

Environmental Justice Council (EJC)  
Meeting #8  
Wednesday, February 8, 2023  
6:00pm (delayed start) to 8:31pm  
Meeting Minutes

**Meeting location:** Zoom webinar and in-person (Williams School Building, 108 Walnut St, Chelsea, MA, 02150)

**Meeting documents:** [Agenda](#), [Slides](#), [Council Member Comments on EEA EJ Strategy](#)

**Council members present:**

- Cheryll Holley (Remote)
- Ari Zorn (Remote)
- Caroline Hon (Remote)
- Melissa Ferretti (Remote)
- Lydia Lowe (In person)
- Patricia Spence (Remote)
- Madeline Fraser Cook (In person)
- Kalila Barnett (In person)
- Namrita Kapur (In person)
- Rishi Reddi (in person)

**Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) staff present:**

- Rebecca Tepper, Secretary of EEA (in person)
- Maria Hardiman, Director of Communications (in person)
- Rishi Reddi, Director of EJ and Chair of EJC (In person)
- Carline Lemoine, Deputy Director of EJ for External Stakeholder Coordination (Remote)

Meeting to begin at 6:00 pm was delayed 10-15 minutes due to technical difficulties.

**Welcome and Overview of Meeting Logistics**

Rishi Reddi welcomed panelists and attendees. Kecil John provided an overview of the meeting logistics, including use of the question and answer (Q&A) box and the availability of interpreters.

**Introduction of Secretary Tepper**

Rishi welcomed Secretary Rebecca Tepper. Secretary Tepper introduced herself to the public and to the EJC, then provided an overview of the EJC's goals and objectives. She also thanked the council members.

**Roll Call/Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes**

Rishi conducted a roll call of the EJC members. At the start of the meeting, the following council members were present: Cheryll Holley, Ari Zorn, Caroline Hon, Melissa Ferretti, Lydia Lowe, Patricia Spence, Madeline Fraser Cook, Kalila Barnett, Namrita Kapur and Rishi Reddi.

Rishi asked for feedback or amendments to the December 13, 2022, meeting minutes. No feedback or amendments were proposed.

Rishi opened the floor for a motion to adopt the minutes. Lydia Lowe motioned to adopt. Madeline Fraser Cook seconded the motion. Rishi took a vote by roll call. Kalila Barnett and Namrita Kapur abstained from voting due to not being present at the prior meeting. All other present council members accepted the minutes. Rishi noted that the meeting was at quorum with ten members present and eight members voting to approve the minutes.

## **Announcements**

Rishi announced that the public comment period for the Draft EJ Strategy will be open until February 17 and that the council will be accepting public comments from postal mail, email, and an online survey. The EJC has also been collecting oral public comments from in-person listening sessions. Rishi announced that there will be a final in-person listening session on February 15 in Chinatown, Boston (885 Washington St, Boston, MA).

## **Presentation from Read Porter on Work Group Formation and Open Meeting Compliance**

Read Porter introduced himself as the Acting General Counsel of EEA. Read explained that due to the EJC's interest in advancing the council's work outside of formal meetings, he is attending to provide information to the council members on how to establish work groups that comply with the Open Meeting Law. Read elaborated on the Open Meeting Law, which stipulates that all meetings of a public body should be open to the public. Read elaborated on the definition of a "public body" and how it relates to a subcommittee. Read provided examples of subcommittees. Read elaborated on how voluntarily constituted groups can comply with the Open Meeting Law and provided practical examples of formal subcommittees and informal working groups under the Open Meeting Law.

In sum: Formal subcommittees, assigned by the whole EJC and made up of any number of members of the EJC, must comply with the Open Meeting Law. Informal working groups, made up of fewer-than-quorum members of the EJC and which include non-EJC members who are not assigned by the EJC, need not comply with the Open Meeting Law.

## **Questions for Read Porter on Work Group Formation and Open Meeting Compliance**

**Rishi Reddi:** Would the EJC be able to be split up into groups with fewer members than a quorum to discuss issues (e.g., metrics, mapping)? Would one or two people be leaders for each subgroup, or do we make a subcommittee of three to four formal members? Would the EJC subgroups/subcommittees be able to present "fact-finding" documents to help the EJC come to a formal recommendation of an EJ strategy for the EEA?

