

Commission on Environmental Justice & Sustainable Communities (CEJSC)
Low House Office Building, Room 318
Annapolis, MD
February 24, 2015

In Attendance

- Commissioners: Clifford Mitchell, Vernice Miller Travis, Andrew Fellows, Arabia Davis, Lisa Nissley, Rebecca Rehr
- Participants: Stephanie Cobb Williams, Jeaneen Logan, Lauren Rodgers, Angelo Bianca, Hadi AlShaikh Nasser, Kristen Weiss, Akosla Dosu

Introductions

Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves.

Transition

Lisa updated the Commission on MDE and the transition. Secretary Grumbles has been appointed and is working through the confirmation process. Lisa has discussed EJ with him. He is interested and would like to meet with the Commission. Lisa will work to get the April or May meeting on the schedule. May would be our joint meeting with CEHPAC. Some members liked the idea of him being exposed to both groups at the same time.

Andy mentioned he'd like the Department to think about Urban Waters and EJ. Secretary Grumbles may be interested in this. Vernice said she would like to learn more about the Secretary's feeling towards CEJSC. Other members suggested we discuss with him what our role should be in terms of briefing the Governor. Could we meet with him annually?

CEJSC Membership

The Commission needs a new Chair appointed. Lisa explained this is done by the Governor's Appointments Office which is currently busy with Secretary-level confirmations. She does not know exactly how soon these things will be done. The Commissioners would like to see more community representatives. We are also in need of legislative representatives. Rebecca suggested we send a letter to the presiding officers with suggestions. There was a brief discussion of members that have expressed an interest in EJ or may be open to discussion about the issue. .

Most members are up for reappointment in October.

Legislative Outreach

The Commission continued to discuss legislators that may be interested in EJ. Also, they would like to do more Legislative Black Caucus outreach. Perhaps there is a role for the Commission in the November Convention? Maybe a panel?

The Commission began to discuss what they can offer as a tangible product. We have a pretty good website at this point, but what can we provide to people as we discuss EJ. The Commission noted that many things happen at the agencies that go under our radar.

Vernice suggested the NEJAC might be a model for the Commission.

Next Steps/Moving Forward

Given the transition of both the administration and the legislature, the Commission discussed how we might adjust our goals for the year. What Regulatory framework that allows us to move forward? How can we grow the Commission's voice? Arabia mentioned she'd like to engage Secretary Craig in the issues as well. Commissioners expressed a need for clarity and a vision both internally and suggestions from the new officials of the administration. Other ideas of interest included accessing current zoning laws. We should take advantage of the transition as an opportunity to raise up EJ and be aspirational.