

Minutes of the Fifty-Eighth Meeting of the  
**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

DATE: March 14, 2023

TIME: 5:00 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Aloysius Nelson, 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  
N. Lynnette McNeely.....Legal Redress Chair, Waukesha County NAACP  
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  
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  
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  
Keith Martin..... Engineering Specialist – Advanced 2, WisDOT  
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

Steven Adams ..... Interested Citizen  
Eric Lynde..... Chief Special Projects Planner, SEWRPC  
Benjamin McKay ..... Interim Executive Director, SEWRPC  
Nakeisha Payne..... Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC  
Karyn Rotker..... Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU of Wisconsin  
Mia Rudolph-Schulta..... Environmental Sustainability Program Coordinator, City of Milwaukee  
Jennifer Sarnecki..... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC  
Dana Shinnars ..... TDM Coordinator, SEWRPC  
Bruce Wiggins .....Interested Citizen

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Nelson called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to order at 5:00 p.m., conducted a brief roll call, and welcomed those in attendance. Mr. Nelson notified the EJTF members that Supervisor Maldonado resigned from the EJTF and encouraged members to consider recommendations for candidates to fill the two vacant positions in Racine County and City of Waukesha. Mr. Nelson thanked the EJTF members and complimented their engagement and commitment.

## **APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 12, 2022, MEETING MINUTES**

Upon the assembly of a quorum, Mr. Nelson asked if there were any questions or comments on the December 12, 2022, meeting minutes (available [here](#)). Mr. Nelson then asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. McNeely moved, and Ms. Adams seconded the approval of the December 12, 2022, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Rotker noted that a coalition of groups, including the ACLU of Wisconsin, submitted comments to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation regarding the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the I-94 East-West corridor (comments available [here](#)). Ms. Rotker indicated that the framing of equity provided in VISION 2050 was utilized in these comments, which recommends significantly improving and expanding public transit. VISION 2050 describes the benefits to people of color, low-income populations, and people with disabilities of a more robust transit system. It also notes the consequences of not addressing the current lack of transit funding.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH REPORT**

Mr. Nelson asked Ms. Payne to present highlights on outreach conducted by the Commission's Public Involvement and Outreach Division from October 2022 through March 2023 (available [here](#)). The following discussion took place after Ms. Payne's presentation.

1. Ms. Brown-Martin indicated that the Milwaukee County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will be conducting outreach to Milwaukee Public Schools this spring to discuss engineering and planning as career opportunities. She suggested a partnership with Commission staff to provide an overview of planning topics to supplement MCDOT's planning staff. Ms. Payne and Mr. McKay thanked Ms. Brown-Martin for the opportunity and indicated that Commission staff would be interested in participating in this effort. Mr. Nelson offered to share information regarding military service with students.
2. Mr. Nelson stated that he appreciates the job notifications sent by Commission staff and asked if there have been changes to the diversity of applicants. Mr. McKay indicated that the latest round of openings resulted in very few applicants and more information will be shared in a subsequent agenda item.
3. Ms. Payne noted that the Juneteenth HBCU day will be Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup> and it will be a collaboration between Racine and Kenosha Counties.
4. Ms. McNeely thanked Ms. Payne for the presentation and indicated that it met all the milestones requested by the EJTF, including expanding areas covered, raising awareness about SEWRPC, and working with schools.
5. Ms. Payne and Mr. McKay noted that a letter was recently sent to SEWRPC's primary organizations to highlight the activities and outreach of the Public Involvement and Outreach Division.

## **UPDATE ON THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PLAN**

At Mr. Nelson's request, Mr. McKay summarized the status of the Regional Food System Plan. Mr. McKay indicated that the Regional Food System Plan Advisory Committee reviewed Chapter 2, which includes

topics such as background on the food system. Chapter 3 will include more detail on socioeconomic information, food sources, and analyses of access to food. Mr. McKay asked EJTF members for feedback on how they would like to review and comment on the Regional Food System Plan and offered to provide copies and links to materials based on the preferences of members. The following discussion occurred after Mr. McKay's update:

1. Ms. Brown-Martin inquired how chapters from the Regional Food System Plan will be shared with the EJTF for review. Mr. McKay indicated that Commission staff can share printed copies or links to materials based on individual preferences. Ms. Brown-Martin indicated that she appreciates receiving individual chapters for review and comment during the planning process. Mr. McKay noted that Commission staff will provide a summary presentation at the next EJTF meeting to refamiliarize members with the data presented in Chapter 2 of the plan review how members' comments have been incorporated. Commission staff will share draft chapters and offer to provide hard copies upon request.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Commission staff shared Regional Food System Plan materials electronically with the EJTF and offered to provide hard copies.]

2. In response to a question from Mr. Nelson regarding input from Kenosha County, Mr. McKay indicated that there are representatives from Kenosha County on the Advisory Committee. Mr. McKay noted that stakeholders from the City of Kenosha have also been engaged and Commission staff has assisted them with research regarding grant opportunities.
3. Ms. Brown-Martin requested information regarding the process used to select case studies, given that those currently provided may not include areas with high concentrations of people of color and low-income populations. Mr. McKay responded that the case studies were selected based on those locations that were conducting a food system plan with a regional scope and indicated that additional case studies could be considered as the planning process continues.
4. Mr. Nelson inquired if the Regional Food System Plan includes information about the homeless population and how homeless individuals access food. Mr. McKay indicated that the plan does not include information regarding where homeless individuals live at this time, but Commission staff could include information about the homeless population in relation to facilities such as food pantries. Mr. McKay noted that the plan includes the locations of food pantries.

