

MEPA Advisory Committee

September 24, 2021, 2:00PM-4:00PM

Remote Meeting

Organizations Represented/In Attendance

- Air, Inc.
- Alternatives for Community & Environment
- American Council of Engineering Companies of MA
- Boston Harbor Now
- Cape Cod Commission
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Environmental Business Council
- Eversource
- Green Roots
- Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Massachusetts (HBRAMA)
- MassAudubon
- Massachusetts Area Planning Commission
- Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners
- Massachusetts Municipal Association
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
- Mystic River Watershed Association
- NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association of MA
- National Grid
- North American Indian Center of Boston (NAICOB)
- VHB

State agency/authority attendees

- EEA EJ Director
- MassPort
- EOHEd
- DHCD
- MassDOT

Meeting Summary

This week's meeting focused on potential public involvement requirements for MEPA projects located near environmental justice (EJ) populations (as set forth in Section 60 of St. 2021, c. 8), specifically: 1) Potential pre-filing Requirements 2) How to Define Impacts, and 3) Forms of Outreach. An overview of comments received on MEPA's DRAFT Public Involvement Protocol for EJ Populations was provided, and key questions were posed for discussion. Attendees noted the need for: discernable goals regarding outreach efforts, opportunities for

input from stakeholders in early stages of project development, new forms and methods of outreach, and consequences for failing to appropriately consider and incorporate feedback from relevant communities. There was additional discussion about the meaning of the term “EIR” (environmental impact report) in Section 58 of St. 2021, c. 8; this discussion was deferred to upcoming advisory committee meetings devoted to the scope of analysis in an EIR required for projects near EJ populations.

The MEPA office requested input on whether existing MEPA thresholds (at 301 CMR 11.03) could be used to define project impacts that would warrant enhanced outreach and public involvement requirements. Alternatively, NEPA guidance could be used as model to require enhanced outreach for every project, but tailor the scale of the outreach to the size and complexity of the project.

Next Steps

For the October 1, 2021 meeting, more input on the threshold approach was requested. The MEPA office will provide clarification of the proposed approach. **Those who have experience with Federal or local requirements relative to community outreach were requested to bring examples to share. This includes best practices, example projects, and outcomes. Written input should be provided 24 hours prior to the October 1 meeting.**