

**MINUTES OF
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
May 13, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER:

Bob Barkanic, CAC Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC) MEMBERS PRESENT:

George Ambrose	Duane Mowery
Bob Barkanic, Chair	Trisha Salvia
Jacqueline Bonomo	Thad Stevens
Carol Collier	John Walliser
Katie Hetherington Cunfer	Jim Welty
	Tim Weston

DEP STAFF PRESENT:

Ramez Ziadeh, Acting Executive Deputy Secretary
Ian Irvin, Executive Director
Casey Damicantonio, Policy Office
Joshua Neyhart, Policy Office

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Bob Barkanic solicited additions or corrections to the April 8, 2025, Minutes. Hearing none:

Tim Weston moved to approve the Minutes of the April 8, 2025 meeting. Jacqueline Bonomo seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

SUMMARY OF FACTS, BACKGROUND & RECOMMENDATIONS:

DEP continues to pay very close attention to all federal actions and the ensuing lawsuits. In many cases, the Executive Orders have called for federal agency actions, but those actions have not yet been taken.

Acting Secretary Shirley continues to have good conversations with Senators around confirmation. All meetings should be completed by the end of May.

Q1 DEP Achievements

Headline Achievements

DEP has dramatically reduced its permit backlog by over 90%, dropping from a high of 2,400 pending permits to around 200 today. This milestone reflects a focused effort to improve efficiency and responsiveness - ensuring that businesses are not left waiting for decisions. The "backlog" is defined as permit applications received before the start of PAYback (11/1/23) that are overdue and waiting on DEP to act.

- In the first four months of 2025, DEP reviewed and acted on over 12,000 permit applications - a clear demonstration of how timely results are being delivered while maintaining its commitment to environmental standards.
- More than 38,000 inspections have already been conducted this year, reinforcing DEP's dual commitment to speed and accountability. Permits are not just being issued faster, but the agency is ensuring those permits are being followed and enforced.

Modernizing Permitting for Business and the Environment

- DEP handles over 40,000 permit applications each year, covering everything from clean drinking water and industrial air quality to oil and gas development and renewable energy projects, all of which is essential to both environmental protection and economic growth.
- For several months, DEP has been in the process of replacing its central database (eFACTS). A software product has been selected, and a consultant will be employed to help integrate that product into our operations. The eFACTS database was created in the mid-90's. Staff work is routinely being delayed by bugs, crashes, and the generally clunky way it operates. Significant training is required for new staff to use it properly.
- Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, DEP is moving at the speed of business, so projects can break ground faster while still meeting rigorous environmental safeguards. This is how DEP is becoming a true partner to Pennsylvania's business community.
- Faster permitting means faster development. DEP is helping companies get shovels in the ground more quickly without compromising its mission to protect clean air and clean water.

Increasing Transparency and Accountability

- With the launch of the permit tracker in January 2025, DEP is giving businesses and residents real-time access to the status of their applications, fostering transparency, and reducing uncertainty for applicants. The tracker allows for searching of any permit received after October 1, 2024, and the search can be conducted by permit number or by browsing a program area or permit type. The results include information such as the date the permit application was received, the expected review time, and the current status.
- Our PAYback Program, which went into effect in late 2023, offers a money-back guarantee if DEP fails to meet its permit review timelines. Since its launch, DEP has reviewed over 50,000 permits. Not a single refund has been issued.

Expanding Capacity to Deliver Results

- Since 2023, DEP has added 225 new employees to expand its capacity for permit reviews, field inspections, and public health and safety work. This investment is paying off in faster responses and stronger protections for communities across the Commonwealth.
- At the same time, DEP is leveraging technology and modernizing internal processes to eliminate bottlenecks and ensure every step in the permitting process is efficient and effective

Innovative Programs to Streamline Reviews

- The new SPEED Program, created under the bipartisan 2024-25 state budget, allows applicants to use DEP-verified professionals to conduct the first round of permit reviews.

This innovative approach maintains DEP oversight while increasing flexibility and reducing time to decision.