**Lydia Lowe:** It would be more efficient to break into working conversations and bring information back. The key is that it is not a formal decision by our group. It does not have to be limited to EJC members; they would have the ability to tap into community resources as well.

**Madeline Fraser Cook:** The less formal structure makes sense. If we went with the working group structure, can people volunteer at different points in time?

**Read Porter:** This would be a volunteer activity. This would not cause an issue with Open Meeting Law compliance.

**Kalila Barnett:** Do we have to choose one option? I need clarity on how to link the working group into the formal deliberation for the EJC.

**Read Porter:** Generally bringing information back to the EJC does not pose a problem, but it could look like a subcommittee is being created if an outside group is doing the work of a public body (the EJC).

**Lydia Lowe:** Could the working group ask to put items on the agenda?

**Read Porter** said that this would be fine.

**Namrita Kapur** clarified that the Public Meeting Law was about maintaining transparency and not making formal decisions outside of the EJC.

**Read Porter** agreed.

**Kalila Barnett** asked for clarification on the creation of working groups.

**Lydia Lowe** clarified that council members could express interest in topics but that the EJC cannot assign members or convene at quorum during formal meetings.

**Read Porter** clarified that you cannot send an email to the whole EJC over quorum but only between working groups, otherwise it would be considered a deliberation.

**Kalila Barnett:** A challenge, as a public body, would be asking residents to expend their time and resources to make decisions.

**Madeline Fraser Cook** asked for clarification on providing recommendations as a working group.

**Read Porter:** The definition of public body does refer to advising or making recommendations to the public. To avoid this, the working groups could provide the EJC options with pros and cons or overall conclusions that come from fact-finding. The EJC could discuss a recommended motion at a meeting based on information provided by working groups.

**Rishi Reddi** called time. Council members agreed to move on, keeping this information in mind for future decision-making.

### **EJC Discussion of Draft EEA EJ Strategy: Decision on EJC Comments**

**Rishi Reddi** provided background on the decisions of the November and the December meetings as follows: At the November meeting, the EJC received the draft EJ Strategy for review. After the November meeting, individual council members sent to EEA staff their personal comments on the Draft EJ Strategy and EEA staff compiled them into a comment document. The December EJC meeting devoted half the meeting time to receiving and making note of oral public stakeholder comments on the Draft EJ Strategy, which were received in English and Spanish. Afterwards, EEA staff prepared a consolidated comment document which included comments from individual EJC members and public comments from the December meeting. At the February 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, EJC members proceeded to review the consolidated [comment document](#).

**Rishi Reddi** proposed to develop a strategy to address the number of comments. Rishi proposed two options for reviewing the comments: 1) reviewing the comments that required more discussion first and 2) discussing metrics of the broader topics addressed within the comment document and the overall organization of the EJ Strategy.

**Namrita Kapur** asked to clarify the timeline and process for the review of the EJC comments.

**Rishi Reddi** clarified that the EEA EJ Office and Secretary Rebecca Tepper would receive these comments for consideration.

**Namrita Kapur** suggested focusing on the metrics of the EJ Strategy.

**Kalila Barnett:** What are the agencies' roles in handling these comments? How are the different agencies utilizing the EJ strategy?

**Rishi Reddi:** The agencies' strategies vary widely. Some agencies have implementation plans, others have EJ committees, and others have yet to develop a strategy. We could propose that agencies develop implementation plans.

**Kalila Barnett:** This would help us determine how much time to spend on these comments. Agencies across the board need to have streamlined implementation plans.

**Rishi Reddi** acknowledged the ideas presented in the comment document and its value. Rishi suggested revisiting the EJC's decision to submit one joint document from the EJC with comments on the EJ strategy. Rishi also suggested looking at the more controversial comments. She acknowledged that a strategy was needed to address the large number of comments.

