VT EJ JOINT Public Meeting-20260909_100745-Meeting Recording

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2h 52m 55s

Birch, Juliet started transcription

Birch, Juliet 0:08

All right.

All right, good morning. Welcome to a meeting of the Vermont Advisory Council and Interagency Committee. We're going to start today's meeting by doing just a quick round of introductions. So if we want to start with Advisory Council members and then the Interagency Committee,

And if there are any folks who are on neither body but would like to introduce themselves, they can go after. And we'll just do names and affiliation and then pass it on. So if someone from the advisory council would like to get us started.

Sears, Mariana 0:58

I can kick us off. Hello everybody, this is Mariana. I am an advisory council member and I represent communities that struggle with food security. So I'm the food security representative to the Environmental Justice Council. I'm trying to learn that name.

Trey Martin 1:08

Oh.

Hurley, Janet 1:18

It's.

Sears, Mariana 1:18

And I work for Hunger Free Vermont, and I'm happy to be here and get to move this work forward. Thank you.

Trey Martin 1:27

Hey, I'm Trey Martin on the Advisory Council from the Vermont Housing and

Conservation Board and representing people who are under-housed or homeless, as well as people who are seeking better connection to rural land and rural enterprise.

Vincent Pricer 1:52
Hi, my name is Victor Davila. I have got to change my name on screen, but I am the Clean Water Director and Vermont Organizer with Slingshot.

Birch, Juliet 2:12
And Jeffrey, since you're kind of the bridge between our two worlds, would you like to introduce yourself next? I think that that's all of our advisory council members for now.



Mbarushimana, Jeffrey 2:25
Yes, my name is Jeffrey. I work with the Office of Virtual Equity. I'm a policy and research analyst.

Hurley, Janet 2:45
Juliet.
Do you want to read off by covered agency and we can go that way? Or instead of...

Birch, Juliet 2:47
Yes.
Why don't we just try popcorning around? How's that sound?

Hurley, Janet 2:57
Okay, well, I'm Janet Hurley. I'm the chair of the Land Use Review Board, one of the covered agencies, and I'm here with Jenny. And Jenny, do you want to introduce yourself and then introduce our externs?

Ronis, Jenny 3:08
Enter.
Yeah, I'm Jenny Ronis. I'm general counsel for the Land Use Review Board, which, so you know, is the organization that administers Act 250. And I will pass it along to our extern Spencer.

Spencer Billings 3:27
Hi, I'm Spencer Billings. I'm A 3L at Vermont Law and I'm currently an extern for the Land Review Board.

Willard, Abbey 3:37
I'm happy to just jump in and go next. I'm Abby Willard from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets as our IAC representative from AG.
Happy to pass it to Amy.



Redman, Amy (She/Her) 3:53
Thanks, Abby. Good morning, everyone. Amy Redman. I do environmental justice and health equity work at the Department of Health. It's great to be with all of you. Stephanie, can I pass it to you?



Smith, Stephanie A 4:07
Absolutely. Good morning. Good to see everybody. I'm Stephanie Smith. I work at Vermont Emergency Management and I'm representing the Department of Public Safety at the covered agency. I'll pass it to, let's see, Elizabeth.

Schilling, Elizabeth 4:20
Good morning, Elizabeth Schilling, she, her, and I'm here on behalf of the Vermont Public Utility Commission, and I'll pop it over to Anne Margolst.

Margolis, Anne 4:31
Hi, I'm Anne Margolis. I am with the Department of Public Service. I'm sitting in today for Claire McElvaney and pass it over to Sarah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 4:44
Hi, all. I'm Sarah McElvenney, she, her pronouns. I work at the Agency of Ag with Abby, and I'm actually here today supporting the ANR team, so I'll just be taking minutes and listening.

Birch, Juliet 4:55
Yay, Sarah. Thank you.

McIlvennie, Sarah 4:58
And I will pass it to Dave.



Pelletier, Dave 5:02
Good morning, I'm Dave Pelletier with the Agency of Transportation and Paula or in the Planning and Development Review section as a representative of covered agency. And
Who do we have left? I see Grace. Grace, go ahead.

Vinson, Grace 5:20
Hi everyone, I'm Grace Benson. I'm the Environmental Officer and the interagency liaison for the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
Um, is there anyone left?

Birch, Juliet 5:35
If I'm keeping track correctly, yeah, we've got Josh.



Allen, Joshua 5:35
I can go.

Vinson, Grace 5:36
Oh, sorry. I didn't see you on the screen.



Allen, Joshua 5:40
Yeah, I'm Josh Allen. I represent the Agency of Education. I'm their digital communication specialist. So I run all things website, video, photos, all that stuff. And yeah, do we have anybody left?

Birch, Juliet 5:55
Carla, would you like to introduce yourself? I would love to introduce myself. Hello, folks. Thank you for being here. I am Carla Raimundi, she, her, and I work at the Agency of Natural Resources, and I am the representative for our agency to the interagency committee.
And I'm going to pass it on to Juliet. Good morning, guys. I'm Juliet Birch, she, her

pronouns. I'm an environmental justice coordinator at the Agency of Natural Resources. So I'll be facilitating our conversation today. I know we also have two folks from the Conservation Law Foundation who are on
You guys don't have to introduce yourselves if you don't want to. I know you're joining as members of the public, but you're welcome to if you'd like.

AR **Adam Reynolds** 6:42
Happy to introduce ourselves. My name is Adam Reynolds. I'm an associate attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation, joining just to follow along as a member of the public here, the important work you guys are doing. So thank you.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 6:56
Good to see you, Adam.
Awesome.

AC **Alejandra Carrillo** 7:02
Hello, so I'm Alejandra Carrillo. I'm also working at CLF and living in Vermont. So here is a member of the public and following along as well. Thanks.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 7:16
It's good to see you. Thanks for coming on. All right, let's get into it. Thanks, everyone, for doing those introductions. I think it's always helpful to get a refresh on who's here. I'll give one quick update, actually, before we jump into our community agreements and stuff, which is that our friend Matt Lawless, who was the representative
for municipal government, excuse me, municipal governments on the advisory council just submitted his resignation because he's going to be moving. So just letting you guys know we have that seat is now vacant in addition to the environmental justice focused population seat. So we have two vacancies on the advisory council.
So that's a quick update for you all.
Um...
All right, so we're going to start with our community agreements. We'll just take a minute or two for folks to read these quietly to themselves, and then it'd be really helpful to get a thumbs up for folks who agree. Specifically, if you can give a digital

thumb, like hit the react button, that's really helpful for me because I can't see all of you.
Right.
If someone who's in the virtual room wants to let me know if we've gotten like majority thumbs, that'd be really helpful.
I unfortunately do not have a high-tech setup today and can't see everybody.

HJ **Hurley, Janet** 9:09
I saw a lot of thumbs go up.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 9:12
Phenomenal. Thank you, Janet. All right.
Today's agenda is going to be broken into three parts, so let's walk through it really quickly. We're going to 1st do our welcome and approvals, which we are part of the way through. And then we will open up to a section of the agenda on the draft environmental justice complaint definition, which the
three members of the advisory council had drafted for us and the interagency committee has had some time to review. And I think this is just a great opportunity bringing the joint bodies together to have some discussion to understand the rationale and background behind that draft definition so that we can move forward with using
it or a future version of it in our work. Then we'll open up for public comment and then take a quick break.
Then we'll move on to another section of the discussion, which is kind of an evolution from the EJ complaint definition conversation, which is all about our centralized complaint intake system and the task group that we're putting together to support that work. This is going to be a great conversation where hopefully we'll be able to walk away with it.
understanding of who is interested and who has time and willingness to support that task group's work. Then we'll take another public comment and quick break, and we'll close out with a quick conversation about the community engagement plan deliverable and the technical assistance rollout that will go alongside.
that work. This is really exciting work that, you know, is going to be fast-paced. So looking forward to getting to some consensus on that timeline and, you know, sharing some information with you guys. And then we'll establish next steps and

close out.
So with that in mind, are folks comfortable with this agenda for today? If so, give me a digital thumb.
I'm assuming the hands might be folks hitting the wrong button, or if they are people meant to raise their hands, please let me know.

Hurley, Janet 11:34
I meant to raise my hand. I just need to leave at about 1245. And I am very interested in this last agenda item in particular and the timeline that we talk about. So

Birch, Juliet 11:41
Okay.

Hurley, Janet 11:53
Hopefully, others from my organization can fill me in on what I miss.

Birch, Juliet 12:00
Yeah, absolutely. And Janet, another thing to keep in mind is that we did send a PDF version of this timeline in our previous e-mail. So you should already have it. And this will just be an opportunity to talk about it in a little bit more depth. But we can always follow up with you if you need more information.
Thanks for letting us know.
Right, and then Trey and Dave.

Trey Martin 12:26
Yeah, Julia, I told you this yesterday, but just for the group, I also have to step out. I will come back, but I have to step out of the meeting at 1215 for 15 or 20 minutes.

Birch, Juliet 12:36
Okay. Thanks, Trey.



Pelletier, Dave 12:40
And I just wanted to let people know that my colleague, Marcella Dent, who's been involved in the community engagement plan conversations will be joining later in the agenda, just to hear a conversation around that particular agenda item. Thank you.

Birch, Juliet 12:57

Nice. Thanks, Dave. So as Carla just mentioned, we would take a moment here to approve the June 10th, 2026 meeting minutes, but we don't have quorum for the advisory council at the moment. We have 4 advisory council members on the call and we need 6 to approve the meeting minutes. So

If we do get quorum at some point during this meeting, we'll go back and approve the minutes, but we'll just skip over that for right now.

All right.

So some quick goals for today, bearing in mind the three distinct conversations we're going to be having in this agenda. You know, getting some clarity on the environmental justice complaint definition and what we can do with that definition, both to finalize it as well as

you know, start implementing the definition. Begin advancing the development of this central environmental justice complaint intake system, and hopefully finalize membership for this central intake system task group, which we'll talk a little bit more about. And then finally walk away with an understanding of the community engagement plan technical assistance timeline.

All right, so let's get into some conversation. The environmental justice complaint definition, for a little bit of background, Matt Lawless, Mariana Sears, and Rich Holshoe from the Advisory Council got together back in, I believe, May of this year to draft an environmental justice complaint definition

that was submitted to the interagency committee back in May. This is something that I'm actually going to drop in the chat. I meant to do it earlier, so I'll do that now.

But we wanted to have a conversation about this complaint definition today because the interagency committee over the last couple of months has had a lot of time to review that definition and come to understand it. And now that we have both of the groups together,

This is an opportunity for you guys to collectively, you know, the interagency committee can ask questions about the rationale behind this definition to learn more and understand what the vision is. And then the advisory council can also ask questions about what implementation of this definition could look like.

So this is really just an opportunity to have collaborative conversation to understand this element of our work. I just dropped in the chat some links that will be helpful for today's meeting. So the first link is the one that we're referring to. Well, the first two

links are the ones that we're referring to right now.
As a quick summary, just for folks who are not familiar, if you've been in the last couple of meetings, you've probably seen these slides before, but I'll just quickly give you a refresh.
As you know, every year the interagency committee or the covered agencies have to submit an annual civil rights and environmental justice complaint report. And that's what this environmental justice complaint definition is pertaining to. So the main question that we get a lot is like, how are civil rights and environmental justice complaints
fundamentally different? And the answer is that civil rights complaints are something that is regulated by the federal government. The federal government provides this very clear legal framework and has very clear requirements for management and resolution of civil rights complaints, like complaints related to Title VI.
or the Americans with Disabilities Act. And because there is this clear federal framework, there's the elements for compliance, what the agencies have to do in order to comply with these laws are clearly outlined. On the flip side, there is no federal legal framework around environmental justice. And so this is something that we get to create ourselves, which is really exciting. And so the framework around how to manage, resolve, and even triage environmental justice complaints still requires development. And
you know, we should also work to come up with elements for compliance as well.
So back in 2024, the Advisory Council had submitted some recommendations to create for the covered agencies to create a central environmental justice complaint intake system. And so this was intended to have things like
you know, a single point of contact for intake and coordination of complaints, you know, some sort of accessible referral and tracking process, shared standards for complaint review, response, coordination, and resolution, as well as a centralized system for record keeping,
analysis and reporting. And so the intention behind this was really to make the experience for the public easier, more seamless, less confusing when it comes to submitting an environmental justice complaint. In response to this, to these recommendations, the interagency committee came up with the idea of developing this system through
possibly a task group through some work plan. But the main question that kept coming up is, this is all great, but what exactly is an environmental justice complaint?

