

Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities

Meeting Minutes

November 24, 2020, Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Obie Patterson, Senator for Prince George's County, District 8; Joseph Griffiths; John Papagni; Camille Burke; Paula Dannenfeldt; Paulette Hammond; Stephan Levitsky; Janet Cornick; Lesliam Quiros; Subha Chander

MDE Staff Present: Ben Grumbles, Secretary; Horacio Tabalada, Deputy Secretary; Suzanne Dorsey, Assistant Secretary; Devon Dodson; Cindy Osorto; Mark Shaffer; Susan Casey; Kimberlee Drake

Guests: Elizabeth Price, Hannah Brubach, John Kumm, Kamita Gray, Brianne Martin, Patrick DeArme, Vontasha Simms, Dorothy Morrison, Diana Conway, Emily Harris, Emily Soontornsaratool, Richard Tabuteau, Sherman Hardy, Elizabeth Shwe, Al Weaver

Next meeting: December 3, 2020, 12:30 – 2:00pm, Virtual and will be hosted by the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC)

Meeting minutes and agenda will be available online:

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/CrossMedia/EnvironmentalJustice/Pages/cejsc.aspx>

Please note that the recording was not able to be provided as stated in the previous meeting minutes for September.

1. Introduction and Remarks

- **Camille Burke**, Chair, Director Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program for the Baltimore City Health Department
 - Thank you for joining us. Note that there will be a joint CEHPAC meeting on December 3, 2020.
 - Today we will be having MDE staff report on recent updates and recommendations. This will be an interactive meeting. We want feedback and welcome you to jump in the discussion.
- **Ben Grumbles**, MDE Secretary
 - I'm excited about the reenergized Commission. Thanks to everyone for your devotion to this Commission. Addressing environmental justice is a top priority for the Department. MDE spoke to Speaker Jones last week regarding the empty House Delegate representative vacancy.

2. Staff Reports

- **Devon Dodson**, MDE Designee and Senior Policy Advisor
 - We will be sending draft meeting minutes around for approval

- Updates pertaining to vacancies include term extensions for members whose terms had expired as well as sending a request to Speaker Jones for the Delegate position
- There have not been any applications for the environmental organization vacancy so if you know of anyone you can apply. Applications can be accepted year-round.
- **Cindy Osorto**, MDE Staff to the Commission, Policy Analyst
 - Meeting minutes available in the CEJSC website
 - Most of the vacancies in the Commission are appointed by the Governor so you would have to apply online with the Governor's Appointments Office.
 - The Commission will continue building off previous work, including the cumulative impact analysis temporary workgroup. Thanks to Steve and Subha for their work evaluating eastern shore communities.
- **Ben Grumbles**, MDE Secretary
 - The Maryland Climate Change Commission (MCCC) is committed to addressing climate justice. On November 15, 2020, the MCCC released its annual report with several commitments pertaining to environmental justice, including increasing the diversity within the MCCC:
<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Documents/MCCCAnnualReport2020.pdf>
 - The Commission appointed a third Co-Chair: Ms. Charmaine Brown, Equity Officer for Charles County. The Commission is looking for interconnectedness of equity considerations in its work and is committed to real progress. It will consider long-term effects, such as flooding issues and moving away from fossil fuels.

3. Draft Recommendations Discussion

- **Camille Burke** – These recommendations are open for feedback and discussion.
- **Devon Dodson and Cindy Osorto** – Overview of Recommendations
 - Prioritize Identification of Communities with EJ Issues
 - Could be done through a workgroup within the Commission
 - Future work can evaluate other state approaches to long-term EJ strategies and policy approaches, including Connecticut
 - Review EJ mapping tools, including:
 - EPA EJ Screen's environmental and demographic indicators
 - University of Maryland also has an EJ mapping tool with Maryland-specific information, including a Park Equity layer
 - Support Enhanced Engagement and Public Participation Strategies
 - Pilot Virtual Listening Sessions
 - Support partnerships with Counties
 - Create Public Input Portal
 - Evaluate diverse geographic representation in Commission
- **The Honorable Obie Patterson** – There can be complexities to building local partnerships.
- **Subha Chander**: a good idea to have a workgroup. There are EJ Screening tools that can be evaluated further. The University of Maryland version has been updated recently.

- Community engagement is a key component – could hold learning sessions
- Commission in the past has struggled with the development of EJ criteria
- **Steve Levitsky** – The Commission will need further guidance for EJ criteria
- **Devon Dodson** – I can't stress enough just how committed to revitalization the Commission will be moving forward
- **Dorothy Morrison**: Important to figure out local concerns. What are the issues? Tools are important but real presence is important
- **Devon Dodson** – it is our recommendation to go out into communities to hear their local concerns, including Prince George's and Eastern Shore
- **Joe Griffiths** – Agree that engagement can be strengthened but there should be goals set for the outreach. Can't go out to go out. In past years, the Commission discussed the creation of an outreach plan.
- **Steve Levitsky** – Some recommendations may require review by counsel to clarify authorities.
- **The Honorable Obie Patterson** – People should know who to contact for their concerns. Talking with communities to learn their specific issues is important. Regulation changes may be necessary. Members could be designated specific roles.
- **Cindy Osorto** – More introductory background information on EJ can be found under the Resources page:
<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Crossmedia/EnvironmentalJustice/Pages/resources.aspx>
- **Camille Burke** – We are hearing that there is interest in more local representation. Everyone is welcome to attend our public meetings. We also don't have to reinvent the wheel and may consider known strategies, such as creating Community Advisory Groups.
- **Devon Dodson** – We look forward to public comments and will adjust our approach as we go based on feedback received. We are available to answer any questions you have. Legislative report has been delayed due to the pandemic but will be available prior to the legislative session.

4. Public Comment

- Vontosha Simms – I am interested in applying for the Commission on behalf of the Charles County Ji'Aire's Workgroup Black By Nature Environmentalist Activist Campaign.
- **Camille Burke and Devon Dodson** - Anyone is welcome to apply to the Commission with the Governor's Appointments Office.
- Kamita Gray – There are studies available that show the correlations between pollution and adverse health effects in overburdened and underserved communities. This can be an issue of civil rights and equity. It is shameful to have so much air pollution in Brandywine.
- Brianna Martin – I am student with Johns Hopkins working on an environmental health project that evaluates EJ community criteria and am interested in supporting this effort.
- Diana Conway – EJ is beginning to look at the big picture and bills will have nuances.

- **Devon Dodson** – The Commission continues committed to providing independent comment during the 2021 legislative session, which will be held virtually.
- **Al Weaver:** EJ efforts have no teeth unless there's a law that's established. More public engagement and tools need to be given. Negotiations in Brandywine was out of tune. Permitting questions are underway.
- **Veronika Carella** – I am also interested in applying for a position in the Commission. I would be interested in looking at the low hanging fruit and evaluating any data gaps.

5. Concluding Remarks

- **Camille Burke:** Thank you everyone. Please continue to provide feedback along our processes. Happy Thanksgiving.
- **Ben Grumbles:** Great discussion and Happy Thanksgiving.
- **Devon Dodson and Cindy Osorto:** Please continue to attend meetings and provide feedback along the way. Let us know if you have any questions.