

**Public Meeting of the Vermont Interagency Environmental Justice (EJ) Committee
(IAC)
Hybrid Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2026**

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

Meeting Information:

Date: April 28, 2026

Meeting Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM EST

Attendees:

Interagency Committee (IAC): Bob Donohue, Karla Raimundi, Abbey Willard, Claire McIlvennie, Stephanie A. Smith, Amy Redman, Dave Pelletier, Elizabeth Schilling, Janet Hurley, Gace Vinson,

State of Vermont: Jenny Ronis, Juliet Birch, Kim Barrett, Joshua Allen, Sarah McIlvennie, Richarda Ericson, Sophi Veltrop

10:00 AM

Welcome & Introductions

- Consent to [Community Agreements](#)
 - Consent received, no comments.
- Approve [April 2, 2026 Meeting Minutes](#)
 - Minutes approved, no comments.
- Approve [April 28, 2026 Agenda](#)
 - Agenda approved, no comments.

10:10 AM

Community Engagement Plans

- Juliet: Today's focus will be on the Community Engagement Plans deliverable due on July 1, 2027. Provides a reminder that the AC and the IAC created a VT EJ Community Engagement Subgroup. Today's meeting will be important to bring

information back to this Subgroup to inform the development of Community Engagement Plan Guidance.

- Juliet: Reminder of the requirements for the Community Engagement Plan deliverable:
 - Covered agency Community Engagement Plans must:
 - Describe how agencies will engage with EJFPs as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs
 - Describe how agencies plan to provide meaningful participation in compliance with Title VI
 - Be informed by the Core Principles of Community Engagement
 - Be developed in consultation with the Advisory Council
- Grace: Do you have any examples from other states that have EJ laws that have done this? I would find it very helpful to put this all into a greater context.
 - Juliet: We have some good Community Engagement Plans from within Vermont, specifically Agency of Transportation and Department of Health.
- Sarah: Will be helping co-facilitate today. Part of the Agency of Agriculture, participant in the VT EJ Community Engagement Subgroup and runs a State of Vermont Community Engagement Community of Practice.
- Sarah: Will be providing a reframing of the Core Principles of Community Engagement, trying to envision the covered agencies as striving towards these principles for continuous improvement:
 - Principle 1: Covered agencies should rely on pre-existing community engagement resources and expertise to build their Community Engagement Plans and implement engagement efforts
 - Principle 2: Covered agencies should strive to engage community members early and often throughout decision-making processes
 - Principle 3: Covered agencies should build capacity to devote time to quality engagement – including relationship building, consistent outreach, and thoughtful translation of technical information
 - Principle 4: Covered agencies should strategize and communicate with other agencies about their engagement efforts
 - Principle 5: Covered agencies should strive to develop strong relationships with community partners and members through consistent, presence and engagement, including outside of moments with decision-making needs

- Principle 6: Covered agencies should identify Vermonters most impacted by environmental justice and actively address systemic barriers for their participation in government decision-making
- Principle 7: Covered agencies should strive to develop policy solutions that are at minimum informed by community's experiences or are co-developed through community perspectives
- Principle 8: Covered agencies should have engagement strategies that can be tailored to the audience rather than using a rigid approach for every engagement
- Principle 9: Covered agencies should ensure that all engagement efforts comply with accessibility requirements
- Principle 10: Covered agencies should strive to communicate clearly with community members about their engagement efforts including the scope of the engagement and community's agency in impacting decision-making; communication should be completed in a consistent and timely manner and in plain language
- Principle 11: Covered agencies should build capacity to devote time to quality engagement
- Principle 12: Covered agencies should compensate community members for their time and expertise where possible
- Juliet: Provides an update on the work being done by the VT EJ Community Engagement Subgroup. The Subgroup is developing a Community Engagement Plan Guidance document that will cover:
 - What sections should all Community Engagement Plans include?
 - Recommendations for language to include in your Community Engagement Plan
 - Recommendations for meaningful community engagement efforts
 - Examples of what successful engagement efforts can look like
- Juliet: The Guidance will be used by covered agencies to develop a Community Engagement Plan that is tailored to the needs of each covered agency – This Guidance document is not a template. It provides strong recommendations for each Community Engagement Plan to follow to ensure consistent voice, intention, and outcome
 - Amy: Could the agencies adopt some core content from the VDH Guide if it really resonated and then tailor it?
 - Juliet: The Community Engagement Plan Guidance is being built using many resources, providing specific excerpts to the resources. One of those resources is the VDH Guide.
 - Grace: Feeling nervous about this deliverable. Any sort of template or guidance on what exactly to include that can be taken to agency

leadership would be welcome. Language to draw from for the actual text and contents.

- Sarah: Are you feeling nervous about how to translate the principles of engagement into ACCD's scope or work?
 - Grace: Nervous about how to bring these principles and the guidance to leadership and get their okay. Looking for more guidance on what the specific ask is for the Community Engagement Plans.
 - Juliet: Provide a run-through of the draft Community Engagement Plan Guidance
- Juliet: The Guidance currently includes recommended sections of a community engagement plan as well as recommended steps for a community engagement process. The sections of a community engagement plan will be more "plug and play" and the recommended steps for a community engagement process will need to be more tailored to the agency
 - Elizabeth: What are the instances in which we would need to follow the Community Engagement Plan? Will the Guidance define what it means to "evaluate new and existing activities and programs?"
 - Karla: Other ANR policies have created different scopes for projects – like statewide vs. geographically specific. This could be similar for the Community Engagement Plans. Our ability to perform on certain recommendations will also depend on resources and capacity
- Bob: Interested to know if there is guidance from ICAR on engagement in the context of rulemaking
 - Juliet: This is something we are interested in tackling as part of the Guidance. Other contexts for engagement include permitting, enforcement, information gathering and sharing, policy development, etc.
 - Stephanie: This would be very helpful. Technical assistance would be extremely helpful to get best practices on
- Juliet: Prompt: When you need to make an informed decision, what kinds of information do you need? Put yourself in the position of a member of the public.
 - Sarah: Also important to think about how much time you need to make the decision
- Juliet: Provides definitions for community engagement, meaningful participation, decision-making. We should be doing engagement anytime that we're making a decision where the actions or choices by an entity could actually be altered by members of the public and community input. At minimum, Community Engagement Plans should address engagement pertaining to decision-making.
 - Amy: VDH focuses engagement around marginalized communities. Thinking about how EJFPs fit into this conversation.