That's not a question that isn't really answered by any sort of pre-existing legal framework. And so in 2026, earlier this year, the Advisory Council
a couple of advisory council members drafted a definition to help us move this work along. So according to this draft definition, an EJ complaint alleges a disregard or neglect to any of the principles of environmental justice. And when you think about standing, people or communities that can file a complaint include people who have allegedly experienced things
like obstruction to fair access to environmental benefits, disproportionate exposure to environmental burdens, or a lack of meaningful participation, information, services, or protections related to the EJ law. This slide is really just a summary of that definition.
But I'll also put on the slide here the full definition as drafted by those three advisory council members.
with the intention that you guys have an opportunity to read it, reflect, and then we'll open up for some discussion. So I'll leave this on the screen here for a minute or two. And if folks could just give me a quick thumbs up when they're ready to open up for discussion.
Um...
We will, we will do that.
Okay.
In just a second, I'm going to move to our discussion slide.
Speak now or forever hold your peace if you need just a minute or two to keep reading.
All right.
So this next section, now that we've gotten that quick little recap or review, is really intended to be group driven discussion. So as I said before, through past meetings with the interagency committee, it's become clear that
It would be really helpful for the IAC to ask questions directly of the advisory council to understand a little bit more of the rationale and vision for this definition. And for the advisory council, maybe to take this as an opportunity to help.
the IAC understand what we can do to implement the vision behind this EJ complaint definition. So I want to open it up. I'll stop talking. This is really a you-driven conversation. So I'll be here, but I won't participate. So I'll turn it over to any IAC or AC members who would like to start us off.

Vincent Pricer 22:50

Um...

So when it comes to the implementation of these complaints, is there an idea of which agency would handle that? Is that agency by agency? Does the dot handle specific complaints that are around the dot? Or does that go back to the AG? And all agencies have been reporting to the AG to then

look at specific cases that are being brought up.

Schilling, Elizabeth 23:23

I can take a stab at this. Right now, it's all done agency by agency. We each look into our own, or we each look into complaints that we each receive.

Vincent Pricer 23:41

But that would that would be like a preliminary understanding and an investigation, right? But the actual implementation of any potential legal...

response, that would still be from the agencies individually, either through, would that be through lawsuit or like what's the actual

Like at the end of a complaint, if it's found legitimate and then push forward, what does that end set look like?

Schilling, Elizabeth 24:13

I would say there's no clear process currently set out in the EJ law. And so part of this process is further determining appropriate processes that each agency should undertake.

Birch, Juliet 24:17

Secret.

Maybe what I can just share as a quick piece of context in terms of where we are in this process is that the, we'll talk about a little bit more about this after this discussion, but the interagency committee is right now seeking to create a task group to start putting together a central intake system. None of this work has been done yet.

but we're preparing to do it. And so the purpose of this discussion is to understand the foundations, which is like, what even is an EJ complaint? And what is our vision

for how we want to implement an EJ complaint system according to that complaint definition, if that makes sense. So none of this has ever been done before at the state of Vermont. And so we're just starting it square.
zero. Mariana.

Sears, Mariana 25:25
Thanks, Julia.
I was one of the three advisory council members that were together when we drafted that definition and two of us have been, two of those members have been together since the beginning of this process and at the beginning of the advisory council.
What I think what the rationale behind our drafting of that definition and now my personal...
Recommendation feeling idea behind this is that.
that this process becomes something that is friendly to people. So I have no idea how to submit a complaint to a government agency, for instance. Like, I'm a person that...
Come from another country, did not experience interaction with the government growing up, and...
And I'm assuming that other people that have...
A background that is not.
related to government or that has now grown up with that, not entitlement, but with that knowledge that the government is an institution that is there for you. If you don't have that idea, you may not know anything of.
how to approach and submit a complaint. It's almost like you don't know that you have that right, that benefit. So I'm just thinking that whatever it is that we come up with together, that we create, is something that folks like me and like so many others that have no idea about this,
can say, oh, wow, I really can go talk to someone about that dump that is in the corner of my street, or the fact that my whole apartment doesn't even have a good system for heating, and I am here with my kids call, or the fact that I live in a town that the only supermarket is a Dollar General Store.
That sort of thinking is happening in so many community members, and I am concerned that they have no idea that they can do something about it. And if they have some idea, what is a friendly way for them to do that? To say, hey, I need help. I need to.

I need this to change, so...
And one of the council's members, who is not here today, was also very concerned about the fact that the...
The natural world or the environment or Mother Nature or Mother Earth, however you think of it, was not represented either as a...
entity that also can need protection. And that was also, we tried to make sure that that was included in the definition. And that's why we refer to the principles of environmental justice to make sure that folks can also
submit a complaint when they see that that is.
being, I would say,
a burden to the natural resources, to Mother Earth, to your environment. So yeah, that was the thinking behind putting together this definition. And I've seen the process that has been created in order to move this forward. So I think that
That's a great start to have different faces and investigate what other states are doing in terms of environmental justice complaints and to see how we can use all the information that is out there to create something that is even more friendlier, more

Birch, Juliet 29:23
Mhm.

Sears, Mariana 29:43
User, yeah, user-friendly and community-oriented.



Redman, Amy (She/Her) 30:02
Thank you for that, Mariana. A system that is friendly to people, I just want to like write that down and keep it central as we're working on this. Juliet, before my comments, did you want to say, did you want to chime in first?

Birch, Juliet 30:18
No, my hand is raised for Carla. So you go first, Amy.
Yeah.



Redman, Amy (She/Her) 30:21
Okay, 22 reflections. One is just on the, I think you said it, I think it's been said already, but the AC's recommendation to create one, like a friendly one door place

for people to go to when they have an environmental justice complaint. And so creating that system
for folks is top of mind. And then the other, I was just going to say related to the definition, I wanted to just express gratitude first to our AC members for drafting this and giving everyone something to respond to. And Mariana, this piece around like indigenous wisdom and this reciprocity and the earth piece does resonate, does resonate with me. So I'm less about like the wordsmithing, but just in terms of the pieces that are in the definition, it does resonate. So that's all I wanted to say at this point.
Thank you.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 31:36
Okay, thank you so much, folks. I would like to start with saying something that Victor included in his question. And so what I would like to do is to offer
that we are having several conversations.
simultaneously, which are all related. But what we have before us is an opportunity to answer or explore several elements of factors that would ultimately
finalized in a comprehensive environmental justice complaint program, right, for the agencies and internal to each agency. So as part of that conversation, there's the definition.
that the advisory council offered for what these three members consider important to be incorporated into an environmental justice complaint.
Then we have the central intake system and the triaging and the values in that definition and the elements identify will help inform that intake system, the accessibility component that you mentioned, Mariana.
the friendliness of the system, and then what's going to happen, Victor, with the complaints that are received. And then that's going to be, I offered part of discussion of the creation of the central ethic system.
And then as part of that system, there will be like a triaging process or an evaluation of the complaints that come in centrally. And then the question is,
If there's a complaint that pertains one agency or two agencies, then there will be like a referral process where those complaints would be transferred to the agency that is named or that are named.
And then as part of this whole system, right, then the agencies internally to their operations would then consider how to manage and respond to those complaints.

And so that's work that should occur internal to the agency.
So what kind of criteria will be utilized to evaluate those complaints? What kind of response system, case management, that will all be determined, I expect, by already pre-existing systems that agencies may have to respond to, for example, civil rights complaints or other complaints that they may receive based on their programs. And also would keep in mind some of the values and the
the considerations that seem very important for the Advisory Council, like accessibility, transparency, clarity, and then ultimately that would finalize or culminate in a resolution of
that particular environmental justice complaint.
So this is the way that I, you know, see the several conversations that we're having, right? Like Victor's question has to do with how will a complaint be managed? And the answer which Elizabeth offered is status quo is internally to each agency.
And I expect that that will remain the case if we take, for example, other spaces like civil rights, the agencies retain the ability to investigate, you know, manage the case, engage with the complainants themselves. So that is something that could remain with the agencies. And then there are also other considerations like
the creation of this intake system that the Advisory Council asked us to stand up so that we are creating efficiencies, uniformity across the board, and members of the public are very clear with regards to, hey, these are the things that agencies are taking into consideration when it pertains to.
environmental justice or environmental injustices.
Thank you, Carla.
Trey, I see your hand is up.
Trey, you're muted.
Sorry.

TM **Trey Martin** 37:06
I took my hand down, but it was a two-button extravaganza, which is just too much.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 37:13
Yeah.

TM **Trey Martin** 37:14
I was going to ask if anybody wanted to respond to Carla because I had my hand up

as she was sort of starting there. I had a thought, but that was a really thorough overview and response. And I want to make some space in case anybody wants to respond or further anything that she had because I have a slightly different question that I wanted to put out there.
But if not, then here's here's a here's a question that I wanted to talk about, which is in the.
One of the sections in the work that's been completed talks about investigation follow-up and resolution, and it sort of sets up a pathway once a complaint has been filed to pursue resolution. That's an area where I'm particularly interested in, like how we would help the covered agencies to like
Like how do you do that in an effective way that is responsive to people and holds that center what Amy, you were just recognizing and being appreciative, you know, of like the principles here are principles of justice that each of us feels really deeply and not helping people to move things to
resolution and conclusion is not environmental justice either. So we have to make sure that agencies have the ability to hear and respond to things that come up and also to resolve when there's a disagreement that's like, you know, is an agency's made a decision and people disagree with it.
And there's been, it's been addressed, but we need to move on. And so that, because it's also not environmental justice for agencies to have, you know, have processes like this cause them to stop work, you know, unless the work really needs to be stopped in which that needs to be the focus of the complaint. But if it's,
something that's going to cause the agencies not to be able to continue to do work that provides services because of an ongoing dispute. How do we identify those situations? And I've seen some, I've seen it work really effectively both ways, how complaints can be brought forward and they can be addressed and it can be part of an agency's ongoing work.
And I've seen public disputes with agencies where it's really, there's no resolution and therefore it continues to cause inefficiencies that are harmful to the agency and the public. So that's just something that I've been thinking a lot about in conjunction with this work is
how to support remedies that are meaningful, that move us forward.
An agency staff need to feel it like.
Feel like they have the power to do that too, because having having the having an inability to process and work with leadership to address things like this is is is really

demoralizing for public employees, too. Anyway, I'm gonna I'm gonna...
Check right there, other hands up.
No, I'll officially mute it too.

Birch, Juliet 40:41
Victor, if you want to jump in.

