

Environmental Justice Council (EJC)
Meeting #9
Wednesday, April 26, 2023
1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

Meeting location: Zoom webinar

Meeting documents: [Agenda](#), [slides](#), [council member comments on EEA EJ Strategy](#)

Council members present:

- Melissa Ferretti
- Cheryll Holley
- Caroline Hon
- Lydia Lowe
- Marcos Luna
- Peter Maathey
- Sofia Owen
- Jen Salinetti
- Patricia Spence
- Ari Zorn

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

- Rishi Reddi, Director of Environmental Justice (EJ) and Chair of the EJC
- Carline Lemoine, Deputy Director of EJ for External Stakeholder Coordination
- María Belén Power, EJC Undersecretary

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.

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: **Melissa Ferretti, Cheryll Holley, Caroline Hon, Marcos Luna, Peter Maathey, Sofia Owen, Jen Salinetti, Patricia Spence, and Rishi Reddi.**

The following council members were not present at the start of the meeting, but joined after: **Lydia Lowe** and **Ari Zorn.**

The following council members were not present: **Kalila Barnett, Namrita Kapur, and Madeline Fraser Cook.**

Rishi Reddi welcomed two new EJC members, **Sofia Owen** and **Jen Salinetti.** **Sofia Owen** and **Jen Salinetti** introduced themselves and their professional backgrounds.

Rishi Reddi opened the floor for a motion to adopt the minutes from the previous meeting. Patricia Spence motioned to adopt. **Melissa Ferretti** seconded the motion. Rishi took a vote by roll call. **Marcos Luna, Jen Salinetti, Sofia Owen, and Peter Maathey** abstained from voting because they were not present at the prior meeting. All other present council members accepted the minutes. **Rishi Reddi** noted that the meeting was at quorum with nine members present and six members voting to approve the minutes.

Introduction of María Belén Power, EJC Undersecretary

Rishi Reddi welcomed Undersecretary **María Belén Power**. María Belén introduced herself to the public and to the EJC, then provided an overview of her background. She also thanked the council members.

Announcements

Rishi Reddi did not have any announcements.

Q&A #1

Catherine Rodriguez: I am from Taunton, living in an EJ zone. It is difficult to engage any government agency for help; it is integral that underserved communities are aware of the EJC. When contacting Border Health due to air pollution, a house inspector was sent instead.

Rishi Reddi requested that Catherine contact the EJC office to hear more.

Tina Grosowsky: Thank you for all the work you've been doing. I live in Hudson, Massachusetts, and am part of Elders Climate Action Massachusetts. What is the status of the interagency council/advisory group that was meeting around the Clean Energy Climate Plan?

María Belén: There have been several interagency initiatives in the past, with the goal being to create a permanent body from each secretariat. With the new administration, we want to be intentional about the creation of the interagency working group, with our priority being collaboration. As we know, public health relates to transportation and housing, and we want to address these issues in a holistic way.

Tina Grosowsky: Is there a timeline estimate?

María Belén: There is no date on paper, but these deadlines are determined internally. Ideally by the late summer, the secretaries will have appointed people for the interagency task force.

Rishi Reddi: If you are referring to the Implementation Advisory Committee, this group was instrumental to the Clean Energy and Climate plan, but there are no current plans to reconvene this group specifically.

Tina Grosowsky: There is very little transparency about these processes, so I appreciate the transparency.

Claire Lahey: I live in Lee, Massachusetts, a rural community. We have been communicating with the Center for Health, Environment & Justice and one of their webinars focused on identifying sacrifice zones utilizing air pollution measurements across the country. Are we able to get these measurements in our community to identify a heavily polluted area? Is air pollution one of your measures?

Rishi Reddi: This is a key question for several reasons. How we are going to gauge the standard for our baseline measuring pollutants? Air pollution is one of these pieces. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been deploying these monitors over time. You bring up an important point around air pollution in Massachusetts, with transportation and mobile air sources accounting for almost 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. We are looking for these metrics to measure how we are doing in this realm. As part of our cumulative impact assessment, we are looking at the number of burdens in a community in relation to our new way of permitting stationary and air sources. We would love to have you comment on the DEP efforts and more.

María Belén: There is a lot of work that has already happened; air pollution and air quality metrics are metrics we are looking at. There are a lot of coalitions in Massachusetts that have prioritized air quality, which will be critical in implementing the goals we have set for our communities. Air pollution and air monitoring is one of the top metrics we will have to use in getting support from the legislature and from advocates.