**Kalila Barnett** inquired about which comments contained disagreements.

**Rishi Reddi** suggested revisiting comment 8 for a discussion of general metrics.

**Council members** acknowledged comment 8 needed more discussion.

**Caroline Hon** suggested revisiting comments where council members agreed.

**Madeline Fraser Cook** seconded visiting agreeable comments, where only simple modifications were requested.

Rishi began a conversation on ***agreeable comments. Comments that are agreed upon will be included in the proposed revisions document for the EEA.***

**Comment 2:** Council members agreed to include comment 2

**Comment 3:** Council members agreed to include comment 3.

**Comment 4:** Council members skipped Question 4 for further deliberation.

**Comment 5:** Council members agreed to include comment 5.

**Madeline Fraser Cook** noted she would like clarity on the purpose of the agency matrix.

**Rishi Reddi** clarified that the matrix identifies topics addressed across agencies. Council members suggested modifying comment 5 to suggest using the matrix to adopt uniformity/standardization among the agencies.

**Comment 6:** Council members agreed to include comment 6.

**Comment 7:** Council members agreed to consolidate comment 7 and comment 6.

**Comment 8:** Council members deliberated and modified comment 8 as follows:

**Kalila Barnett:** The environmental justice outcomes being sought by agencies are not contained to the agencies mentioned in the comment, rather about other agencies being in alignment.

**Madeline Fraser Cook:** The comment can be modified by adding to the final sentence of the comment.

Council members agreed to include comment 8.

**Comment 9:** Council members agreed to include comment 9.

**Comment 10:** Council members deliberated as follows:

**Rishi Reddi** flagged this comment as important and inquired if the EJC should recommend that the EEA and its agencies pay communities to engage with the EJ Strategy.

**Lydia Lowe** suggested that this comment would require more in-depth discussion. The idea of providing monetary resources to participants could also lead to negative consequences at a city level.

**Namrita Kapur** thought the second bullet point of the comment helped address the barriers to participation to engage with the EJ strategy for communities and agencies.

**Rishi Reddi** asked if council members were interested in making the second bullet point the main comment.

**Kalila Barnett:** Our comment should speak to community engagement and speak to nuance. In terms of paying community members to participate and other planning processes, this is an active conversation that needs to be had. I would like to expand on the second bullet of the comment.

**Lydia Lowe:** We should include the possibility of monetary stipends for community engagement.

**Kalila Barnett:** It could be important to know why the comment was called out, either through the perspective of an individual or through the state providing accountability incentives. We need to find out more about the permitting process if viewing this from the viewpoint of state processes.

**Rishi Reddi** accepted the modification the council members suggested; council members agreed. Comment 10 was modified by making the second bullet the main comment, broadening comment 10's scope to state processes, and modifying the wording.

**Comment 11:** Council members made a modification and agreed to include comment 11.

**Comment 12:** Council members agreed to include comment 12.

**Comment 13:** Council members deliberated as follows:

**Rishi Reddi:** There are other training comments in the comment document that suggest internal staff trainings are important. I suggest we remove this comment and consolidate it with the other training comments.

**Kalila Barnett:** This might have been one of my comments. We have no way to assess the quality of these trainings.

EJC moved onto **Comment 29**, another comment on the topic of trainings.

**Rishi Reddi** suggested collapsing all the training comments into the phrase "effective, meaningful, and relevant training is important."

**Madeline Fraser Cook:** Trainings must be mandatory and include an explanation of why.

**Namrita Kapur** prefers comment 13 over 29.

EJC members agreed to collapse all training comments into Comment 13 with a modification.

**Rishi Reddi** suggested consolidating the rest of the comments that were left unaddressed to avoid redundancy and scheduling a short Zoom meeting to go over the consolidated comments. All council members agreed. Council members will further discuss comments that were suggested to be taken out.

**Rishi Reddi** suggested including all comments in the proposed revision document to EEA marked as "C" (include with modification). Council members will attend a one-hour meeting to discuss comments categorized as "B" (remove comment) and agree upon which comments they will remove and discuss the comments the EJC cannot come to a consensus on.

**Namrita Kapur** expressed concern over losing comments. Namrita suggested framing the comments under topics and prioritizing the topics that the comments fall under.