Vincent Pricer 40:44
Yeah, so a couple of things upon reading it for the draft more thoroughly. I am wondering if, one, it would be important when talking about the sacredness of things to say the sacredness of the state of Vermont and Mother Earth.
primarily to help narrow in, I would worry about complaints potentially spiraling out to things agencies can't handle if it's not focused in enough to locality as part of its sacred definition, because I'd like the state of Vermont can't do anything about the Amazon right now.
And I not to say that like they aren't, that's going to be a regular issue, but I would hate for that to become a larger sprawling perspective because the definition there was taken so incredibly broadly without reference to locality. The other thing is that I want, so flexibility is mentioned at the bottom of this with the law to remain
of good use, I think is the intent there. But I also have seen that flexibility can be a double-edged sword that can potentially weaken pieces of law and legislation. And I am wondering if there is worth in looking at this and trying to co-partmentalize which pots must remain rigid for the skeleton to remain true.
And then, which parts can be flexible for adaptation and module and module and module, you know the word.

Birch, Juliet 42:10
Yes.

Vincent Pricer 42:16
So I could take a beat there for responses to that before going into a next second question.
Yeah, there's no responses, but I can I can jump into the to the other comment I want to make.
Okay. When it comes to the single friendly point of entrance or community members

when it comes to environmental complaints, I think I like that a lot. I think a part of that that is going to be important is a thing that I remember we talked about a while ago, this idea of power mapping and how power mapping communities is a terrible idea.
But that's a terrible idea. But you don't want to power map communities because that could potentially be information that is misused if there are ever bad actors in place in a situation. Or that acts as, even if it's not within government, it could be within a private company that is now able to access public information about communities that have empowerment.
Not a good idea. But power mapping and agency, I think is a little better. I think that if we're going to have a single point in which people can access.
Understanding how they file a complaint, but not only that, but how they follow up and which agencies are relevant and who within those agencies are relevant. Having an info map that is that is helping people understand who they have to talk to to help. Like there's a yeah, because even with existing environmental laws like Act 250 or Act
I think it's like 151, which is the PFAS products update that happened to remove more PFAS in public market. There have been some situations where I have encountered community members who were unsure as to which agencies were supposed to actually have the authority to implement which.
things. And to the point where I had at least one person contact the AG about Act 151 and the AG was like, that's up to this department. And it's like, well, the law says it's you, so which is it? And being able to map that out for people would help make sure that those kinds of interactions which are
technically a waste of time for agencies, right? Like to have, like both for the person having to bounce around and for the agencies having to shuffle people like it's a call line, right? That's not helpful for anyone. Being able to map that out up front is going to help save time for everyone across the board.
and make these laws a lot more implementable because it means you have more eyes on the ground, which means ideally investigations go more smoothly because no one is bringing the information to the wrong people.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 45:11
Victor, thank you so much for those comments. I want people to have an opportunity to respond. I was also wondering if you could really quick just define or explain

power mapping for folks who might not know, just to help contextualize some of what you shared.

Vincent Pricer 45:28
Yeah, I think in my profession, power mapping is usually where someone is authority-wise. Do they exist on an executive position? Do we exist as a part of a council that has to make decisions? Power mapping is also about relevance to a particular point of issue, how much say someone has over a specific point, and being able to map them along chains of command.
while also mapping. This would not be the case for this, but it also can include levels of favorability. So if I am power mapping to figure out who within what is going to be able to be useful to us, I need to understand that they are a neutral, antagonistic or cooperative.
person in the space, and then also map them along degrees of their capacity to work with us. I think that would be less necessary here, but it would potentially be degrees of ease of access. It is easier to access a select board than it is to access the AG. The AG might require a petition to get access to them.
And being able to map that out means that individuals don't have to hit a wall within government because they don't understand what they're doing. And that also strains the relationship between the community members and government, because it is kind of a form of passive miscommunication.

Birch, Juliet 46:58
Thanks for that, Victor. Jennifer?

Byrne, Jennifer 47:05
Hi. Well, I don't want to, I don't have to jump ahead, but my comments are related. I think it's really helpful what Victor shared. And it made me think through some things as well. But in terms of what, you know, the law,
asks, right, the agencies to submit these reports on civil rights and environmental justice complaints. What we're doing as a council is sort of agreeing to a new process because an environmental justice complaint system doesn't exist.
And what we can't do is create some kind of new enforcement mechanism, right? And some kind of new structure where a community member could be like, well, I filed an environmental justice complaint, so I know I'm going to get some type of

response from this agency that I filed with.
We don't we don't want to cross over into that territory. But I think what I'm hearing or what I'm like seeing described in a way as some type of 1 system, because as we all know, it's not in a silo, nothing in environmental justice and these solutions. The great thing is that
we're here as a group. So if there is some type of system where it could be assessed, I think the idea of doing some kind of internal power structure to sort of how could, how can these complaints that may not, that may, you know, cross boundaries be handled by.
the agencies. So yeah, so I'm really in favor of that, kind of where that's heading, if that's where we're heading. And yeah, not having like expectations, just having expectations to be very clear about what can.
what can happen by filing a complaint. It's really not, it's not like a legal action. And having it be really accessible to folks.
And just one thing on the power mapping, you know, that phrase is, it's a tool for communities and definitely wouldn't be something that like the, I think the government would do backwards, but having like that forethought and it goes into the community engagement planning stuff too, where it's like,
you know, we know websites are only accessible by a certain sect of people, you know, so how else, when else, where else are we, you know, doing that extra oomph, putting resources out in a different way. So yeah, I think this is all really good, but just want to put that out there.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 49:56
Thanks for sharing that, Jennifer. Oh, Mariana, you go first.

SM **Sears, Mariana** 50:04
No, it's okay. You can go first, Juliet. I can go second.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 50:07
No, I was going to pivot us, but I want Mariana and Trey, you guys go first and then I'll pivot us.

SM **Sears, Mariana** 50:14
Okay, no, I just wanted to highlight and emphasize all what Victor and Jennifer

shared and also Trey and also circle back to what Janet put in the chat. I think we have a tremendous opportunity
to link these with the community engagement process. So if we think about relationships,
You tell someone in your relationships that something is not working once you engage with them, and once you have that, build trust. So I feel like there should be a strong relationship between this process and the community engagement plans. And that will make things easier for folks and will empower them to understand and actually be able to speak up when they need to submit a complaint.
So I feel like, which is also what I think Carla said at the beginning, there's all these conversations happening at the same time and we should make sure that we are connecting them all.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 51:51
Absolutely, Trey.

TM **Trey Martin** 51:53
Thanks, Mariana. And thanks, Jennifer. That was more of what I really appreciated your questions and your thoughts there, because that's, again, sort of what I was wondering is, is do we, what are the multiple ways that responses could happen in agencies that are supported and get?
create the kind of action that complaints are seeking. And so one is like, there's the Section 1983 process and the civil rights complaints. That has a clear process. We don't have a new, a full apparatus for environmental justice complaints and response. But then there are other places within agencies that complaint complainants could be directed as well. Other processes that are already established that allow that have ways for people to allege complaints and agency processes or decision making. And I wonder if that's also could be kind of like
if it could be the responsibility of the agencies to help people. Like if, you know, I remember talking with somebody in Bennington when there was a, there was an agency permit that was affecting, you know, an area that there was sort of an environmental justice concern about. And people didn't, there wasn't a complaint process, there wasn't a mechanism to do that.
but people could have been helped to understand how they could participate in the decision making that already was happening, which had had apparatus built into it.

The existence of the Environmental Justice Program contemplates that that can be insufficient and that more may be necessary, but also to, because
agencies, as Victor pointed out, can be very confusing to connect to. Understanding and being able to be directed within existing mechanisms seems also like part of what we could do that would help move issues to resolution for people.
Anyway, that's just thank you, Jennifer, for that and Mariana. I just wanted to kind of pull that thought together.
I'll check there.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 54:03
Thanks, guys, for this conversation. I think it was much needed and really helpful. We have about 5 minutes before we're going to take our first public comment and break. And I know I personally could really use a break. I've had too much water today. So if there's even a such thing,
But I wanted to ask before we close out this section of our agenda, you know, Victor had posed a question or a series of questions earlier that kind of implied that, you know, there could be some room for tweaking or refining of the current EJ complaint definition before it is.
Yay, drinking more water. Thank you, Jennifer, for the encouragement. So final refining or tweaking of the EJ complaint definition before it's approved and adopted by the advisory council. So I wanted to just get a feel for each of the, from each of the advisory council members who are present here. There's six of you now. We have quorum.
Do you guys want to pursue making revisions to the EJ complaint definition? And then maybe our next meeting, we can review the final refined one and perhaps vote if we have quorum. Like what do you guys see as the next steps to getting us to a place where the...
Complaint definition is final and approved.

VP **Vincent Pricer** 55:35
I don't think it would take more than one. Oh, sorry, I should raise my hand, Jennifer, please.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 55:41
Please go ahead.

Vincent Pricer 55:44
I was going to say, I don't think it would take more than one session to do it. I think the definition is pretty good right now. I think it just, the tweaks that I would want to make to it are literally just to help make sure that it's the form follows the spirit, so to speak.

Birch, Juliet 56:01
waterproofing, if you will.
Yeah, Jennifer.

Byrne, Jennifer 56:06
Yeah, I wonder if the definition in a way could link
more directly back to the definition of environmental justice in the law. There might be some way to add, even if it's like adding a clause, like an extra sentence. And then kind of a bigger question, which is sort of happening in the chat in terms of like the Definitions one thing, but this process that we're kind of building out, could that be built out a little bit more and developed into, you know, another version of the guidance based on what we agree on, it seems, between the council and the committee?
Like how to, what do you do with the definition once you make it? We could probably do that in the same time period as what I would hope is like, if we're taking the month or, you know, until we meet again to stamp approval.

Birch, Juliet 56:53
Thank you.
Yeah.
Yeah, thank you for that. And Elizabeth?

Schilling, Elizabeth 57:13
Yeah, you know, there hasn't been a whole lot of back and forth today, specifically about the definition, the current definition. And I was just wondering, you know, would the AC like a little bit more back and forth or feedback from the IAC today, or should we wait until the whole AC has signed off?

Birch, Juliet 57:18
Mmh.
Mhm.

Schilling, Elizabeth 57:32
on a proposed definition. I just want to be, you know, support your work in the best way possible.

Birch, Juliet 57:42
It sounds like from what Jennifer and Victor said, there might be some work that happens between now and our next meeting to do some of that refining. And maybe, I don't want to speak for the AC, I'm curious what you guys think, but maybe it would be helpful to get some specific IAC feedback to inform that.

Schilling, Elizabeth 58:02
I mean, I'm happy to like just provide a couple of quick things that I reacted to when I was reading the definition. I definitely appreciated the second paragraph because I felt like that clearly ties back to the current definition of environmental justice and from like a state agency implementation perspective.
that felt like a good grounding for that part of the definition. So I like that. I guess a concern I had with the first part of the definition, the first paragraph, I'm thinking about state agency staff needing to implement that. So like it refers to, you know, disregard or neglect any of the principles of environmental justice. And while this group might understand what that means, you know, the principles of environmental justice, I don't think is defined, is actually defined in the EJ law itself. And so, you know, either that needs to be more clearly explained in this definition or it needs to clearly cross-reference
some document that talks about what the principles of environmental justice are. So just being sure that, you know, all the terms used in the definition could be clearly understood by state agency staff that might have to implement this. And then, oh, and then also the concept of

Birch, Juliet 59:08
Mhm.

Schilling, Elizabeth 59:25

What distinguishes an environmental justice complaint from just any general complaint about an environmental issue? Because I want to be, or I think we need to figure out what makes an EJ complaint versus just, you know, a run-of-the-mill complaint that an agency might receive.

Um...

Yeah, I guess those were the top things that I had when I was reading the definition.

Birch, Juliet 59:53

That's extremely helpful. It sounds like those are good jumping off points to help. clarify some parts of the EJ definition. If you guys are okay, I would love to take a breather where we open up for public comment and then take like a 5 minute break. How does that sound?

Awesome. I know we have some folks who are on the call who are attending as members of the public. If any of you would like to share any thoughts related to the conversation that was just had or really anything, please feel free.