#	Question	Asker Name	Answer
1	Air pollution measurements for identifying “sacrifice zones” in rural communities?	Claire Lahey	
2	Question: Are there legal resources available for residents in the western half of the state to assist EJ neighborhood residents appeal zoning decisions, particularly near waste sites with EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)/DEP involvement? Appeals here take the form of a filing in Superior Court and must happen within 20 days of the ruling under Massachusetts General Law c40a §17. Attorneys have quoted \$5,000–\$20,000 to help. This is a huge obstacle to exercising their right to appeal. Are there any resources out here to help them?	Kristen Mello	
3	Sorry, background noise here too loud to speak.	Kristen Mello	
	Can links for this and any other document being discussed be shared in the chat so we can access them or made available another way?	Linden Jenkins	Hi Linden, the documents are available here: https://www.mass.gov/event/public-meeting-notice-april-26-2023-remote-meeting-of-the-environmental-justice-council-ejc-2023-04-26t180000-0400-2023-04-26t200000-0400 . The agenda, slides, and comment document are available.
4	Oh I see it was just shared – thx.	Linden Jenkins	
5	I think comment 8 was supposed to [be] as “as opposed to.”	Jonas Kaplan-Bucciarelli	
6	I want to stress that successful community engagement and understanding is very important, particularly in some of the outlying areas of the state. Several of the strategy items listed do intend to address this. Intention is one thing, execution is another. The level of involvement/assistance that is expected/needed/required from local	Mary Ann Babinski	

	government officials is important. In my opinion, local officials and organizations can play a key role in the successful implementation of the proposed EJ strategies. This would include accepting that they have a role to play and then educating themselves and the public. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.		
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EJC Discussion of Draft EEA EJ Strategy: Decision on EJC Comments

Rishi provided background on the comment document, which came from the initial February 8 meeting. The EJC decided to delete a few comments that folks could not agree upon, working toward a set of comments for which there was a consensus. A consultant (ERG) assisted in deleting and consolidating comments, resulting in a shorter document.

Caroline Hon: Thank you so much for doing the work to consolidate the comments.

Rishi Reddi: Were there any comments that needed clarification, or do you think we need more discussion amongst our group?

Marcos Luna: Item number 8, I wanted to offer a clarification. There is a missing word, “within a community opposed to expecting communities...” would it be clearer to say “rather than expecting communities”?

Jen Salinetti: Yes, that is a helpful language shift.

Ari Zorn: I agree.

Sofia Owen: Item number 11, where it talks about the use of “plain language” around non-technical audiences: One thing may be worth adding – it needs to be plain language accessible to people in the community due to existing inequity, which could be classified as a fourth grade reading level.

Rishi Reddi: Are you proposing putting “fourth grade reading level” in the comment?

Sofia Owen: Materials being distributed should be at a fourth grade reading level as a baseline.

Lydia Lowe: It varies by language group; it’s important for there to be attention to literacy level.

Patricia Spence: I agree with the wording and with the importance in general. We check the box when we translate in different languages, but it is important to focus on literacy in the languages.

Rishi Reddi: Is it more important to keep it general (i.e., attention to literacy level) or focus on fourth grade?

Ari Zorn: Attention to literacy level sounds more friendly and not insulting.

Peter Maathey: I like the mention of fourth grade reading level—it adds specificity and guidance, with nuance depending on language.

Rishi Reddi: We could highlight both pieces—attention to literacy levels such as a standard designation of fourth grade. How do people feel about including both?

Marcos Luna: I agree with putting both—standard designation at fourth grade reading level. To give context, newspaper standards are at a sixth grade reading level.

Sofia Owen: That works with me. Part of what I’m thinking about here is that all too often it is on the backs of advocates and Community Based Organizations to be the ones taking things and breaking them down for us, staff, and volunteers, then taking it out into the community. Having this be a requirement at the state level would make things more accessible across the board.

Rishi Reddi: Lydia and Ari, do you agree?

Lydia Lowe and Ari Zorn: Yes.

Jen Salinetti: On item 1, the recommendation to highlight one or two pilot efforts—could we specify one urban and one rural?

Rishi Reddi: That makes sense to me. At least one urban and one rural?

Jen Salinetti, Marcos Luna, and Melissa Ferretti agreed.

Jen Salinetti: I have a question about 17. I'm wondering what the difference is between "all communities" and "across the Commonwealth."

Marcos Luna: Does it make sense to think about who you are comparing, comparing what is going on between regions? Is this too in the weeds?

Rishi: Are you proposing two comparisons—across the Commonwealth and across regions (e.g., coastal, inland)? Should we enumerate a few categories?

