

Environmental Justice Council (EJC)
Meeting #10
Thursday, September 21, 2023
6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

Meeting location: Zoom webinar

Meeting documents: [Agenda](#), [slides](#)

Council members present:

- Kalila Barnett
- Melissa Ferretti
- Caroline Hon
- Namrita Kapur
- Sofia Owen
- Patricia Spence
- Jen Salinetti
- Marcos Luna
- Lydia Lowe
- Cheryll Holley

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

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

1. Welcome and Overview of Meeting Logistics

María Belén Power 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.

2. 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: **Kalila Barnett, Namrita Kapur, Lydia Lowe, Melissa Ferretti, Caroline Hon, Marcos Luna, Sofia Owen, Jen Salinetti, Patricia Spence, and María Belén.**
- The following council members were not present at the start of the meeting but joined after: **Cheryll Holley.**
- The following council members were not present: **Madeline Fraser Cook, Peter Maathey, and Ari Zorn.**
- **María Belén** opened the floor for a motion to adopt the minutes from the previous meeting. **Patricia Spence** motioned to adopt. **Lydia Lowe** seconded the motion. **María Belén** took a vote by roll call. All present council members accepted the minutes.

3. First Public Question and Answer Session

Questions from the public participants and discussion by the EJC included the following topics:

- Clarification on EJ laws regarding a power plant in Taunton,
- Designation of EJ populations within communities,
- Establishment of EJ maps with environmental census data,
- Updating the EJ definition, and

- The potential for creating a Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) workgroup.

Comments from the Q&A Chat included:

#	Question	Asker Name
1	How does the EJC plan to address the “Rights of Nature” approach for Tribes to protect environmental resources essential to their lifestyles?	David Dow
2	I am very concerned about EJ related to the Fore River Basin (Quincy, Weymouth, and Braintree). Given you are now 10 meetings into this council, what actions/decisions/policies have been implemented as a result of the recommendations of this council?	Peter Delano
3	One significant unresolved issue remains significance thresholds for triggering MEPA review. Individual projects in EJ communities may fall below existing MEPA thresholds (thus not requiring enhanced review), while the existing cumulative baseline of adverse impacts is significant and the proposed individual project adds to the historical, cumulative impacts. When will EEA, the Council, and Governor Healey address this issue?	Frank O’Brien

4. EEA Discussion on Logistics for Future EJC Meetings

- Councilmembers agreed to alternating between working group meetings and official EJC meetings once a month.
- Councilmembers decided to hold a recurring meeting every other month on the same day of each month
- Working group meetings would then occur on the “off” month. Work groups can meet without being subject to Open Meeting Law (OPL) as long as a quorum is not achieved.

5. EEA Discussion on Locations for Future EJC Meetings

- Locations proposed include Brockton, Mashpee, Worcester, North Adams, Holyoke/Springfield, Roxbury, Lynn/Salem, Stockbridge, Lowell/Lawrence, Taunton, Leominster, and Framingham.
- Councilmembers proposed to hold hybrid meetings to include both in-person and virtual attendance. Virtual attendance would count toward quorum.
- Councilmembers also proposed setting up a standard protocol when needing to switch from hybrid meetings to a fully virtual format.

6. EEA Discussion on Priorities of EJ Office

- María Belén provided an overview of the work being done at the EJ Office.
- The EJ Office intends to collect feedback from the public on projects, policies, and additional methods, while making sure those comments are incorporated in outcomes.
- Currently working on their EJ strategy, supporting the agencies involved and ensuring feedback is incorporated through the executive office and all agencies under the EEA.

- Office is also investigating quantifying benefits versus burdens, looking at community benefit agreements, and creating a Justice40 working group centered around ensuring investments are being distributed in alignment with the Justice40 initiative and state initiatives to EJ communities.

7. Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Discussion

- **Jonathan Schrag** from the Governors' Office joined to discuss Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRGs). He provided an overview of the process for communities to receive grants.
- Jonathan explained that Boston; Worcester; and Providence, Rhode Island will receive approximately \$1 million.
- Priority measures are being identified to find which will most reduce greenhouse gas emissions and benefit EJ populations in a significant way. An example of a priority measure includes reducing emissions from heavy vehicles 20 percent by 2030. This would be prioritized compared to reducing emissions from passenger cars, due to heavy vehicles having higher diesel emissions. CPRG funding is still in the planning phase.
- Councilmembers discussed the intersectionality between sustainable and accessible transit, the shift to electrified transit, the likelihood of Massachusetts receiving implementation funds, and the necessity of equitably distributed funds between rural and urban areas.

8. Updates on the EJ strategy and discussion

- Carline Lemoine provided an update on the EJ strategy, which has been in progress for approximately two and a half years.
- The EJ task force has been working to improve and incorporate changes to reflect comments received over the winter. Public comments have mainly centered around improving public access, how agencies will identify and measure progress, and how EJ principles will be embedded into the developed EJ strategy.
- Budget provided by the Governor's office for the fiscal year allocated approximately \$2 million for translation services, which is an example of how accessibility is being improved. Vital documents will be made accessible in multiple languages.
- The final strategy is tentatively scheduled to be released by the end of the year and will serve as a living document and reviewed approximately every three years.

9. Discussion of Working Groups

- The five working groups initially proposed were EJ Definition, Meaningful Engagement and EJ Strategy, Justice40, Community Benefit Agreements, and Benefits versus Burdens.
- The Councilmembers decided to focus on two working groups, Justice 40 and Environmental Justice Definition.
- **María Belén** requested council members raise their hands for each working group they are interested in.
 - For the EJ Definition working group, council members **Melissa Ferretti, Caroline Hon, Marcos Luna, Cheryll Holley, Jen Salinetti, and Sofia Owen** volunteered.
 - For the Justice40 working group, council members **Kalila Barnett, Lydia Lowe, and Patricia Spence** volunteered.
- **María Belén** to follow-up via email on working groups and logistics and scheduling.

- Experts are allowed to be invited to the working group meetings.

10. Second Public Question and Answer Session

- A participant expressed interest in having more outreach done in Taunton, Massachusetts. María Belén provided details on past listening sessions and noted to include Taunton in an upcoming listening session.

Comments from the Q&A Chat included:

#	Question	Name
1	The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe is seeking to manage river herring that breed in local rivers within the town boundaries, but outside the reservation boundaries.	David Dow
2	Regarding the Benefits versus Burdens working group suggestion, you could employ a scenario analysis to compare different implementation strategies.	David Dow
3	Where/when/how will answers to Q&A that don't get answered during the meeting get to the attendees?	Anonymous
4	Given the priorities mentioned by Jonathan in his presentation, is there a percentage of the funding that can only be used for priorities like air pollution reduction versus a percentage of the funding that can only be used for the second priority, EJ populations?	David Queeley
5	Apologies for the late and unrelated question. We have heard some concern about how the Supreme Court affirmative action case ruling could impact whether Massachusetts can implement climate policies relative to EJ and race; has the EJ Council considered this as it discusses the updated definition? Here is a recent article for reference on this—thank you for your work and leadership! https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/could-supreme-courts-admissions-decision-affect-mass-climate-law/	Isabella Gambill

11. Next Steps and Adjourn

- **María Belén** motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.