Hey, Jean.

Jean Hamilton 1:00:36

Hi everyone. My name is Jean Hamilton. I'm one of the co-directors of the Land Access and Opportunity Board and really great to jump into your meeting for a little bit. Thank you for offering this time for public comment. I am interested in Generally trying to follow what's happening with the community engagement planning for all of your agencies, covered agencies, and really recognizing what a giant body of work that is and what a very, very important, potentially transformative body of work it is. And from the perspective of the LAOB and just as a citizen of Vermont, I'm

I'm really interested in how we can support this work. You know, what kinds of resources would help your both of your committees really and all of the agencies lean in and make these community engagement plans as operational, functional, and really impactful as possible.

Again, I'm just going to say I know how under-resourced all of our work often is and acknowledge that you all have done so much with, you know, with very tight resourcing and that that's not a good recipe for creating, you know, for this body of

work you have coming up.
So.
Really just voicing my support for you all and an active question of how can LAOB wrap around and support agencies and community engagement planning? What kind of, you know, movement support would be helpful? And just underscoring and appreciating all of that conversation before about
the complaint system and really using the best practices of community engagement in whatever that complaint system is. It also occurred to me listening to you all that.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:02:33
Mm-hmm.

JH **Jean Hamilton** 1:02:37
You know, we have, and perhaps you've consulted all of these, but I guess just from the work that we do here at the LAOB, we see the bodies we have of the, you know, housing violation complaint system, civil rights complaints in other entities, the Human Rights Commission, and then, of course, just
the changing federal environment on how civil rights and justice is protected within government bodies. And just really seeing like how, what an incredible barrier.
I guess just feeling like, oh, what's the point of sending up a complaint system if it's not going to function? And there are so many complaints, civil rights complaint systems right now that are just really dysfunctional, like intentionally, bureaucratically, and administratively undermined.
And how can we not do that again with this very important law that you all have been working on? So thank you for taking my comment, and I would really love to find ways that we can support your work.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 1:03:58
Thank you so much, Jean. I am the environmental justice coordinator. That's the point of contact for our community engagement plan work. So maybe a good first step would be I follow up with you and then we figure out how to get you kind of engaged with the IAC and the covered agencies directly with this work. Thank you so much for
Offering LEOB support is awesome.
Any other public comments?

Adam Reynolds 1:04:28
Not for me here. Thank you.

Birch, Juliet 1:04:31
Awesome.
All right, team, let's take a 5 minute break and we'll be back at, let's say, 1118.
Thank you.
Hey, guys.
Welcome back.
Welcome back, folks. If you're back and just not in a place to put your camera on, just let me know so that I, yeah, thumbs up is good. Thanks, Jennifer. That's just helpful to know. I don't want to get started before people have come back to their computers.
Oh, Mariana, I have to fold laundry too. When I get home, I don't want to do it. You're a better person than I am to have the patience to do that right now.
Yeah.
All right, folks, if you're back, please just either turn your camera on, give a thumbs up, or leave a message in the chat, just so I know. I don't want to get started until folks are back to their computers.
Folks.
Awesome.
All right, so before we...
get into the next section of our agenda. I do want to acknowledge we have quorum from both the interagency committee and the advisory council right now. And so I would love to do a little bit of the housekeeping business really quick before we get into anything else.
So I'm going to drop in the chat our June 2026 joint meeting minutes. And if folks would like to just peruse it really quick and...
Let me know. We'll give it about a minute. If folks want to just let me know if we're ready to approve it.
All right. If you're here as the representative of your seat, either on the interagency committee or the advisory council, and you would like to vote to approve these joint meeting minutes, please raise your virtual hand.
And please leave them raised while I do some counting.

Alright.
Jeffrey, how are you feeling about approving these meeting minutes?
I'm only asking you just because you're kind of our bridge to quorum for the Advisory Council today.
All right. Maybe we can give it a minute. Give it a minute or two. Jeffrey, if you are on the call, just let me know if you're open to approving these joint meeting minutes that are in the chat. I'm only calling you out specifically just because you are.
Our bridge to quorum for the Advisory Council today.
Yeah, I'll.
With regard to your point, Victor, I will, I can send a message.
Um...
Okay, perfect. And just letting you guys know, advisory council members, preemptively, I'm also going to put in the chat our meeting minutes for the advisory council meetings over the last couple of months, because since we do have quorum, at least on this call,
It would be great to approve these minutes as well, but we'll just give it a minute if you guys want to take a look at those links as well. Feel free to lower your hands, folks.
I, I've done the counting.
All right, just so that I can get a feel for where we're at with approving the advisory council meeting minutes, if folks want to raise their hands, let's just say raise your hands to approve all of the meeting minutes. And if you have any particular concerns, please unmute if you would like to.
talk about anyone in specific or have any concerns. Advisory Council members only, please.
Perfect.
Brittany, are you comfortable with approving these meeting minutes or have any?
Concerns or questions you'd like to voice?
Perfect. Thank you.
Let's say if we hear back from Jeffrey at some point in the call, we can mark those minutes as approved. For now, we can just move on to our next section of the agenda. Feel free to lower your hands, folks. Thank you very much.
I hope everyone had a good break and thank you all for humoring me through this housekeeping. I know that it's not always the most thrilling part of the meeting. The next section of our agenda today is about the central intake system work plan.

Oh, Janet, what's your dog's name?
He.

Hurley, Janet 1:19:01
Sorry, Una, she's getting a little rambunctious, so I thought I'd pick her up. Una meaning, or short for Una Ona, which is spotted in Swahili.
Because she's got great spots.

Birch, Juliet 1:19:18
She's really cute.
So earlier today through our conversation about the EJ complaint definition, we did already start talking about this complaint, the central intake system for our EJ complaints. And so I feel like we've already done a lot of the pre-work to get us ready for this part of the conversation.
which is awesome.
I want to just provide a quick overview because the interagency committee, as part of the work plan that they submitted, which is linked in the chat in the very first set of links that I sent you all, this work plan to create a central intake system for environmental justice complaints includes the creation
of a task group. And so some of you are probably familiar with the slides I'm about to show you, but I'll do a quick review to just talk about the task group, its scope, the potential roles and responsibilities, and the pacing of this work, just so you guys understand. And then, you know, I would love for there to be an opportunity for the advisory council to
ask questions of the interagency committee to understand this scope and timeline. Mariana, specifically, I know you had shot me an e-mail to ask if we could have this conversation. So I hope that this is helpful to you. And then we'll close out this section of the agenda, hopefully with a strong understanding of
what the intake system entails, and if there's any interest amongst the AC and IAC to participate in a task group.
So what is the point of this central intake system task group? Basically, this task group would lead the creation of this transparent, equitable, accessible, one-stop shop central intake system that we've been talking about all this time. Specifically, the purpose of this task group is to
kind of meet the Advisory Council's 2024 recommendations that we've talked about,

really incorporate the Advisory Council's draft or definition of an environmental justice complaint once that definition is final and approved. And then we'll do our best to follow the IAC's central intake system work plan, recognizing
that the dates that are in that work plan do need to change because we are not currently up to speed with those particular dates. But in terms of the phasing, the work plan is still, you know, the intended vision.
Speaking of the phasing of this work plan, here it is. So the work plan that was submitted to the advisory council back in May of this year by the interagency committee, or no, maybe it was May or August of last year. I'm losing track of time. It's like it's a seven-phase work plan, which starts first and foremost with a core team development, which we're currently in the process of doing. This is all about creating a task group of folks who are interested and have some dedicated capacity that they're willing to put towards.
this intake system process. Next, we have conducting some sort of comparative analysis of existing EJ intake models. You know, this maybe has never been done before in the state of Vermont, but it doesn't mean it's never been done before, period. So I think there's a lot to learn from pre-existing
models that we could steal from, perhaps. Then we go into an internal agency evaluation where we understand what is it that agencies already do when it comes to intaking, triaging, and responding to complaints of any kind, not just ones that might fit under our definition of environmental justice, just to give an idea of what systems already exist.
Then we'll move into some synthesis and advisory council engagement to help prep for the creation of this tool. Fiscal planning and resource assessment is going to be really key. As Jean had mentioned in her public comment, you know, there are some constraints and limitations around resources.
And so to the extent that we can plan in advance to fund this work, that would be extremely helpful. And then finally, we get into system design and capacity assessment, and then finally, milestone reporting and next steps. So if you want more information about the details of each of these phases, please take a look at the work plan that's linked.
in the chat. Excuse me.
I stopped drinking water so that I wouldn't have to run to the bathroom again, but now I'm starting to lose my voice. So it's the pros and cons of it all. So when we think about the task group itself, we've mentioned this before to you folks, but we're really

thinking about this being like,
two teams or one big team with different types of membership. So there would be in theory, a core team that is people who are kind of central to the process throughout each of the phases, as well as a revolving team. So people who are brought in maybe one or two phases at a time,
based off of particular interest or expertise or particular capacity that they have to offer at any given point in our timeline. This core team would ideally include two IAC members, two AC members, probably one person from our unit just to help coordinate and facilitate this work.
and then some program staff from the covered agencies, just so we're bringing some programmatic expertise in as well. We already have two IAC members identified for this task group. So shout out to Jeffrey and Amy for your interest in doing this work. And we would love to, we've already heard from some covered agencies of program staff, they'd be willing
to recommend either as core team members or revolving team members. So that's really, really helpful. The main thing that we're looking for when it comes to participating in this task group is if you have any experience or interest in things like systems and data management.
any interest in accessibility and equity, language access, civil rights. These are all things that quote un quote qualify you to be in this task group. But that said, there are really no like qualifications. We really just want people who are interested in doing this work and changing the way that covered agencies interact with Vermonters.
So it's very, very open-ended.
So that's the end of my very quick spiel, but I know that in the past, advisory council members have shared that they would love to have an opportunity to discuss and explore the steps of the central intake system work plan with the IAC.
to just understand more about like what we're all getting ourselves into. And then, you know, if there's any questions or comments about what the, what they'd like to see the task group do, how they'd like to see the task group function, we'd love to hear that as well. So once again, this is a very group.
driven discussion. So I'm going to stop talking and pass it to you guys.
The floor is yours.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 1:27:44

I just have a general question around the revolving team and the maybe more so the revolving team and the core team about.
Like meeting expectation, capacity, kind of like what the X, what the responsibilities might be if we're trying to identify.
additional folks from the IAC kind of like community to join Jeffrey and Amy.
And maybe that's something that the core team kind of establishes. I'm not, I'm not certain.

Birch, Juliet 1:28:16
You hit the nail on the head, Abby. This, it hasn't been fully established just yet. But once we have a firmer understanding of like our start and end point, we can understand more about timeline, when we'll need different expertise to be brought in. And then that'll also give us a firmer understanding of hourly commitment or what types of
capacity or responsibilities we would love for other people to take on. So that's all still to be explored.
Great question.
Yeah, Jennifer, feel free to jump in.

Byrne, Jennifer 1:28:51
And.
Well, it strikes me just how, like we were mentioning before, this is really a piece of the community engagement assessment, which is how it's currently referenced in the guide as part of that initial assessment in part 2 for those who are in the community engagement guide.
But it's, and then it's also referenced, but not really delved into throughout the rest of the guidance. And as I recall, you know, basically knowing that this was coming and these conversations were already happening with the council and the committee waiting on this process to happen.
before developing it in any more detail in the guidance. But we're sort of at this moment now where it's like, we, I feel like it all has to still remain under the context of the bigger assessment that now is like at the foot of everyone here that needs to. take place. So I guess, and then as a council member, in terms of where we put our time and how we can like divide, knowing sort of what's coming in that regard, like the technical assistance, this sort of, I don't know, it's, yeah, I can't separate all of

these things, I guess.
And...
Not sure if that's helpful, but this is, it's important that we go into the complaint process in a very, you know, truncated way or like a specific way. But I wonder if this task group would be a much, much less of a burden in terms of time.
If there's really just a just some discrete questions that need to be answered and a couple minds getting together for, you know, four or five times, maybe that would be helpful to have an idea of.