- SPEED applies to critical permit types, including Air Quality Plan Approvals, earth disturbance, dam safety, and water obstruction and encroachment permits.
 - The qualified professionals must apply to be selected through the procurement process, and their education and experience must satisfy the requirements of the Act. For example, applicants must have five years of relevant permitting experience within Pennsylvania.
 - DEP retains final authority on permit decisions, but this program gives applicants more certainty and quicker answers while still holding environmental standards firm.
- DEP is also seeing early success with targeted pilot programs designed to speed up permitting for complex projects.
 - A Chapter 102 NPDES pilot program launched in 10 counties is already showing impressive results, cutting review times by up to 73 business days.
 - Five permit applications have been issued so far, and all of them were issued faster than the normal process (176 business days). Two were issued faster than was expected when the pilot program was designed (103 business days).
 - The pilot program requires the applicant to attend two pre-application meetings with staff from DEP and the local County Conservation District. This ensures a higher-quality application that can go through the process more smoothly.
 - A new Chapter 105 pilot aims to reduce errors and shorten review times by 63 days. It also prioritizes projects that deliver public benefit, including clean energy and environmental restoration efforts.

PRESENTATIONS:

Jay Patel, Bureau of Clean Water

Draft Proposed Regulatory Updates to Chapters 71, 71, and 73

This presentation identified the goals of the Sewage Facilities Act, the engagement that is anticipated, the goals of the rulemaking, including proactive municipal planning, simplified sewage planning, on-lot sewage disposal as a long-term solution, providing flexibility in on-lot permitting to SEOs and local agencies, and updating the standards for on-lot systems. Highlights of Chapters 71, 72, and 73 were presented and next steps provided.

Brian Rengert, Dir. of Government Relations, PA State Association of Twp. Supervisors

Environmental Updates and Initiatives of PSATS

This presentation covered food processing residuals, stream cleaning, and the modification of MS-4 requirements that are new or different than previously met requirements.

Sean Wenrich/Arun Sharma, DEP's New Source Review Section

25 Pa. Code Chapter 129 – Additional RACT Requirements for Major Sources of NOx and VOCs for the 2-15 Ozone NAAQS (RACT III Corrections)

This presentation provided a detailed background and reasoning of the rulemaking, entities that are subject to the rulemaking, rulemaking outcomes, revisions that were made to the final form rulemaking, and the anticipated rulemaking schedule.

RECOMMENDATION OF CAC'S POLICY & REGULATORY OVERSIGHT AND COUNCIL VOTE ON RACT 3 CORRECTIONS RULEMAKING

Chair Barkanic requested a motion in support of moving forward with two rulemakings.

Tim Weston moved to support moving forward. Thad Stevens seconded, which was unanimously approved.

CAC COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Radiation Protection Advisory Committee

- Updates on bills regarding radon testing and mitigation in schools
- Review of Nuclear Material Events Database and Medical Reportable Events
- Draft final omitted regulation for consistency with the US NRC

Strategic Issues Committee

- With the seeming holding pattern on hydrogen hubs, the committee debated about next steps regarding that specific issue and if there are other issues the committee can turn its attention to
- Data centers and warehouses have seemed to be a growing issue in the Commonwealth. Most focus on power issues (really interested in environmental issues) water usage and land disturbance
- Update on the State Water Plan. The committee talked about more discrete issues for “one off” presentations.

Policy and Regulatory Oversight

- Decision on RACT 3 corrections rulemaking

NEW BUSINESS/OPEN DISCUSSION

Reminders

- Election of Chair and Vice Chair in June
- Aggregate Advisory Committee: May 21 at 10:00
- PA House Energy Committee – Informational meeting on electric transmission: Tomorrow at 10:00
- PA House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee meeting: May 19 at 10:00
- Some pieces of legislation that have come into the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee: PRESS, PACER, Elimination of EQB

ADJOURNMENT:

The next meeting of the CAC will be June 10, 2025, at 12:30 in Room 105 of the Rachel Carson State Office Building or Teams.

Tim Weston moved to adjourn the meeting. Jacqueline Bonomo seconded

the motion, which was unanimously approved.

The May 13 meeting of the CAC was adjourned at 2:57pm.