Lydia Lowe: We can add an "and/or reported relative to similarly situated communities..."

Council members agreed.

Jen Salinetti: Question on 25, "is there a baseline analysis for current work within EJ communities within agencies"—is this expected to be a part of the initial strategy work, so we know where we're coming from or going towards?

Rishi Reddi: There has been a lot of attention paid to metrics—there would be a baseline.

Jen Salinetti: On line 27—I would add "education" to "clarify strategy for increasing education and access to recreation facilities..."

Rishi Reddi: We could specify what the education is about.

Jen Salinetti: There have historically been communities pushed out of recreational spaces—what it means to learn about the space itself, to feel safe in the place, to know knowledge can be accessed. We can add "increasing awareness of availability and access to recreation facilities."

Patricia Spence: I completely agree. There are so many spaces the community is unaware of.

Rishi Reddi: Does anyone have any additional suggestions?

Lydia Lowe: Could we go back to number 27? Include "increasing awareness" in the sentence.

Rishi Reddi: Any objections?

Marcos Luna: I would add "inclusivity."

Patricia Spence: I like the word "utilization."

Sofia Owen: My comment relates to 27 but goes in a different direction. There is such a disparity between communities with EJ populations and those that are whiter and wealthier, who have trees and parks. It is important to maintain and expand green spaces where available and where the heat island effect is worse.

Rishi Reddi: Are you proposing this as a completely different comment?

Sofia Owen: Yes, the pieces that feel most urgent to me are clarifying the strategy to ensure that green spaces in areas with EJ populations are equally well-maintained and resourced. The EJC added a new comment, comment number 28.

Lydia Lowe: This ensures that there *are* green spaces established, maintained, and resourced.

Ari Zorn: When you originally spoke you used the word *equally*, which should be in there in some way.

Sofia Owen: Equitably makes more sense than *equally*.

Rishi Reddi: I think we should use the word that focuses on the fact that there are some communities who need more attention.

Lydia Lowe: I think *equitably* works better—not necessarily *equal*, but more of a historic term.

Marcos Luna: On number 27, we should say "tree canopy."

Patricia Spence: Utilize the word "increase" rather than "improve."

Cheryll Holley: Comment number 27, not just *within* EJ communities, but "for use by" EJ communities.

Marcos Luna: The point is that we want the increasing awareness to be more equitable in general. On the one hand we want all communities to have adequate access, and we also want to address those who have been left behind historically.

Cheryll Holley: We can say “utilization of state recreation facilities.”

Rishi Reddi: I would like to say EJ “populations” rather than “communities.” We need to make sure the state is thinking about “how do EJ populations use these parks? How do we increase the awareness, availability, and utilization of them?” I don’t think we can figure out the details within this comment.

Jen Salinetti: I am thinking line number 27 could be exactly applied to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (line 25), applied to farmland instead.

Rishi Reddi: We could say “applies to all state agency plans” in the last column.

Jen Salinetti: Is it necessary to have something that mentions metrics?

Rishi Reddi: Metrics appears in the comments in some form for all the agencies.

Peter Maathey: We had talked a bit about metrics but also, if these key components were to be included in the strategy, metrics could be added when it comes to execution and tactical plans. As part of our review, we might be able to provide and shape these details.

Marcos Luna: In this document we’re telling them to develop metrics, but we want a second opportunity to review.

Peter Maathey: The EJC expects that we would be able to determine whether the metrics are appropriate upon review.

Marcos Luna: I would like to do that; it’d be nice for the council to weigh in on what the execution looks like.

Rishi Reddi: It is something we can put in the comment document—the council intends to review the final strategy and comments at a later date.

Jen Salinetti: I would support having the ability to review and comment on it when it is finalized. Can we add the language of “continued periodic review”? Line 3 mentions this specifically.

Sofia Owen: I must hop off for another commitment; I would love more time before a vote.

Vote on EEA EJ Strategy Comments

Rishi Reddi: Does anyone want to move to adopt this document? Our goal for this meeting was to adopt this document.

Ari Zorn: I’ll move to adopt these changes.

Lydia Lowe: I’ll second.

Rishi Reddi took the vote by roll call. **Sofia Owen** voted no. All other present council members voted yes.

The vote carries for approval of this document to be submitted as a consensus document. Members of the EJC can still submit individual comments at this time.

Next Steps and Adjourn

Rishi Reddi motioned to adjourn. **Patricia Spence** moved to adjourn. **Ari Zorn** seconded. Roll call was taken and EJC members agreed to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.