

**MINUTES OF
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD
CONFERENCE CALL
APRIL 16, 2020
1:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA PHONE:

Jennifer Baka	Rafiyqa Muhammad
Heather Bedi	Allison Robinson
Adam Cutler	Jerome Shabazz
Arthur Frank	Horace Strand
Hazem Hijazi	Tom Torres
Gary Horton	

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT VIA PHONE:

Farhad Ahmed	Glenda Davidson
Allison Acevedo	Justin Dula
John Brakeall	David Saunders
Abbey Cadden	Alice Wright
Shannon Crooker	
Keisha Fitz Stratford	

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Adam Cutler called the conference call to order at 1:05 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Cutler solicited additions or corrections to the Minutes of the February 20, 2020 meeting. Hearing none, the Chairman requested a motion to approve the Minutes. Rafiyqa Muhammad made a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 20, 2020 meeting. Gary Horton seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

ACTION ITEMS:

EJAB Service Recognition

Allison Acevedo indicated that the EJAB service recognition process had been started but was discontinued because of the office closing. She will work with Adam Cutler and Allison Robinson to prepare EJAB certificates of recognition.

Communications and Messaging

Allison Acevedo stated that there had not been much progress on the Communications and Messaging Subcommittee around environmental justice since the last EJAB meeting.

Communication from Edith Abeyta

Chairman Cutler prepared a draft letter, which he has discussed with Vice Chair Allison Robinson. The Chairman will finalize and transmit the letter to Allison Acevedo who will then move it on to Secretary McDonnell. The letter includes the written statement from Edith Abeyta presented to the EJAB members at the February 20, 2020 meeting and presents the

recommendations that were voted on by the members at the meeting and asks for the Secretary's consideration and feedback. The letter will be ready by early next week. Allison Acevedo will reach out to Edith Abeyta to confirm that the letter correctly represents the issues raised by her. If Edith raises additional substantive issues, those would need to be reviewed by the EJAB members.

Comments from February 15, 2020 Town Hall

Allison Acevedo thanked Heather Bedi for organizing the written comments presented at the event. Allison will circulate the compilation of comments from the Town Hall to the EJAB members. Heather further relayed that there is a lack of dialog and information on how community members can report issues of concern.

COVID-19 PLANNING:

Allison Acevedo informed the members that the Department is operational even though the physical offices are closed as most employees are teleworking. Information about practices, alerts, and general information about COVID-19 can be found on the Department's website. Any entity that is granted temporary suspension of certain environmental compliance requirements by the Department will also be listed on the webpage.

David Saunders from the Department of Health (DOH) offered that a Health Equity Response Team emanating out of their department is conducting a kickoff virtual meeting on April 22 at 10:00. The goal of the team is to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities. Based upon the numbers around the country, black communities are being disproportionately burdened by the virus. David expressed that support and input from EJAB would be welcome, and he will reach out to the Department of Education (DOE) to extend an invitation to the kickoff meeting.

Gary Horton offered details of an effort in Erie involving multiple local and county government offices, community health workers, and citizens in order to get a better handle on COVID-19 in the community. The plan identifies cases through screening and outreach, identifying medical facilities in the area that are conducting testing, hiring community health workers and providing appropriate PPE, creating educational pamphlets in multiple languages and providing interpreters, as well as supplying residents with masks and gloves. Gary will share information on this model program with Allison Acevedo, who will then share the information with EJAB members.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Alice Wright offered a comment to David Saunders' invitation to the DOE. She believes there must be communication with folks in order to tackle the health and environmental issues that communities are facing.

Allison Robinson raised the issue of solid waste management during COVID-19. The workers tend to be minorities and in Pittsburgh there was almost a strike because workers claimed they were not equipped with proper PPE. Allison Acevedo will follow up with the Department and provide feedback via email to members.

DEP AND OEJ UPDATES:

Allison Acevedo

SWRO Regional Coordinator

Because of the Governor's statewide hiring freeze, the selected candidate was not able to be hired for the OEJ Southwest Regional Coordinator position. The future economic situation will determine if the position will become available again.