## **PRESENTATION ON NEW COMMUTEWISE PROGRAM**

At the request of Mr. Nelson, Ms. Shinnars introduced the Commission's CommuteWISE program (available [here](#)), a new initiative that encourages a shift from drive-alone commuting to cost-effective and sustainable options like riding the bus, carpooling, or biking. Ms. Brown-Martin indicated that she appreciated the presentation, and that Milwaukee County staff are testing the CommuteWISE online tool and like it.

## **UPDATE ON EJTF GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

At Mr. Nelson's request, Mr. Lynde reviewed the most recent updates to the EJTF "Guidance Document" (available [here](#)), which guides the EJTF in completing its duties. Mr. Lynde thanked the group of

stakeholders who provided input during the update process, many of whom were present. The following discussion occurred during Mr. Lynde's update:

1. Ms. Adams suggested considering the future inclusion of high school or college students on the EJTF, noting that the Kenosha Unified School District's Board of Education includes student representatives and refers to them as "student ambassadors." Mr. Nelson agreed with the recommendation and indicated that high school students participate in Kenosha County meetings and report back to their peers.

[Secretary's Note: Commission staff will discuss how to approach the request for student ambassadors in the future and could incorporate this request into the Guidance Document if the EJTF determines student ambassadors should be included.]

2. Ms. Rotker offered to share updated environmental justice references from the Federal Government for Commission staff to consider in the updated EJTF Guidance Document.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Commission staff reviewed the environmental justice and Title VI references provided by Ms. Rotker and determined that they reaffirm existing environmental justice and Title VI Executive Orders and Department of Transportation Orders. Based on the citations provided, one footnote in the EJTF Guidance Document was updated to reflect the most recent iteration of U.S. DOT Order 5610.2C, "U.S. Department of Transportation Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, dated May 16, 2021" (available [here](#)).]

3. In response to a suggestion from Mr. Wiggins that the Commission be updated on EJTF activity, Mr. McKay indicated that the Commission's Executive Committee receives an overview of EJTF activities when a new member is appointed. Mr. Nelson noted that the suggested update to the Commission could be done as an annual review, providing a summary that expands on the action item list. Mr. Nelson noted that the Guidance Document will be reviewed every two years and encouraged EJTF members to continue providing suggestions for improvement to Commission staff. In response to a request from Mr. Nelson, Mr. McKay indicated that the final EJTF Guidance Document will be presented to the Commission's Executive Committee.

[Secretary's Note: The Guidance Document was updated to include the following text: "Commission staff will discuss the work of the EJTF at least annually with the Commission." The final Guidance Document was shared with the EJTF on April 19, 2023, and is available [here](#).]

4. Ms. Alkaff shared a link to the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing (available [here](#)) and suggested they could be incorporated into the EJTF Guidance Document. Ms. Alkaff also indicated that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently established a combined Office of Environmental Justice and Civil Rights (available [here](#)) and that staff should consider impacts to the EJTF.

[Secretary's Note: Commission staff reviewed the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, which were developed and adopted at the Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade hosted by the Southwest Network

for Environmental and Economic Justice in 1996. The document includes six values that emphasize the importance of inclusion and equity in the organizing process. Commission staff reviewed the referenced document and determined that the principles and purpose included in the EJTF Guidance Document embody the core values outlined in the Jemez Principles. Commission staff will monitor the U.S. EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and Civil Rights to determine if changes should be reflected in future iterations of the Guidance Document.]

## **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 (available [here](#)). In response to a question from Mr. Nelson, Ms. Sarnecki indicated that three items were closed since the last meeting as they had been addressed as staff updated the EJTF Guidance Document, including a focus on environmental justice outcomes, considering additional representation on the EJTF, and gathering input on the Guidance Document from individuals outside the Commission staff.

## **OVERVIEW OF COMPOSITION OF APPLICANTS FOR RECENTLY FILLED COMMISSION POSITIONS**

At Mr. Nelson's request, Mr. McKay provided a summary of recent applicants for Commission positions, including two filled positions. The first position for a transportation planner had few applicants overall with two applicants, including one white male and one Asian female. The white male was offered the position and accepted. The second position received eight applicants and of those individuals that provided their race and ethnicity, three applicants responded white male and one applicant responded Hispanic male. Based on their range of skills, two candidates were offered a position, including one white male and one Hispanic male. The white male accepted the position and the Hispanic male declined. In response to a question from Ms. Barrutia, Mr. McKay indicated that the Hispanic male's salary requirements could not be met.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Adams commended the EJTF members for their engagement and noted the good work that has been done since the EJTF was initiated.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. Nelson requested a future agenda item to consider Economically Distressed Areas and understand how Federal funding is being utilized in these areas. Mr. McKay noted that Commission staff will add this topic to a future meeting. Mr. McKay indicated that there will be future updates to the EJTF on the Regional Food System Plan and an upcoming interim review of VISION 2050, which will consider progress on implementing the current plan, changes over the past four years requiring updates, and a public outreach process.

Ms. Adams requested information regarding groundwater issues under Bradford High School, which is causing the gym floor to swell and is a hazard for the students.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Commission staff, in coordination with Ms. Adams, met with the Director of Facilities and Project Architect for the Kenosha Unified School District to understand the issue and identify if

there are additional resources available. A summary email was sent to KUSD staff with findings and recommendations.]

**NEXT MEETING DATES**

Mr. Nelson indicated that the next meeting is Tuesday, June 13, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. and the meeting is planned to be in person with an option to join remotely.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Nelson requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. McNeely moved, and Ms. Dunbar seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Sarnecki  
Recording Secretary

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