

Minutes of the Fifty-Seventh Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: December 12, 2022

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Aloysius NelsonCommissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;
Chair Director, Division of Veterans Services, Kenosha County
Yolanda Adams Board of Education Member, Kenosha Unified School District
Huda Alkaff Founder & Director, Wisconsin Green Muslims
Donna Brown-Martin.....Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;
Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation;
Liaison to Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation Planning
Ella Dunbar Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee
Keith Martin..... Engineering Specialist – Advanced 2, WisDOT
Andrea Mendez Barrutia.....Director of Community Engagement, Hispanic Collaborative
Theresa Schuerman..... Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach

Members Excused

Brad Holz.....Board Member, Independence First
N. Lynnette McNeely..... Legal Redress Chair, Waukesha County NAACP
Pastor Ernest Ni’A President, Racine African American Roundtable of Leaders
Gina Green-Harris.....Director, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Center for
Community Engagement and Health Partnerships in Milwaukee
Fabi Maldonado Racine County Supervisor, District 2
Sandra Rubin..... Equal Opportunity Specialist (retired), Milwaukee HUD
Field Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
Jackie Schellinger Indian Community Representative, Retired Judge

Guests and Staff Present

Joseph Boxhorn.....Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Mimi Johnson..... Policy Director, Office of Emerging Contaminants,
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Eric Lynde.....Chief Special Projects Planner, SEWRPC
Julie Majerus.....Environmental Justice Policy Advisor
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Benjamin McKay Interim Executive Director, SEWRPC
Nakeisha Payne..... Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Jorge Roman-RomeroAttorney/Equal Justice Works Fellow, Midwest Environmental Advocates
Jennifer Sarnecki..... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC
Michael Thompson Secretary’s Director for Southeastern Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Nelson called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to order at 4:31 p.m., conducted a brief introduction, and welcomed those in attendance.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2022, MEETING MINUTES

Upon the assembly of a quorum, Mr. Nelson asked if there were any questions or comments on the September 20, 2022, meeting minutes (available [here](#)). Mr. Nelson then asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Brown-Martin moved, and Mr. Martin seconded the approval of the September 20, 2022, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

REVIEW OF 2023 PRIMARY ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS

Mr. Nelson asked Ms. Payne to present the Commission's draft 2023 primary organizational contacts list (available [here](#)). Ms. Payne noted that Commission staff was proposing to add two organizations (Nearby Nature Milwaukee and Root Pike Watershed Initiative Network) and remove two organizations (Racine County Family Resource Network and We Got This) for 2023. Task Force members did not suggest any additional changes to the primary organizational contacts.

PRESENTATION ON PFAS CHEMICALS

At Mr. Nelson's request, Ms. Alkaff explained that she had requested a presentation on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals after a June 2022 announcement one of West Bend's wells had high levels of PFAS contamination. She has been working to understand how to ensure water is safe to drink in her community and across Wisconsin. Mr. McKay indicated that Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) staff had been invited to present on the WDNR's work related to PFAS chemicals. Ms. Johnson then gave a presentation (available [here](#)) that included an overview of PFAS chemicals, the Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan, the Wisconsin PFAS Interactive Data Viewer (available [here](#)), and other PFAS initiatives. The following discussion occurred during Ms. Johnson's presentation:

1. Ms. Mendez Barrutia asked about the most common ways people would be exposed to PFAS. Ms. Johnson explained that PFAS can be found in contaminated drinking water and common products include non-stick cookware, stain-resistant carpets or fabrics, fast-food packaging, and firefighting foam. She indicated that more study is needed to understand the various PFAS sources.
2. Mr. Nelson asked how PFAS contamination is reported to the community. Ms. Johnson stated that State standards for PFAS went into effect in August and drinking water utilities are beginning to conduct routine sampling. The utilities are required to report those results and notify customers if elevated levels of concern are detected. The WDNR will also include the sampling data in the PFAS viewer as the data are received.
3. Ms. Dunbar indicated that the Social Development Commission runs a lead-free homes program and would be interested in distributing information on PFAS to residents in Milwaukee, many of whom are low-income residents.