Birch, Juliet 1:30:50
That's a really good point, Jennifer. And I'll just say that my understanding is that this work plan was developed way before the guidance had ever been conceived of. And it's so cool. I think that the community engagement assessment that each of the covered agencies will do will help create data that the
central intake system will be based off of. So I love that point. And yeah, similar to what Abby had said or what Abby asked, I think that when it comes to like what are the fundamental questions that need to be answered in each phase and who's going to do the answering of those questions, it's also something that remains to be explored.
I just want to read out loud what Mariana, and then I'll pass it to Carla. Mariana said in the chat, along the lines of what Jennifer is saying, I'm wondering about recruitment or appointment of new AC members to help with this work. Yes, 100%. We do, as I mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, now have two vacancies, one for the environmental justice focus populations.
seat and one for the municipal government seat.
And yeah, I think that we're currently in the process of figuring out how to get the appointing authorities to fill those seats. But yeah, I think that if we can have a fully seated council, that will also help blank capacity do this work 100%.
Along those lines, if you have recommendations regarding potential folks who have interest in occupying some of the seats that are available, please let us know. You know, capacity is important. So if you are thinking of someone, it would be great if you could have a brief conversation with them and ask whether they
have the capacity to occupy the seat and then let us know and we can move forward with suggestions to the General Assembly.

Vincent Pricer 1:32:58
Can you repeat the seats that are open again?

Birch, Juliet 1:33:02
Environmental justice focused populations representative and municipal government representative.
And I can put in the law or in the I can put in the chat the specific descriptions that are in the law of what.
Who's eligible to fill those roles?
That's a great question.
And going back to...
Jennifer's.
Comments about where we find ourselves.
in the implementation of the EJ law. What's really interesting about this particular time in this process is that right now, most of the foundational deliverables, with the humongous exception of the community engagement plan,
are completed or partially completed. And so we are at a point where in working and advancing discrete projects or tasks under those deliverables, we're able to connect multiple deliverables under the EJ law very actively and tangibly, right? Like in thinking through the content of the community engagement plans, we also have information that we've gathered through conversations around
the baseline spending reports, the core principles of community engagement. We also have conversations that were had during the creation of the guidance, and we have this document. And now we're also conceptualizing a central intake system. So all of those, all of those projects are related to each other. And this is, you know, and you've heard me say this, why I insist that the implementation of this law in a very intentional way will allow us
to shape policy and processes very comprehensively. If, you know, we do as we have done, take the time to put the pieces together in a very intentional, meaningful way, and centering
the advisory council. So just wanted to communicate that right now, because we have done so many things and advanced the EJ law implementation, we are in a position where we can take from other areas.
and inform current practices and projects. So just wanted to expand on what Jennifer

mentioned by saying, yes, this is exciting. Now we're getting to connect all of the dots and we'll continue to do that with the rulemaking and the mapping tool. But we're building foundations.
So thank you all.
Yeah, Mariana.

Sears, Mariana 1:36:43
Yeah, thank you. I just wanted to check if you guys can report, related to the question that I asked about recruitment and new advisory council members, have we been able to
ensure that those advisory council members that cannot attend these meetings are meaningfully participating in ways that are good for them. I just know of Mariam, who is not able to attend,

Birch, Juliet 1:37:16
Okay.
Mhm.

Sears, Mariana 1:37:21
Wednesday meetings, but I wondered about other members and also wondering if we have some flexibility to move some of these meetings to times that are good for other members who have not been able to participate actively.
just to be with them in community, to make sure that they know that the participations are appreciated. And yeah, we hear what they have to say about all this wonderful work we're all doing.

Birch, Juliet 1:37:54
Yeah, that's a great question, Mariana. So the first thing I'll say is that there...
There are reasons why different advisory council members can't participate that are sometimes personal. So I don't want to get too in depth on the reason behind some folks are not able to attend. But I'll just share that for Mariam, we have been able to connect with her and we are working with her where before each meeting, she share some of her perspectives with us directly so that we can bring them to the meeting. Unfortunately, that wasn't able to happen for this particular public meeting, but that's the agreement that we were able to come to knowing where her current

schedule is. When it comes to future meetings, we're going to need to reassess for 2027 how, when, and how we schedule
Yeah, like offering alternative times. And as Jennifer said, considering alternative times for council members who work during business hours, that's something that we will work towards for 2027. And then for other council members who haven't necessarily been able to participate,
There's some questions about, you know, if they'll be able to come back or if other conflicting priorities that they have may mean that it's better for them to find an alternative who can fill their role.
we're having those conversations right now. So I appreciate you asking those things. And I just don't want to get into too much detail in the public setting just because for some folks, it's personal. And I don't find I don't want to get too in the weeds. But it's definitely a motivating factor, I think, to some of this work and building capacity for
the central intake system task group 100%.
If I may add to what Juliet just mentioned, just want to share, you know, and provide an assurance that right now, and we've been in this process for some time now, but because of your involvement,
and reaching out to other fellow advisory council members, we've been able to connect with most of those individuals who have not been able to show up to the meetings and we are in conversations with them. So just want to share that right now we find ourselves in a pretty good spot where we're having conversations about those folks and
you know, investigating what the next steps are for each of those individuals. But I just want to share here that for us and for me personally, is of the utmost importance that we have as much participation from advisory council members as we can.
as these are individuals who are intended to represent communities that have been historically known at participating in these conversations. And so it is really important for us that we look out for what was the intent in the law, which is to center
these communities and ensure that we're not creating policy or documents that get ahead of what actual needs, preferences, lift knowledge, experience, and expertise from these individuals are. So just sharing that for us, this is a
Extremely important part of our jobs.
Yeah, Abby.
But.

Willard, Abbey 1:41:48
Similarly, yet slightly different tact. I wanted to, and I know we've chatted about this in some IAC meetings, but I wanted to maybe bring it to the joint conversation that of a few voices that I think could be really valuable around this centralized intake.

Birch, Juliet 1:42:07
People.

Willard, Abbey 1:42:08
system would be the state's chief performance office. So Justin Kenny or anyone from his small but mighty team, as well as our agency of digital services, just thinking about like the tech solutions that are very limited and quite complicated.

Birch, Juliet 1:42:18
Mhm.

Willard, Abbey 1:42:27
within state government. So kind of like the opposite end of like having the real like heartfelt AC involvement. I also want to just make sure we have like clear tech solutions input and thinking about opportunities for like centralization and efficiency is really our chief performance office kind of like objective.

Birch, Juliet 1:42:52
Just for folks who might not be aware of the Chief Performance Office, do you think, Abby, you could describe a little bit more of what their main role is for the state, just for their context?

Willard, Abbey 1:43:04
I think what I can offer is that it is focused on, they are always looking at like cross agency collaboration opportunities, looking at efficiency. They provide a fair amount of education, technical assistance, and kind of like exposure to kind of like new systems, new processes across state government.
There's a whole like structure that they manage of trainings and professional development as well, but they're like very specifically connected to like data

collection and efficiency and some of our performance metrics across government statewide.

Birch, Juliet 1:43:42
Mhm.

Willard, Abbey 1:43:44
But again, others who work with...

Birch, Juliet 1:43:44
Mhm.

Willard, Abbey 1:43:47
that office have other kind of input, but that's what I kind of see their role and their function and value, great value.

Birch, Juliet 1:43:53
I.
Thanks for sharing that, Abby. Yeah, Carla. This is all very helpful, Abby, and we've definitely thought about reaching out and branching out as we start having these conversations. What is very important for us at this point is to finalize the membership
the membership for the task group that's going to take on this project. Once we have that group identified, then we can very strategically come up with a timeline, a work plan, and identify where and when.
we would be primed or right for reaching out to the many resources that may be available to us around the state. But I think really important for us right now is to try to identify who's going to contribute to the task group.
and have a meeting and take it from there so that we are making some tangible progress in this area.
Thank you, Abby, for that.
I'll just read out loud what Sarah said in the chat just for the record. Sarah said, the only thing I would add to presumably what Abby had shared is that the Chief Performance Office also does a lot of work in building cross-agency functional systems, including intaking information, sorting it, and being able to share it across

agencies.
which sounds extremely relevant to everything that we're talking about doing here for the complaint intake system. And Jennifer said, I wonder if LAOB could be considered as participants if willing. Yeah, that's if Jean's still on the call.
Alright.
I don't think that she is, but we could certainly, when we reach out to Jean, bring this up as like a very related area for LAOB's interest. That's a great offer, Jennifer.

Willard, Abbey 1:46:13
Just for if it's also relevant, the agency of digital services is a separate recommendation that I was offering. And that's where like all of our IT is managed across state government. It was centralized into an agency of digital services, I don't know, five years ago. But

Birch, Juliet 1:46:21
Right.

Willard, Abbey 1:46:33
Again, another recommendation of just the kind of like the existing structure that this intake system would have to work within.

Birch, Juliet 1:46:33
Yep.
Yep, thank you.
Yeah, Amy, it looked like the cogs were whirring in your head and I thought maybe you were going to jump in.



Redman, Amy (She/Her) 1:47:00
Oh, I'm just so I'm just really appreciating the conversation and listening and hearing all these great ideas. I was wondering, I know one idea we had talked about on the side was having a separate space, like an informational meeting. So people that are interested but maybe not ready to commit could
could say so in this space, and then we can start to kind of like gather up and huddle up and start to talk about how do we stay connected with community engagement

work? What are some of these ideas? Are there people, are there things that people are interested in, certain sections, but maybe don't need to kind of be

Birch, Juliet 1:47:22
Yup.



Redman, Amy (She/Her) 1:47:38
at every meeting. So I know we talked about that and wondering if that might be something we can do now is anyone that's interested and then we'll have a separate kind of info meeting. Doesn't mean you have to commit, just have an informational huddle.

Birch, Juliet 1:47:57
Yeah, thanks, Amy. You completely and totally beat me to it. Go you. I am going to drop in the chat.
As Amy mentioned, we've talked about the, Amy, Jeffrey, and I have talked about the possibility of having an informational session to give people more ideas about what working in the task group could look like. This is really, it's kind of an interest session. So if you're interested, but you're not totally sure, this is no commitment, you could show up. One of the options in terms of timing that we had come up with was September 30th from 1 P.m. to 1.45 P.m. But this is not, I'm going to drop that in the chat. This is not set in stone because I acknowledge that I have no idea what everybody's availability is right now. So what we can do is after this meeting, send out a doodle poll.
And if you are interested in attending an informational session, please respond to the doodle poll. If you're not interested in attending, ignore the doodle poll. But we would love to have an informational session to kind of share more about what this task group could look like and.
Build that vision.
Sorry, is there more that you wanted to add, Amy? I realize I kind of I jumped on jumped on what you shared.



Redman, Amy (She/Her) 1:49:21
That was perfect. Thank you.

Birch, Juliet 1:49:32
And we have heard from...
Two agencies.
that they are interested and have offered.
Already, yeah, to engage specific staff members, um, task group.
Yeah, Sarah.

McIlvennie, Sarah 1:49:54
Just a point of clarification, the informational session is for IAC and AC members only or for representative staff potentially who might not be the IAC rep.

