

MEPA Advisory Committee

October 8, 2021, 2:00PM-4:00PM

Remote Meeting

Organizations Represented/In Attendance

- **Air, Inc.**
- **American Council of Engineering Companies of MA**
- **Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission**
- **Boston Harbor Now**
- **Cape Cod Commission**
- **Conservation Law Foundation**
- **Environmental Business Council**
- **Eversource**
- **GreenRoots**
- **Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Massachusetts (HBRAMA)**
- **Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners**
- **Mystic River Watershed Association**
- **NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association of MA**
- **National Grid**
- **VHB**

State agency/authority attendees

- EEA EJ Director
- MassDEP
- MassPort
- EOHED
- CZM

Meeting Summary

This week's meeting focused on the new "EIR requirement" set forth in Section 58 of St. 2021, c. 8, and potential guidance to be issued by the MEPA Office relative to analysis of project impacts on environmental justice populations. Five key questions were raised by the MEPA Office for discussion:

- Is it reasonable to use [EPA's EJ Screen](#), supplemented by the [DPH EJ Viewer](#), while more refined approaches are developed?
- If using EJ Screen, what percentile should be chosen as interim indicator of "inequitable burden"?
- Is it reasonable to require a qualitative discussion of projects impacts to assess "disproportionate adverse impacts"?

- What climate change aspects should be considered? Should climate change be considered as part of EJ analysis, if there is no indication of specific impacts (such as flooding) on EJ populations?
- How should a project consider public health impacts that may result from its environmental impacts?

Some committee members expressed support for using EPA's EJ Screen as an interim tool, but noted that the EJ Screen is not sufficient on its own long-term. Members expressed support for requiring pre-filing outreach and integrating this into screening. There was ongoing discussion about the definition of an "EIR" in the MEPA statute and whether certain projects should be allowed to proceed without a multiple step review process.

Some committee members suggested that the MEPA Office provide guidance regarding best practices for outreach and expectations for the outreach process. One committee member raised the [Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning](#) as a source for guidance in designing and implementing an inclusive, equitable planning process. The need for innovative and effective means of outreach and engagement with EJ communities (in addition to current practices around translation) was emphasized.

Next Steps

The Committee collectively decided to cancel the meeting scheduled for October 15, 2021. For the October 22, 2021 meeting, the MEPA Office requests that committee members consider how to address projects located in EJ communities that would have negligible impact should be treated, and to provide examples of best practices around community engagement. Kevin Walsh (ACEC/MA) volunteered to provide examples of best practices and potentially coordinate with public engagement/EJ specialists to present to the committee.