**Rishi Reddi:** Do we want to focus on outcomes or outputs for metrics? We need to clarify this for the agencies.

Rishi suggested focusing on community engagement and metrics as the overall focus of the comments. Rishi reiterated that the deadline for the comment period is open until the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, however there is flexibility. The EJ Office would consider comments received outside of the formal public comment period.

### **Draft EEA EJ Strategy: Public Comments**

The public submitted questions and comments both verbally and through the Q&A box on Zoom. The following are summarized comments from the public that were received verbally:

**Paulina Casasola:** I work as a climate justice organizer at Clean Water Action. Thank you, council members, for your time. The EJ Table is not participating in this process in solidarity with GreenRoots as a critique of the meeting process. Moving forward, it would be important for the EJC to have an equitable and participatory process. GreenRoots and Clean Water Action hope to continue working closely with the Massachusetts EEA and EJC.

**Rishi Reddi** expressed her desire to continue working closely with GreenRoots and other Community Based Organizations.

**Namrita Kapur** requested context regarding the decisions which led GreenRoots to not participate.

**Rishi Reddi:** GreenRoots requested for the agenda to be adjusted to accommodate public comments at the beginning of the meeting rather than at the end. Under the Open Meeting Law, we posted the agenda, which could not be changed within 48 hours. When these meetings got taken out of the Zoom format and into the in-person format, the comments being at the end of a Zoom call made sense. In the future, we would like in-person meetings to have comments at the beginning and at the end. That allows general public comment and also comment over the specific subjects addressed by the council. Accessibility is a priority for these meetings. Paulina, I thank you for your comment and for the opportunity to express my opinion on this issue.

**Lydia Lowe:** Next week, we have an in-person listening session in Chinatown. I suggest not combining the EJC meeting with the listening session to focus on grassroots support and community engagement. We need to make sure the word gets out about these listening sessions. As a question for the Secretary, how do you see the role of the EJC supporting your work in the future?

**Kalila Barnett:** Adding to that, the important projects up for debate within EJ communities are also part of the dynamic. People will be interested to hear the EJC's perspective on topics.

**Secretary Rebecca Tepper:** We are feeling this out as we go along and are interested in community input. The EEA wants to collaborate with EJC as an advisory group with flexibility embedded in the process.

**Rishi Reddi:** The EJC has a statutory mandate to complete some tasks. During EJC meetings, we must keep the statutory mandate in mind. However, we are interested in the input from community members and the local neighborhoods we visit. It is important for the council to be connected to folks on the ground.

**Lydia Lowe:** I agree.

**Rebecca Tepper:** These meetings are not substitutes for public hearings and listening sessions for individual projects. These EJC meetings are in addition to the other required meetings.

**Rishi Reddi:** As part of the EJC, it is a necessity to hear out community members, especially when there are emotions and lived experiences involved. We should be on the forefront of this work.

**Ari Zorn:** I echo what Rishi said. As a collective group, we are tasked to address EJ concerns.

**Catherine Rodriguez:** I have attended a few of these Zoom meetings and appreciate their accessibility. You've never come to southeastern Massachusetts (Taunton, Massachusetts). I live in an environmental justice zone that has an elderly disabled housing complex. Not everyone is able to find out about these Zoom meetings and Taunton would be interested in an in-person meeting.

**Rishi Reddi:** Due to our previous conversations, Taunton is now on the list for an in-person meeting location.

**Kalila Barnett:** I am curious about the capacity to do outreach for the listening sessions for EJC meetings. Are our current mechanisms adequate?

**Lydia Lowe and Rishi Reddi:** We need to do better outreach.

**Rishi Reddi:** We could use social media and old-fashioned postings. We have so much more to do in terms of outreach.

**Communications Director of EEA** asked if the EJC is funded.

**Rishi Reddi:** By statute, the EJC is not funded.

**Communications Director of EEA:** We can explore multicultural radio ads and build press lists. Something worth researching for the EJC outreach are the channels multicultural communities are present in, such as WhatsApp groups and Facebook groups.