Birch, Juliet 1:50:05
All of the above.
Anyone who's interested, mildly interested, curious about what this is about, are invited and should feel free to participate. Hopefully, we'll answer questions that will help them determine whether they are going to get involved in.
the extent of their involvement.
And with that in mind, when we send out the doodle poll, you guys are kind of our liaisons between this group and your covered agencies. So feel free to forward that doodle poll to any folks you know may have some interest.
so that we can make sure to bring anybody in who wants that information. Mariana, I saw your hand was up. I'm sorry if I was the reason why you lowered it.

Sears, Mariana 1:51:01
No.
No, no, no. You and Carla and Amy were clarifying some of the things that were coming to mind. And I have an easy yes, and I'm trying to hold myself not to say yes to this also. After having said yes to participating,

Birch, Juliet 1:51:18
Hmm.

Sears, Mariana 1:51:22
into the other technical support and community engagement process. But I was

wondering to ease my needs of saying yes, I want to know if you guys have heard from other advisory councils saying yes or we feel like

Birch, Juliet 1:51:29
Yeah.
Mhm.

Sears, Mariana 1:51:42
were even good to start without necessarily having those two committed persons to start this process without having two advisory council members saying, yes, I mean, 100%. And, you know, these may also became more clear after September 30th, after we all learn a little bit more.

Birch, Juliet 1:51:52
Yeah.
And.
Mhm.

Sears, Mariana 1:52:04
But yeah, just curious about if anybody else have verbalized interest in moving this work forward.

Birch, Juliet 1:52:13
Yeah, that's a great question, Mariana. In short, the answer is no, not yet. But...
You know.
There was something else I was going to say, but it has escaped me, so I'm not going to keep talking. But yeah, the answer is no, not yet. We haven't heard from advisory council members just yet. And I will add to the second part of, to answer the second part of your question, which is, is it ideal to have AC members from the beginning? And I would offer
Um...
That the answer is yes. You know, it's really important that agencies are not moving forward with the with the knowledge and.
the ideas that we have without engaging in meaningful dialogue with the advisory council. You know, an important goal is that this system is informed by advisory

council members.
experiences of engaging with the communities that they represent and just to ensure that we are not recreating what's been done previously that may be improved upon that we're
And by we I mean that perhaps agency staff are not privy to.
Yeah, that reminds me of what I was going to say, which is just that this intake system is not, it is for state agencies, but it's more so for the public. You know, it is, yeah. It's more so for the public. And so being representatives from communities that are most impacted by environmental injustices, I think that it would be phenomenal to have advisory council perspectives brought in from the beginning.
And I also wanted to say that just because the slide says one to two advisory council members or two advisory council members does not necessarily mean that we have to get to. I know that it's hard right now with the many.
many things that we're all juggling. So just putting that out there.
And as we've done in the past, if participation is not possible in the way that majority can commit to, we will engage and reach out to members of the task group outside of meetings to ensure that we have your input.
like what we're doing for these public meetings with some advisory council members. So there's always that alternative of engaging differently with the project.
All right.
It feels like perhaps we have exhausted this line of conversation for today. We do have...
Only like 2 more minutes left dedicated to this section of the agenda, but it sounds like what we can do is set up that informational session. Anyone who's interested is welcome to attend and go from there. I appreciate you guys, you know.
working with us through obviously the obstacles that doing this work on top of all of our different life and job responsibilities can entail. So we're all doing our best and I appreciate you all for being here and offering what you can. This is really not easy.
at all. So thank you.
What we'll do now is open up for one more public comment, and then we'll take another five-minute break before we prepare to close out our meeting today.
So if there are any members of the public who are on the call and want to give comment related to anything we were just talking about or the EJ law, please feel free to provide your comment now.

Adam Reynolds 1:56:56
Thank you for the discussion. No comment here on what was just discussed, though. Appreciate it.

Birch, Juliet 1:57:03
Thanks, Adam. I was just doing my facilitators count, which everybody else reads as really awkward silence. So thanks, everyone. We'll take a 5 minute break and come back at 1210. See you soon. Bye.

Trey Martin 1:57:20
Juliet, I'm gonna, oh.

Birch, Juliet 1:57:23
I'm here.

Trey Martin 1:57:24
Okay, hey, I'm going to be, I have to step out at 1215 to give your colleague Becca a call. And depending how long that goes, I may not be back for closure stuff. I didn't volunteer for that task group because I don't, I didn't feel like I have the kind of systems analysis, but if you.

Birch, Juliet 1:57:25
Hi, Trey.
Right.
Mm.

Trey Martin 1:57:45
If you're having trouble filling it, we could talk, we could add that to our conversation about a VHCB person who might be able to help with that. Because there are people here much better at systems and data management than I am.

Birch, Juliet 1:57:53
Perfect.
Thank you, Trey. I appreciate that. And if we don't see you again, I hope that you

have a wonderful rest of your day. And if we do see you again, yay. I'll make sure to follow up with you and share anything that you've missed.

Trey Martin 1:58:09
Thank you.
Thank you, Carla. And thank you, thank you, Juliet. I'm going to leave it on for now because I'm hoping I'll be back, but like I'll leave it muted and with my camera off.

Birch, Juliet 1:58:15
Thank you.
Perfect. Appreciate it.

Trey Martin 1:58:25
All right, see you soon.

Birch, Juliet 1:58:27
Thanks, Trey. Bye.
Hey folks, welcome back.
If you're back, please either turn your camera on, give me like a little reaction, or say something in the chat just so that I don't.
Get the ball rolling without you.
All right, thank you.
I do.
Hey, Marcela, welcome.

Dent, Marcella 2:04:00
Hey, thank you.

Birch, Juliet 2:04:03
That made me laugh, Mariana.
All right, so.
Now that we're back together, let's just one last time try and do some approvals for our meeting minutes. These meeting minutes were all previously dropped in the chat. And
If you hadn't previously voted to approve these meeting minutes, specifically the

June 10th, 2026 meeting minutes, if you are an advisory council or interagency committee member and you hadn't previously weighed in, please raise your hand if you are ready to approve those meeting minutes.
Awesome.
Thank you, Jeffrey. Are there any other IAC members who want to weigh in? We already have majority, but I just wanted to double check.
All right. And then for the advisory council minutes that are also in the chat at 1124 AM, there's five different meeting minutes there. If folks who, if advisory council members who haven't previously weighed in want to raise their hand,
to tell me if they approve or not, please let me know.
Awesome, thank you, Jeffrey. Perfect. We've completed our housekeeping for the day, so I appreciate you all, so...
Thanks everyone for the conversation so far about the EJ complaint intake system and the definition. These are great conversations that we'll have to do some follow up on. I will kind of outline what those next steps will be as we're closing out the meeting.
For the last, you know, half hour or so, for the next half hour or so, we're going to pivot our attention to the community engagement plan deliverable again, which has come up many times today and is really deeply related to the complaint intake system.
Um...
Before we get started, I just wanted to share with you all, obviously, the community engagement plan guidance was finalized about a month ago and shared with the covered agencies. That was a really great step in the right direction. Since that happened, our unit hosted a couple of office hours and was able to, through those office hours, connect directly with
all 10 of the covered agencies to get them started on the right foot for preparing to develop their community engagement plan deliverable, or just community engagement plan. I'm just throwing the word deliverable anywhere it goes, I guess.
So that office hours was specifically focused on
part 2 of the community engagement plan guidance, specifically steps one, two, and three, which was all about getting buy-in and commitment from your agency, developing a task group to prepare your community engagement plan, and then developing a community engagement plan assessment.
in some way. And I think that that was a pretty good set of office hours to get the

ball rolling. And I'm looking forward to being able to continue to meet with each of the covered agencies individually. Several of you have reached out for, you know, tailored support with, you know, meeting with your leadership or starting a task group.
group with like a kickoff meeting. So just putting out there for everyone that that offer is always on the table. Any sort of technical assistance you need to support this work, please reach out and we can do our best to accommodate. So always, always, always on the table. Don't hesitate to reach out.
With that in mind, we're going to talk a little bit today about the community engagement plan technical assistance timeline and what that timeline will look like, especially in...
like side by side with the actual development of the community engagement plans. I'm going to preface this by saying this is a proposed timeline. I want to encourage people to share any sort of concerns or revisions that they would make to this timeline considering
things within your agency that happen any given time of year that we're not privy to. So this is a discussion, not a statement.
Just sharing that up front. Oops, I'm way too far in this slide deck.
All right.
So in the resources for today's meeting, you can find a PDF that kind of goes through this timeline and provides a little bit more detail. This has also been shared with you over e-mail, but we'll just walk through this quickly together. What we are proposing in terms of the community engagement plan technical assistance timeline is basically 3 phases of technical assistance that are interspersed with advisory council consultation and a coordinated public comment period. And we'll get to that because I know that that is going to ring some bells for folks.
We'll talk about that specifically.
So starting in August of 2026, which was just a short few weeks ago, I think that we've kicked off technical assistance phase one, which is really focused on setting up the foundations for the covered agencies to begin developing their community engagement plans, getting you guys set up with all the tools and capacity you need. well, to the extent possible, to be able to begin working on your community engagement plans.
This is all about making sure that our unit provides you with the support you need to get those foundations built. So that could be meeting with your leadership, providing

some sort of introductory overview to your task group, giving recommendations for a community engagement plan assessment process,
Then we can move into technical assistance phase two, which is really focused more on discrete obstacles. Hypothetically, this would take place between November and January. I would say that obviously we're going to be facing and trying to solve discrete obstacles for much longer than November through January, but this is just in advance of the consultation with the advisory council. So you can think of advisory council consultation as an extension of this second phase of technical assistance. But really, by November, hopefully you'll have a little bit more information about how your agency is going to be building your community engagement plan. Maybe you'll have a task group that's starting to meet.
Maybe you'll have a vision for a plan that you're starting to flesh out. And so this is your opportunity to start exploring discrete concerns, obstacles, questions, or problems that your agency needs to address. For example, it could be, we don't know how to compensate community members for our time, or...
We don't know how to incorporate better engagement into our specific permitting processes. So this is an opportunity to explore that with us. And then of course, that would continue to extend to the advisory council as well.
From February to June is where we're dedicating or hoping to dedicate really like specific opportunities to consult with the advisory council. That could be in the form of our joint public meetings, it could be in office hours, it could be over e-mail or in small meetings as long as we're not reaching quorum.
But this would be our advisory council consultation period, our dedicated advisory council consultation period. And overlapping with this would be a coordinated public comment period. Now, I'm going to take a pause and just say,
This is something that the inter-agency committee actually came up with as an idea, to have a coordinated public comment period where each of the covered agencies would simultaneously put their community engagement plans up for public comment and accept public comment from communities.
This is something that the advisory council has really encouraged, especially in our subgroup that was developing the community engagement plan guidance. I think that it would be a really cool opportunity to walk the walk at, you know, and avoid to the extent that we can.
creating any sort of engagement fatigue for our communities, but just putting this out there. And then finally, we come to the last month of this work, which would be

finalizing the community engagement plans sometime in June with the deadline of July 1st of 2027.
That brings us to our third phase of technical assistance, which would be basically July into perpetuity, where we're doing training, we're working with covered agencies on implementation of their plan, and even perhaps considering places where the plan could be revised maybe in a couple of years.
to better meet the agency's needs. This slide is intended to be just a brief overview of the timeline. And I wanted to ask if there are any quick questions. We'll get into a little bit more detail about some of the more interesting points here.
Yeah, Janet.
You're muted. Sorry.