4. Ms. Schuerman asked if the Commission has studied PFAS chemicals. Mr. McKay replied that Commission staff had recently prepared a white paper on issues related to PFAS chemicals (available [here](#)). Dr. Boxhorn provided an overview of the white paper, which is intended to provide guidance to technical staff at municipalities and counties in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Ms. Alkaff shared a guide developed by Wisconsin Green Muslims and Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) for communities with PFAS in their municipal water systems (available [here](#)). She then introduced Mr. Roman-Romero who described MEA's role in drinking water safety, and provided resources related to the #PFASFree Wisconsin campaign (available [here](#)). The following discussion occurred after Mr. Roman-Romero's presentation:

1. Ms. Brown-Martin asked if there were changes being considered at the federal level that would weaken Clean Water Act requirements. Ms. Johnson indicated she was not aware of any imminent major changes and suggested contacting the Region 5 Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Mr. Roman-Romero noted there is a U.S. Supreme Court decision that may reduce the EPA's jurisdictional reach.

UPDATE ON EJTF GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

At Mr. Nelson's request, Mr. Lynde gave an update on Commission staff's efforts to update the EJTF "guidance document," including meeting with a group of stakeholders who volunteered to provide input on proposed changes to the document. He noted that Commission staff is addressing the group's comments and will obtain their input on a draft document. Staff would then review the draft document with the EJTF, likely at its next meeting. Mr. Lynde asked for members' preferences related to EJTF meetings in 2023, including whether they be held virtually or in person and whether to set the meeting dates in advance for the entire year. He also asked for members' input on developing a commitment form for members to sign that would clearly indicate a member's role and responsibilities, and on ways to ensure ongoing participation by members. The following discussion occurred during Mr. Lynde's update:

1. Ms. Brown-Martin expressed support for setting the meeting dates in advance. She noted that starting meetings at 4:30 p.m. can be a challenge and suggested a 5:00 p.m. meeting start time. Ms. Mendez Barrutia agreed with setting the meeting dates in advance and indicated virtual meetings were more convenient. Mr. Lynde stated that staff would suggest setting the 2023 meetings on the second Tuesday of March, June, September, and December, and would email the specific dates to members. Mr. Nelson requested that the start time for 2023 meetings also be shifted to 5:00 p.m.
2. Mr. Nelson and Ms. Brown-Martin expressed support for a commitment form and Ms. Mendez Barrutia agreed and noted a form outlining members' commitment would be particularly helpful for new members to understand what is expected of them.
3. Ms. Schuerman and Mr. Nelson expressed support for establishing a limit related to the number of absences that are acceptable. Ms. Brown-Martin agreed and noted that setting the meeting dates in advance would help to reduce absences. Mr. Nelson stated that the limit should focus on unexcused absences. Ms. Adams agreed and noted that missing two meetings in one year was essentially missing half the year's meetings.

REVIEW OF EJTF ACTION ITEM LIST

At Mr. Nelson's request, Ms. Sarnecki reviewed the current action item list, which was linked within the agenda for review (available [here](#)). She noted there were three new action items on the list and that staff was proposing to close out three items that are being addressed through the guidance document.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any announcements or correspondence. Ms. Majerus introduced herself and noted that she was the WDNR's new and first Environmental Justice Policy Advisor. Mr. Thompson also introduced himself and indicated he was reaching out across the Region to determine how the WDNR can engage and be helpful to residents, and that the WDNR is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mr. Nelson thanked WDNR staff for attending and stated that WDNR staff was welcome to attend future meetings to provide information that EJTF members can distribute to their communities.

NEXT MEETING DATES

Mr. Nelson indicated that Commission staff will contact EJTF members with the specific dates for meetings in 2023, as discussed previously. He suggested that the December 2023 meeting could be held in person and dinner provided as a thank you to members for their work during the year. Ms. Brown-Martin suggested meetings held during warmer months could also be in person and include a BBQ.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Commission staff emailed and sent calendar invites to members for the following meeting dates in 2023: March 14, June 13, September 12, and December 12. The time for each meeting is 5:00pm to 6:30pm.]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nelson requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Brown-Martin moved, and Ms. Adams seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Lynde
Recording Secretary