**Patricia Spence:** Reaching out to senior centers and utilizing institutional knowledge is important.

**Lydia Lowe:** It is important to use ethnic social media. For example, the Chinese use WeChat and we can send out a poster in WeChat. As an aside, it is important to have Cantonese interpretations for the listening session in Chinatown.

**Zeus Smith:** I am Zeus Smith, the policy advocate with the Charles River Water Association. We have been working on language and environmental justice ourselves. Utilizing networks that we have been cultivating could be a good way to help spread the word.

**Amanda McNeill:** To expand on the idea of networking with community-based organizations (CBOs), the people with boots on the ground have their finger on the pulse of what is going on, including how to get information out to communities in an efficient and effective way. Working with CBOs would also be a great way to empower CBOs that are trying to do the work on the ground. For next steps, getting a list of these organizations and sending an email could be a way to get the word out and ensure everyone's voices are heard.

**Rishi Reddi:** At EEA, we have an EJ organization list that we utilize on nearly a daily basis, but it does get out of date. A lot of the CBOs we work with tell us they are already short-staffed and very overworked. Asking them to get the word out can add to their workload, so we try to stay cognizant of this. We are discussing how to provide enabling compensation for when these CBOs participate in the EJC meeting process. We must account for people's time when they already have their own work to do. These are the things we are trying to figure out, which is the next step. Thank you for that comment.

**Madeline Fraser Cook:** This relates to the comment we discussed previously, comment 10, and we should center organizations when discussing compensation for their work.

**Rishi Reddi:** We have been discussing with Read Porter how to define these groups we are seeking compensation for.

**Kalila Barnett:** This conversation is important for the council as an individual body and across EEA. The success of these strategies relies on meaningful public participation. The state needs to recognize that it needs additional capacity to help supplement this work, so we do not devolve this work onto community groups. The state needs to participate in this process.

**Kristen Mello:** Thank you everyone for your time. Community engagement does not need to be harder or more expensive than it needs to be. When you go into a community, those community groups or schools know what specifically to provide due to their lived experiences and participation in the community. The EJC can utilize available resources to perform outreach. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

### Questions Received Through Zoom’s Q&A Box

#	Question	Asker Name	Answer	Answerer Name
1	Sorry for arriving late—will a recording of the meeting be shared with participants?	Anonymous Attendee	Yes, recordings will be posted on the EJ Council website: <a href="https://www.mass.gov/orgs/environmental-justice-council/events?page=1">https://www.mass.gov/orgs/environmental-justice-council/events?page=1</a>	N/A
2	I have been asked by the Social and Environmental Action Committee (SEAC) at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth (UUFF) if the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection’s (MassDEP’s) Title V Septic System/Watershed Permit proposal has an EJ component, since this program will cost Cape Cod towns/water districts to expend \$3–7 billion over the next 20–30 years. SEAC wants to organize a program on the MassDEP proposal and has EJ concerns as a community of faith.	David Dow <a href="mailto:ddow420@comcast.net">ddow420@comcast.net</a>	A person you might want to contact is Deneen Simpson, the Director of Environmental Justice at MassDEP. She could help you with this, her email is on the EJ website and I can send you her information to be in touch directly.	Rishi Reddi
3	Last Sunday’s Boston Globe contained an advertisement sponsored by environmental nongovernment organizations urging action on “nitrogen pollution” from septic systems, which create water quality problems and loss of marine habitat in Cape Cod’s impacted embayment. Falmouth, where I live, has 14 nitrogen-sensitive embayments that run from inland kettle ponds to coastal embayments which are connected by a combination of rivers and groundwater. Thus, nutrient pollution includes both nitrogen and phosphorus.	David Dow	N/A	