HJ **Hurley, Janet** 2:14:35
Sorry, just looking at AC consultation through June, whereas the public comment period is through May. And I just wonder about that, you know, getting AC consultation a little bit earlier.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:14:40
Oop.
Mhm.
Yep, so advisory council consultation is from February to June, while the public comment period is theoretically from April to May. The purpose behind this idea was that the advisory council consultation is really key to this work, as is the public comment period, I would argue.
But I also think that the advisory council would have strong...
perspectives to offer on how to apply any feedback we receive from the public. So that's part of the reason why the AC consultation kind of extends both before and after this public comment period.
Does that answer your question?
OK, perfect.
Yes, Elizabeth.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 2:15:42
I, uh, um...
I guess just having an initial reaction of, you know, a lot of these, a lot of us covered

agencies are just starting this process and having just from November to January to get a first draft together makes me feel a little anxious because this is not the only thing I'm working on. I know that I say that a lot. I don't know if any other covered agencies.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:15:54
Mhm.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 2:16:06
have a similar reaction or if everyone's feeling like, oh, that sounds like plenty of time.
So anyone else feeling like they might want a little more time to get that first draft together?

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:16:17
Can I offer a point of clarification, which is that you don't, I think it's dependent on how we want to, as a collective, utilize the advisory council for consultation, but it could be that you don't have a complete first draft to submit to the advisory council by that time, but you have something to consult them on.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 2:16:20
Oh, sure.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:16:38
It's really, it's dependent on how we want to utilize the advisory council consultation. So much of this can be flexible, if that makes sense.

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 2:16:48
Okay, well, maybe the, yeah, I'm looking at the document that was circulated and in technical assistance phase two, the last bullet is at least one strong and complete community engagement plan draft has been developed at each agency. And you know, the timeline is November through January. So

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:17:01
Yes.

Schilling, Elizabeth 2:17:06
Yeah, I don't know.

Birch, Juliet 2:17:10
Yeah, I hear you. It's just a recommendation. That's like the ideal scenario, but if that doesn't work, it doesn't work. And that I want to make that very clear that like I acknowledge that this is a very, this is ambitious.

Schilling, Elizabeth 2:17:13
Okay.
Okay.
Yeah.
Yeah, and I just want to be mindful of expectations and that, yeah.

Birch, Juliet 2:17:25
Yes.
Janet.

Hurley, Janet 2:17:33
Oh, me. Just echoing Elizabeth's comment. Yeah, we're not going to have a draft that soon. And one thing I wanted to bring up and ask others about is that we are hoping to contract with a
with a community engagement specialist. I'll just say that much soon using carry forward funding. And that funding would have to be spent by May 1st or May 15th. And so I'm sort of
Seeing, you know, spring is sort of the earliest that we would have a draft, but...
Yeah, so I was thinking public comment May to June, adoption July for us.

Birch, Juliet 2:18:32
Can I ask Janet, logistically, how would you?
have enough time to incorporate public comments if the public comment period ends in June. I, I, this is, I'm, I'm, this is a genuine asking.

Hurley, Janet 2:18:48

Yeah.
Yeah, I mean, um...
You know, I think it would be public comments through the first part of June, giving, you know, a few weeks to incorporate.

Birch, Juliet 2:19:06
Yeah, that makes sense.

Hurley, Janet 2:19:09
And then adoption.

Birch, Juliet 2:19:10
Abby.
Ohh, sorry.

Hurley, Janet 2:19:13
You know, actually, I don't know what day of the week July 1st is, but that could, you know, I haven't looked at this closely enough, but that could sort of, because the board has to adopt it at an open meeting. And so depending on when that,
When July 1st falls, we normally have our meetings on Mondays, but yeah.

Willard, Abbey 2:19:39
July 1st is the first Thursday.

Hurley, Janet 2:19:44
So yeah, we would adopt it in June.
Most likely.

Ronis, Jenny 2:19:52
June 28th.

Hurley, Janet 2:19:55
Yeah.

Birch, Juliet 2:20:03

Thanks for that, Janet.
Abby, were you gonna jump in next?

Willard, Abbey 2:20:08
Yeah, yeah, I was just.
For whatever reason, I wasn't able to see these documents in advance because they weren't, I was getting some error. So this is the first I'm kind of digesting. And I, and I, no, no, no, no worries. And I feel both the, like, it feels fast and it feels.

Hurley, Janet 2:20:20
Yeah.

Birch, Juliet 2:20:21
Sorry about that.

Willard, Abbey 2:20:33
site at the same time, right? Like I'm recognizing that. So I'll say for Agency of Agriculture, we've just drafted an outline work plan timeline, or I shouldn't say work plan timeline for ourselves. And doing public engagement in April does align with what we were potentially anticipating.
Um...

Birch, Juliet 2:21:01
Mhm.

Willard, Abbey 2:21:04
Though I would say...
It's almost feeling like...
In January.
is when or February is when we might also do public engagement. Yeah, happy to share it. Public engagement.
that would be organized by themes. So again, that like coordinated public comment period, I don't know, maybe we're gonna talk about that in greater detail or maybe that's what we're doing right now. But like, I think one of the conversation topics that had come up from the IAC discussions was there are some like.

Birch, Juliet 2:21:36
Mhm.

Willard, Abbey 2:21:46
shared themes across state units of we do rulemaking, we do grant making, we have, you know, statute, regulatory responsibilities, and then we do education and outreach as just like 4 categories that I'm like identifying. And that some of the community engagement and meaningful participation
activities within those category areas may actually be similar across agencies, more so than the tasks are similar within the same agency, if that makes sense. Like how we do community and how we do meaningful participation for education probably looks a fair bit different for how we do meaningful participation around regulatory programming, but our regulatory programming efforts might look very similar to AOT, ANR, and Department of Health. And so I was imagining that those coordinated public comment periods may be organized by kind of like themed type of work that we do, maybe not. And if that's the case,
April's actually feeling possibly a little late to me to have those conversations with the public, unless it's like...
Unless we're doing, again, maybe final thought, and then I know others have comments, unless we're doing some like internal work as part of that AC consultation starting in February and we're drafting some things that then we're asking the public to weigh in on beginning in April. So I'm just thinking out loud here. Sorry for my verbal processing.

Birch, Juliet 2:23:13
Yeah.
No, always appreciate it, Abby. I will say that.
And then I'll pass it to Jennifer. This timeline, I'm just going to acknowledge like it's there. I think there's not a way where we could make this ideal because of the amount of time that we have at our disposal. But this is 1 recommendation or one attempt to try and incorporate all of the needs that we've been hearing from the interagency, the covered agencies, and the advisory council.
And so, yeah, I understand what you mean about like, well, it might actually be that this public comment period is a little too late. And the purpose of placing it where it

is, is because there's like an order of operations. We're going to need some internal development. We're going to need some AC consultation. And presumably covered agencies are also going to need some leadership.
weigh in before they can even open for public comment period. And so, yeah, the timing is difficult. There's a lot of competing factors. And I just want to acknowledge that. Yeah, Jennifer, I know that you're really, really into this topic, so I'll pass it to you.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 2:24:32
Yeah.
Well, yeah, and I mean, I have a thought here just in terms of, well, first of all, in terms of the guidance document and what it lays out as essentially a phase one is this internal assessment, which really is going to take the, you know, the

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:24:49
Mhm.

BJ **Byrne, Jennifer** 2:24:53
the first end of time and focus before the draft of the plan. And I want to offer an idea, which is just looking at the law itself. You know, I wouldn't want to just rush to community engagement, you know, without a reason to engage the community. And Thinking about, you know, these plans are not formal rules. And maybe we can think about the timeline here a bit to where, you know, what the law itself says is that the covered agency shall create and adopt on or before July 1st, 2027, a community engagement plan.
And, you know, if the council and the committee agrees to a different type of timeline, you know, perhaps where by that July 1st date, there's a completed plan that's ready now to go and be deeper developed, you know, with the public. And I'm sure there will be lots of reasons, you know, throughout the year
that maybe there would be like a, you know, an ask of the community, like through the EJ Council, even, you know, we want you to weigh in on this part. This is what we're thinking about right now. Here's the opportunity to comment. We don't have to run this like a formal rulemaking. So there's sort of, maybe we can get creative and.

Birch, Juliet 2:26:11
Mhm.

Byrne, Jennifer 2:26:14
maybe build in a little bit more time because it feels a little bit like we're, you know, maybe skipping ahead over what this assessment really means, this internal assessment. And then I also just, you know, wanted to, I think I heard from Janet from Lerb, you know, the intention not.
to go to the community until the, like, basically right before what would pass. So I think like, you know, the expectation of like, where will everyone need to be by July 1st in order to comply with the law? Maybe can be, I mean, we can talk about it, like, and we can decide how.
To do this.
Well.

Birch, Juliet 2:26:57
Thank you, Jennifer. Before you go, Janet, I want to acknowledge Carla had like told me she had her hand raised as well. So I'm going to do Carla, then Janet. It's just that Carla's not virtually on the call. So Carla, you first and then we'll go to Janet. Hi, folks. Thank you. I actually just put it on the chat. And it's the.

Hurley, Janet 2:27:06
Sorry.

Birch, Juliet 2:27:18
It's been offered before and it explains a little bit further what the idea or concept behind the coordinated public comment period is, which is issue-based.
Like you mentioned, Abby, perhaps there are commonalities that are identified across the board. So it's really not specifically about each individual agency's content, but rather around.
common items that arise as agencies are drafting their community engagement themes. And so there will be a process of continuing these conversations amongst agencies to identify common
you know, whether there are questions, then the agencies continue drafting their

plan under a timeline. Then the joint comment period occurs for
the agencies that have common questions around those common questions. So this is going to be an iterative process. So it's not intended to be, you know, all agencies have a final draft, then we consult a C.
public comment, then come back. It's rather intended to capture where agencies are when that time comes. The goal here is that agencies should have a clear sense of when they're going to be doing
you know, the tasks so that, you know, you can get to the finish line, which is adoption of a community engagement plan by the deadline, and then fold into that process a public comment period alongside other agencies that
have same concerns or questions as yours so that we are creating efficiencies, honoring the core principles of community engagement, and be able to get input from communities and have the time to meaningfully include that feedback.
in our community engagement.
Thank you, Carla. We'll do Janet, and then I would like to share with you guys just a little bit more information about the coordinated public comment period, because I know it's a point of interest.

HJ **Hurley, Janet** 2:30:13
Sorry, I'm going to have to speak and then run, but...
You know everything that the board does, the land use review board does.
as a quorum has to be done in open meeting. And so we began our conversation as a board, well, actually last month when we invited Carla and Senator Ram Hinsdale to our meeting. But then yesterday we had a good, at least half hour or longer discussion on our

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:30:29
Mhm.