- Juliet: Prompt: Please select from the list below the types of work that your agency does:

- Rulemaking
- Regulation
- Permitting
- Grantmaking
- Enforcement and Compliance
- Technical assistance
- Policy development
- Information gathering
- Education and information sharing
- Consultation

Commented [WA1]: I would directly add 'grantmaking' as work an agency may do

- Sarah: For the people who responded that they do information gathering, where does that information go? Gathering information for what?
 - Grace: Maintaining databases to ensure that the data represented is accurate
 - Claire: Some of the data collected is used by PSD, but some of it is passed along to Regional Planning Commissions to support their planning efforts
 - Sarah: So information gathering doesn't always result in immediate decision-making. Sometimes it is a longer arc
- Claire: Planning is missing from this list
 - Juliet: When you do planning using community input, how do you demonstrate that the community input impacted the plan
 - Claire: Working on building out what it looks like to be more responsive, reflecting back how the input impacts the outcome
 - Dave: community input frequently informs the priorities, sections, and goals of plans for AOT
- Juliet: Prompt: What kinds of obstacles do you face when doing community engagement at your agency? Think beyond resources and capacity
 - Sarah: Specificity here would be very helpful
 - Janet: LURB dealing with a Rulemaking process that was halted by public outcry. Legislature will reconsider the role of public engagement in the roll-out of Act 181. How do you do Rulemaking and engage the public? Timelines don't always allow for thorough engagement before the Rulemaking process starts
 - Grace: Some agencies hire consultants to do engagement. This is a resource concern, but also there are limited firms that do engagement in Vermont. Thinking about who we learn engagement from and if they represent the focus populations

- Stephanie: Thinking about an accountability framework – who is responsible for what and when? How do we do our best within the frameworks that we work within
 - Sarah: Defining scope early is part of what we want to address in the Guidance “Harm is not preventable, but muscles can be built and flexed around repair”
- Sarah: When thinking about the scope of your work and the scope of engagement in decision-making, what comes up? What obstacles come up? If you could ask the Community Engagement Subgroup for anything, what would you ask for?
 - Claire: The lack of training and expertise from agency staff is something that really needs to be addressed. Not possible for one person to be engaged in every project an agency implements. Need tools that someone can take with a little bit of training and then begin doing the work. For example: How do you build a budget? Operational tools. How do you use master contracts to get documents translated?
 - Juliet: This is something that we could definitely do. Maybe not all relevant processes, but at least some.
 - Abbey: There is a cultural piece that needs to be acknowledged. There is a complex cultural change needed to implement community engagement the way that the Law is asking us to.
 - Juliet: Training how to apply principles of community engagement. Training and repeated opportunities to engage with the same material is how you change culture from the ground up.
 - Sarah: Continuous Improvement Network has helpful resources for this as well
 - Amy: Principles need to be applied internally, not just externally. How are we embodying these principles with the AC?

11:30 AM

Public Comment

- No comments.

11:30 AM

Break

11:35 AM

Community Engagement Plans continued

- Juliet: Prompt: What kind of support or technical assistance would be beneficial for your agency to develop a Community Engagement Plan? Think about what you want to see addressed in Guidance AND what kinds of technical assistance you need after the Guidance is developed and even after your Community Engagement Plans are complete.
 - Sarah: Responding to a response, state group of agency communication directors does exist. They meet monthly
 - Jane: Who is allowed to go to those meetings? Only communication directors?
 - Sarah: My understanding is that it is only communication directors and equivalent staff for agencies that do not explicitly have directors
 - Sarah: What does meaningful engagement with the AC on this topic look like for you all?
 - Abbey: Having an exchange of information where we communicate our constraints and they communicate their recommendations. Would not be great to develop CEPs without hearing from AC members. Would not wait until the CEP is done to ask them their thoughts
 - Karla: This is a core principle of community engagement – engaging early enough that the input can influence the outcome. The only obstacle here is timing and capacity, not just for us but for the AC too.
 - Claire: Working with AC members to identify smaller steps that agencies could take to advance the principles when facing budget or capacity constraints. Gut-checking state agency priorities
 - Sarah: The Working on Excellence Partnerships are a good potential forum for these conversations as well
 - Amy: This work is very relational. Our relationship with the AC is foundational to embodying these practices
 - Karla: Retreat?
 - Juliet: Emphasizing again the WOE partnerships as an opportunity to build more intimate relationships. You can also reach out to people individually and try to get coffee or meet in person. Having a retreat could be cool. Trying to build public meeting spaces where those relationships can be built is really complicated. Finding other forums to get to know each other

11:50 AM

Next Steps and Updates

- Kim: April 8 Advisory Council meeting was a productive meeting about the Civil Rights and Environmental Justice complaint report process. Vermont Environmental Justice Law attorney calls are scheduled for May 5 and 8. The May 13 Advisory Council meeting is going to be turned into a Joint meeting and will hopefully be an executive session.

12:00 PM

Close Out