#	Question	Asker Name	Answer	Answerer Name
4	What kinds of agencies will be implementing ideas and guidelines from this document?	Grace Sprague <a href="mailto:gsprague@une.edu">gsprague@une.edu</a>	The agency matrix document document pertains to all six of EEA's agencies that oversee agriculture, energy, environment, and climate. The strategy will guide the four EEA internal offices: the Office of Technical Assistance, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, and our climate work through the Municipal Vulnerable Preparedness program. In addition, it will guide two external entities: the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.	Rishi Reddi
5	What are some examples of other actions that incentives may be provided for, like the ones described in comment 10?	Grace Sprague	<b>Lydia Lowe:</b> I think we discussed it more as removing barriers rather than creating incentives. <b>Rishi Reddi:</b> Permitting, siting, grant disbursement, enforcement, planning, and regulations would be part of the state processes to create incentives.	Lydia Lowe and Rishi Reddi
6	If Lawrence isn't on your visit list, it should be. Is it?	Dennis Richards <a href="mailto:dennisar@gmail.com">dennisar@gmail.com</a>	It is on our list.	Rishi Reddi
7	UUFF SEAC is engaged with the Faith Community Environmental Network of the Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative and interacts with the	David Dow	N/A	

#	Question	Asker Name	Answer	Answerer Name
	Mashpee Wampanoag tribe on local concerns in the Waquoit Bay Watershed.			
8	Another approach to get the word out about listening sessions and opportunities to participate in this process is to reach out directly to community-based organizations (CBOs). They often know the best way to reach community members and mobilize them. I think engaging CBOs also empowers the communities.	Amanda McNeill <a href="mailto:amanda.mcneill@mass.gov">amanda.mcneill@mass.gov</a>	N/A	
9	Is Salem on your list? We would love to have you come and we respectfully ask to have public comments at the beginning. This is from Pat Gozemba, co-chair of Salem Alliance for the Environment. SAFE will help publicize the meeting.	Pat Gozemba <a href="mailto:pgozemba@gmail.com">pgozemba@gmail.com</a>	It is now on our list. Please send contact information so we can be in touch with you.	Rishi Reddi
10	I would love to throw Gloucester in the ring as a possible meeting site. Gloucester's EJ neighborhoods are important regionally to Cape Ann in terms of providing housing and services for EJ communities. I'm happy to help in any way I can. Thanks for your work.	Gemma Wilkens <a href="mailto:gwilkens@gloucester-ma.gov">gwilkens@gloucester-ma.gov</a>	Please put your contact information in the chat so we can contact you.	Rishi Reddi
11	<a href="mailto:Pgozemba@gmail.com">Pgozemba@gmail.com</a> 978-744-9141	Pat Gozemba	N/A	
12	<a href="mailto:SalemSAFE@gmail.com">SalemSAFE@gmail.com</a>	Pat Gozemba	N/A	
13	Chat is disabled for me but here is my contact information for possibly hosting a meeting in Gloucester. Gemma Wilkens <a href="mailto:gwilkens@gloucester-ma.gov">gwilkens@gloucester-ma.gov</a> . Thanks again!	Gemma Wilkens	N/A	
14	Please make sure that SAFE (Salem Alliance for the Environment) is on your EJ list. Contact us at <a href="mailto:SalemSAFE@gmail.com">SalemSAFE@gmail.com</a> .	Pat Gozemba	N/A	
15	I live in Andover. Does the EJC have any suggestions for how non-EJ communities should be formally working with EJ populations in nearby communities to help the region prepare for the impacts	Dennis Richards <a href="mailto:dennisar@gmail.com">dennisar@gmail.com</a>	Thank you for this comment and raise a good point. We are also aware of many places in the state where EJ populations make up a huge share of the workforce in	Rishi Reddi

#	Question	Asker Name	Answer	Answerer Name
	of climate and ecological breakdown? Can the EJ Strategy incorporate this concept as a formal part of the document when it is revised?		non-EJ populations. We need to develop strategies to address these concerns.	
16	This is the first time that I've been able to participate in this meeting and have been really impressed with the comments and discourse I heard. I just want to thank Rishi and the members of the council for your sincerity and the genuine effort being made to get this important work done!	Pallavi Mande <a href="mailto:pallavi.km@gmail.com">pallavi.km@gmail.com</a>	N/A	

### Next Steps and Adjourn

Rishi Reddi motioned to adjourn. Namrita Kapur moved and Lydia Lowe seconded. Roll call was taken and EJC members agreed to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.