Capacity Building and EJ Mapping

OEJ has been involved with the EPA around capacity building and supporting the Department's internal knowledge on the history of environmental justice, environmental justice mapping, and interagency training and collaboration.

Public Participation in Virtual Hearings

Secretary McDonnell is soliciting feedback from the EJAB on public participation and virtual public hearings during social distancing from COVID-19 and beyond. We are assessing ways to access communities we don't typically engage, communities without internet, and other obstacles of public participation and outreach.

Member comments included: Outreach should be prioritized around fracking; provide accommodations to individuals without computer and internet technology; and identify ways to get hard copy documents to communities because standard methods (e.g. posting in public library) are not feasible at this time.

Suggestions were made to form a Public Participation and Outreach subcommittee. Tom Torres and Jerome Shabazz volunteered to be on the Public Participation and Outreach Subcommittee:

EJAB Student Membership

The OEJ was recently contacted by a student interested in serving on the EJAB. It was determined that there is no language in the bylaws that would preclude student membership and the Secretary can appoint members at his discretion. The board members expressed interest in having a student member. The student's credentials could be reviewed by the EJAB and sent to the Secretary.

Environment and Science Education Standards Committee

This committee is administered through the Department of Education and is seeking candidates with experience and interest in environmental education and advancing environmental justice. The applications are due April 20, 2020. Allison will send information to EJAB members.

Board Diversity

Justin Dula explain that in order to increase diversity of Department boards and commissions there is a need to assess the current makeup of the boards. Justin has drafted a series of demographic questions in survey format that would be optional for members to compete. Justin will email the draft survey to the EJAB members for discussion at the next meeting. Allison Acevedo mentioned that this survey may need to be evaluated by counsel. Members reiterated

that it is critical to diversify by adding folks who have a stake in environmental justice and who understand communities, as well as looking at their experience and expertise.

Policy Update

Abbey Cadden highlighted that the Department is seeking to operate as normal as possible with inspections and permit reviews continuing to move forward. It is anticipated that the CO2 Budget Trading Program regulation, also known as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, will be published in draft form this year.

EJ SYMPOSIUM:

In light of COVID-19, Allison Acevedo encouraged the EJAB members to think about alternative methods to holding an in-person symposium. Heather Bedi stated that Dickinson College is interested in incorporating the EJ Symposium into their Clark Forum for Contemporary Issues. The group discussed having an initial event through Dickinson College in the fall and host a full symposium in 2021. The OEJ and EJAB were asked to think about funding mechanisms. Heather Bedi offered that Dickinson will pay to bring the speakers to Carlisle and provide housing as well. For the 2021 larger forum, Justin Dula offered that possibly the PA Environmental Consortium would be willing to sponsor the event and take up some management aspects. Justin offered to contact them to gauge their interest. Chairman Cutler stated that the EJAB would need to have a clear understanding of the amount of control over the program it needs to retain in any sort of relationship with another entity.

Actions Items include: develop list of possible dates and blackout dates in the September/October timeframe; identify potential speakers; solicit interest from EJAB members to participate as panelists; and EJAB members to submit names of community members interested in participating in a panel discussion to Allison Acevedo and the EJ Symposium subcommittee.

EJAB COMMITTEE UPDATES:

DOH – Interagency Health Workgroup

Allison Robinson offered that subcommittee conference calls have been focused on a group of Penn State students piloting a project around GIS tools and census tract versus census block. Training will be held in the near future. The goal is to try to understand what tools can be used to identify communities of greatest concern.

NEXT MEETING:

Because of COVID-19, members indicated their preference to change the May 12 in-person meeting to a virtual meeting. Topics for discussion may include: Climate Action Plan, RGGI update, location of August EJAB meeting, strategies for virtual engagement with communities, and review of the board diversity draft survey.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Adam Cutler requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Arthur Frank made a motion to adjourn the EJAB meeting, which was seconded by Allison Robinson. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.