from 2-5 and December 10 from 1-4. We need responses to the scheduling form to know availability for the public meetings and to anticipate if we will meet quorum.

2:00 PM Close Out