HJ **Hurley, Janet** 2:30:45
Community engagement planning, and so...
You know, as we do this, all of our work is being scrutinized by the public. And we are engaging the public. I think what I was seeing on your proposed schedule is that there would be a draft for public comment by April. But as Carla's sort of describing, It's an iterative process. People are, the public is going to be, I mean, you know,

seeing what we're doing because we are subject to open meeting law. And I don't, you know, some, the rest of you aren't necessarily subject to open meeting law like we are.
So you can do a lot of that work behind the scenes and nobody has to see it. We can't do that. So we will be having this sort of development of this in public view all along the way. You know, some of that, those first steps are internal.
But other than those first few steps, we're going to be doing this in the public view.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:32:02
Yeah, I appreciate that, Janet. We're all in. There are.
There are a lot of different types of covered agencies. And so that we're all in kind of somewhat unique positions. And I appreciate the particularly unique position that the LERB is in. And I think that we can figure out a way to make this process work and be meaningful for all of us.
collectively. I want to emphasize again that what we're offering right now is like a recommendation or like a proposed initial timeline. And so if people have recommendations of ways to make the timeline more feasible or, you know, solutions to some of the obstacles we're coming up with, please offer them. I really. I'm interested in what Jennifer had offered around like sort of the interpretation of that create or adopt by language. So that might be something to look into. But.
Now, since we're about to close out our meeting, thanks for joining Janet. We'll see you. Sorry you have to hop off.
I just really quickly wanted to.
I really quickly wanted to just share a slide about the coordinated public comment period for folks to react to.
Where are we? Here we are.
So, as Carla had said, you know, this would be a public comment period where all covered agencies would be able to receive feedback from the public as a collective. And really, this is focused more on like high level, you know, in theory, I think the best way to make a public comment period accessible both to the public and feasible for us would be
to really focus or accept comments that are really of any level of detail, but I think largely it would be around public expectations for meaningful participation. I'm not sure that every member of the public would be able to delve into drafts of community engagement plans for every covered agency. And so that's a high

expectation that I think we should
not have. Why is this kind of coordinated public comment period really important? As I had mentioned, this was proposed by the interagency committee and really encouraged by the advisory council. I want us to think about this from like an alternative framing, which is that the public need to be involved in our community engagement plan development process.
Point blank period. That's A non-negotiable, even if the law doesn't say anything about it. However, by having a coordinated public comment period, we're actually building capacity for this meaningful public participation because we're not all doing it alone on our own timeline and in our own sort of frantic way. This can be like a calculated and coordinated effort.
that is better for us and better for the public. We are thinking about doing this through like a joint organizing group, specifically Amy Redmond and Mariana Sears have very graciously offered to support with this work, and I'm looking forward to working with them on it. So
you know, we'll have to figure out the details of the timeline.
As we move to that point, but uh, you know, this is sort of the...
vision of how we would be able to begin organizing this. Obviously, we've already started getting some reactions and reflections. So knowing that we have just a few minutes left here before we want to move into next steps, I wanted to offer if anyone has any last things that they would like to share now having
received some context around the, a little bit more context around the coordinated public comment period.

AR **Adam Reynolds** 2:36:15
Hi, I don't know if it's appropriate for the public to comment here on that, or if you're sick right now to just the agency and the advisory committee staff.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:36:25
Are folks cool with taking some public comment right now?

SE **Schilling, Elizabeth** 2:36:29
Yes, that'd be great.

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:36:30

Awesome. Getting nods and thumbs up. Perfect. Yeah, Adam, if you'd like to weigh in, please.

Adam Reynolds 2:36:36
Thank you. Not a long public comment or anything like that, but I think this has been a really helpful discussion and where this is obviously a really important part of the EJ Laws rollout. And so I just wanted to express on behalf of CLF that like being I think the inclusion of a coordinated public comment period in as a part of this process to release the community engagement plans is something that would be really valuable. And I think folks have spoken to that and

Birch, Juliet 2:36:40
Right.

Adam Reynolds 2:37:00
and why it would be helpful to the public to sort of have all of this at once as opposed to having to figure out what the various different common periods are. And I think it would make this more accessible, which is in the spirit of the work that you all have been working so hard to do. So I just want to emphasize that we think that this would be a great idea and thank everybody.
Considering.

Birch, Juliet 2:37:22
Thanks, Adam. Really appreciate that.
I feel like there was also a hand from an interagency committee member.
But I could be making that up.

Willard, Abbey 2:37:36
Had mine up, but I took it down. I think Adam shared a lot of what I was feeling.

Birch, Juliet 2:37:39
It is.
Awesome.
Yeah, so, oh, Jennifer, yes.

Byrne, Jennifer 2:37:51
Yeah, I guess I just want to, I guess, circle back to like, you know, what leaving this meeting should everybody be considering? You've presented a timeline. I guess folks I've seen maybe in the chat like coming back with
their own agency timeline of, you know, following the guidance document basically of how and when do you think reasonably will this be completed. But I do feel like somehow maybe addressing, you know, within the next period of time,
What, what's the real timeline we're talking about? Because I think rushing this, rushing the, you know, rushing the assessment, rushing the public engagement, you know, just, it just won't be as good. And it's not realistic because I'm not sure how much people have even been able to sit with the guidance.

Birch, Juliet 2:38:50
Yeah.

Byrne, Jennifer 2:38:51
And it's going to take a lot of time and effort. So yeah, maybe answering that question of like, could we anticipate as the plan, you know, a lot of this law, the roles sort of end, but the council still and the committees still exist. So it's like, how do we continue to work together and implement? There's going to be a lot of, you know, roles to play and thinking about, well, the community engagement of it all to input into these plans, we can conceive of between now and July as a process, you know, just like we have public take public comments at these meetings, like maybe there's some type of AC role.
to play to maintain the public involvement in the development of these plans and the questions that arise as the assessments start coming in. Because I think a lot of what, yeah, there's going to be a lot to talk about when we start looking at what we're doing. And that we could take the time, the space, and, you know, we have the meetings on the calendar to
to engage with the assessments and start to develop the plans. The writing and drafting of the plan itself, like you all know how it is, like that could, you could just be filling out a form. Like it won't take that long, but is the content there and the structures there and that kind of thing to make it good on the other end. So yeah. I'm just putting it out there, the question being, do we have to engage in this formal,

you know, any type of more formalized public comment before the July date that would put an undue stress on the agencies actually doing the work.

Birch, Juliet 2:40:30

Yeah, I think with respect to what you just shared, Jennifer, and this idea of like how we interpret creating or adopting a plan and, you know, what the July 1st deadline actually means, I think that that's something that we could look into and figure out. Like what actually is our timeline? What's our, what, what does it, what does July 1st actually mean for us? And then go from there. So what we can do is maybe talk to our legal counsel and then provide guidance from there. And you know, if, if folks, if. Covered agencies would like to also share with our team the timelines that they've come up with for their community engagement plans. We can then do the full group here, just so that we're avoiding quorum and, you know, continue to dive in and continue to build out a timeline that is collectively
working for all of us as opposed to, you know, some of us feeling left behind or really, really pressured. So that's never the intention. Now, yes, Carla.
The question about timeline is always going to be very complicated.
especially when we have so many different entities trying to collaborate and work with each other so that we're doing good by process and also being responsible with our internal dynamics, capacity, and resources that we have.
And so the proposal here for consideration is that.
There has been dialogue.
having conversations with the communities that we serve around the content of our community engagement plans and what should go into those documents and the extent to which existing practices perhaps could be improved. I know it's an area of conversation and a lot of interest. And so the offer is that there is this period of time where when if we can, as a collective, identify topics of interest.
where we know we would benefit from public input to get clarity with regards to what works, what does not, what is preferred, what is of the utmost importance for certain kinds of engagements.
If we can get to a point where there are common questions that agencies have, that period of time will allow us to have conversations with communities around that content and get feedback and incorporate it into our community engagement plans. Whether we get to that moment or not, it is yet to be determined, right? And I think this is why the implementation of this law is so complex, is we are dealing with very

different entities. We are working very hard to also center
environmental justice principles to hear from communities on the practices of the agencies. And what sits at the heart of it all is what kinds of conversations we're having with members of the public when we're having those conversations.
and the extent to which those conversations are effective or not. And so community engagement plans do all of that or are intended to do all of that, you know, providing of the clarity for agencies and show that there is a real interest
of engaging in these conversations with the communities that we serve. So the proposal is that
There is this period of time, given the very strict timeline that we have for the deliverable to be completed in a timely fashion. And that time should be enough time so that, you know, for agencies to
digest the guidance, engage with each other and the environmental justice coordinators to come up with an approach that will be sustainable and helpful for your agency to start thinking through the contents of these community engagement plans.
As you do that, invariably, questions will arise. And some of those questions will be best answered by members of our communities, not necessarily each other. And so those are the questions that would be surfaced
And then reflected back onto communities as part of our public, as part of our public comment period.
And so this timeline allows us that opportunity.
Okay. I hate to be the bearer of time checks, but we do have 5 minutes left and I would love to just close out with the action items that have come out of this meeting. So Abby, we'll take your last thought and then we'll move on.

WA **Willard, Abbey** 2:46:42
I just, yeah, I want to kind of elevate Sarah's question in the chat of like whether public comment period is the form in which we want to collect public engagement thoughts because it's such a formal approach. So that's one comment. Second comment, just because I wanted AC members to hear an idea that was floated for that July 27 and onward technical

BJ **Birch, Juliet** 2:46:55
In.

You.
Maybe.

Willard, Abbey 2:47:15
of community engagement that would be targeting state employees and partners to sort of like really engage and like build the change over time that we're hoping that these plans will seed and then it will actually take years to kind of like change the culture of how government operates. So something that we're hoping there could be capacity and interest in.

Birch, Juliet 2:47:38
That's a cool idea. To go to Sarah's point, I think that the term public comment period is just one that we all collectively associate with bringing the public into a process. But I don't think the intention is to follow the extremely formal and unfriendly sometimes structure that a public comment period brings. So I would defer mostly to Amy and Mariana on like what we end up building because I know that they've, that they'll be really involved in that, but that will evolve as we get closer to that time.
That's a great question. Yeah, Mariana.

Sears, Mariana 2:48:23
Just very quickly to reiterate that I think this is once everybody gets to engage with the plan that we put together for creating this plan, the guidance that we put together for creating these plans, you may feel more comfortable knowing that

Birch, Juliet 2:48:39
Yeah.

Sears, Mariana 2:48:40
We are thinking of this plan, the timeline, as a flexible one. And also, we're thinking as community engagements as processes and not periods of time in which people come in and get out of the process. The vision for the future is that we will always be engaging with communities all the time, reiterating, bringing the feedback.

Birch, Juliet 2:48:56
Yeah, mhm.

Sears, Mariana 2:49:03
back and re-engaging again, just like you would do with your community at home, whatever that looks like. You come with a plan for dinner and you start asking, oh, what do we people want to eat? So you get that and then you come up with a plan and say, tonight we're eating spaghetti and meatballs. People say, yes, no, no, take out the onions.
Like that sort of like, like really clear, friendly, easy. That is how we should be thinking about community engagement. This should not be rocket science for anyone. So, and I think we're all here to help the agencies and each other to arrive to that point in which, wow, we now leaving a new future in which everybody can be engaged. as much as they want and they can with the government in an easy, friendly way. I mean, it'll be a long time. I know that I'm very nice, but I think we should get there and we should not be anxious about that or worried. Well, little by little, we'll make it happen.

Birch, Juliet 2:50:05
Love the spaghetti and meatballs metaphor, Mariana. Now I'm hungry. So thanks for that. So just to very clearly outline what our next steps are here.
And we will follow up with this, each of these points here, but it sounds like the advisory council members may be interested in doing some minor revisions to the EJ complaint definition before potentially voting to adopt this definition at our next public meeting. So we can figure out how to coordinate that work.
Presumably, I think I'll just send you guys the emails of all the advisory council members. And as long as there isn't a quorum of folks who are working on this definition revision, it should be fine. And we'll make sure that it gets circulated in advance of our next public meeting. Next, we have the AC members actually finalizing membership for this.
task, the central intake system task group, that will presumably take place after we have our informational session. So we talked about having an informational session potentially on September 30th from 1 to 1.45. I will send out a doodle poll just to make sure that we're catching everybody who's interested at a time that is feasible

for them.
And then lastly, this is just a reminder for the covered agencies to, you know, really start taking those steps to prepare developing their community engagement plans. And the main places you should be looking right now is the community engagement plan guidance part 2, which recommends some pre-steps
for you all to take to develop your community engagement plans.
This was a great meeting. I appreciate you all, your participation, your passion, your interest, your ideas. And yes, Abby, add this to the to-do list. Share any community engagement plan timelines you may have for your covered agency with our team, and then we will circulate it to the full, this full group.
just for everyone's reference. So that wasn't on my next step slide, but I'm going to add it to our to-do list here. Thanks everyone for a wonderful meeting. I appreciate you all and I hope that you have a great rest of your day and hopefully get to like eat some lunch or something. See you all.
Thank you so much. Bye.

SM **Sears, Mariana** 2:52:36
Thank you. Bye bye.

Birch, Juliet stopped transcription