

Environmental Justice Council (EJC)

Meeting #21

Thursday, August 21, 2025

Location: Drury High School, 1130 Church St, North Adams, MA, 01247
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Meeting location: In-person

Meeting documents: Agenda, Slides

Council members:

- María Belén Power, EEA Undersecretary of EJ & Equity (In-person)
- Marcos Luna- in-person
- Jen Salinetti- in-person

- Kalila Barnett – virtual
- Madeline Fraser Cook- virtual
- Melissa Ferretti- virtual
- Patricia Spence- virtual

- Cheryll Holley- not present
- Caroline Hon- not present
- Lydia Lowe- not present
- Peter Maathey- not present
- Sofia Owen- not present
- Ari Zorn- not present
- Miles Gresham- not present

1. Welcome and Overview of Meeting Logistics

María Belén Power welcomed all attendees.

Sophia Spungin provided an overview of the meeting logistics, including the use of the question and answer (Q&A) box and the availability of interpreters.

2. Agenda Overview

María Belén Power reviewed the meeting agenda.

3. Roll Call/Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

María Belén conducted a roll call of the EJC members. At the start of the meeting, the following council members were present: Marcos Luna, Jen Salinetti, Kalila Barnett, Madeline Fraser Cook, Melissa Ferretti, and Patricia Spence.

The following council members were not present: Cheryll Holley, Caroline Hon, Lydia Lowe, Peter Maathey, Sofia Owen, Ari Zorn, and Miles Gresham.

María Belén acknowledged the lack of quorum for this meeting. Without quorum, councilmembers will not hold votes or make decisions.

4. First Public Question and Answer Session

Virtual public participants provided comments and inquiries:

- A participant requested that there be an amendment to the EJC Meeting 17 minutes with a correction to the origin of the organization (Taunton, MA). The participant expressed concerns over environmental public safety and health issues in Taunton, MA.
- A participant expressed concern over an environmental justice grant termination and the consistency of accessibility and inclusivity of Massachusetts Executive Office agency meetings.

5. Presentation on the Massachusetts Ready Act (Environmental Bond Bill)

Guest speaker **Undersecretary for the Environment, Stephanie Cooper** from the **Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs** provided an overview of the Massachusetts Ready Act. The Massachusetts Ready Act serves to strengthen and protect communities in response to the challenge of climate change. Undersecretary Cooper outlined the plans made to establish the strategic goal of achieving resilient infrastructure, restoring rivers, repairing state parks, reducing solid waste, prioritizing nature, and addressing environmental contaminants.

Councilmembers inquired about the council's ability to provide input on the process, the details of the revolving loan fund, the concern regarding permit restrictions being lifted impacting Indigenous communities, procurement guidelines and processes, and the opportunities that the EJC has to uplift EJ communities and Community Based Organizations.

6. Second Public Question and Answer Session

Both virtual and in-person public participants provided comments, inquiries, and suggestions.

- A public participant urged that revolving funds be made available to disadvantaged communities and, ultimately, the ability for funds to be forgivable. Additionally, the participant acknowledged the difficulty in maintaining reimbursable grants for small and local environmental justice groups. With respect to language access, the participant

encouraged the ability for grant Request For Proposals to be provided in multiple languages.

- A virtual participant expressed concern over the removal of references to environmental justice and diversity. Additionally, the participant requested that environmental justice populations in Cape Cod are able to provide input in Superfunds.
- A virtual participant expressed concern in being unable to receive answers from the Department of Conservation & Recreation.
- A virtual participant from Berkshire County expressed concern over the health-related crises in Pittsfield, MA. This includes health-related issues associated with proximity to Superfund sites.
- A public participant from the Berkshires emphasized the importance of prioritizing the “micro” pieces (i.e. language access, accessible grant opportunities for communities) that are tangible for small communities. The participant encouraged one-on-one relationships with communities.

Comments from the Q&A are listed below

#	Question	Asker Name	Answer
1	What about workforce development for Agriculture fishing water related recreation jobs business Our Youth Conservation Corps youth apprenticeship career development in Environmental Industry	John G Andrade	Agreed this is all important and something we support, for example DCR's Conservation Fellows program and MDAR's Youth Leadership council that are supported by operating funding.
2	What does supporting farms mean if it doesn't mean giving farms access to more funding for climate resilience? Is that just allocating funds for the existing programs?	Angela Roell	The bill will authorize a range of funding programs to support farms like the ones described here https://www.mass.gov/guides/agricultural-grants-and-financial-assistance-programs

7. Next Steps and Adjourn

María Belén reminded council members of the next meeting in **October 23** in **Leominster, MA**.

María Belén closed the meeting at 8:33 pm.