

Meeting Minutes: CEJSC Meeting

Date: August 26, 2025

Commissioners in Attendance: Camille Burke, Del. Regina Boyce, Joseph Griffith, Sacoby Wilson, Tyler Brice, John Papagni, Andrew Miller, Rebecca Rehr, Robin Bailey, Aneca Atkinson, Subha Chandar, Voncia Molock

Other Attendance:

Noble Smith (MDE), Alex Lima (MDE), Nevan Edwards, Veronica Carella

Agenda:

1. CEJSC Bylaws

- Nevan Edwards provided an update on the approval process of their bylaws by the AG team. They are awaiting feedback, after which they plan to implement a new attendance policy and keep the commission informed. Noble Smith added that attendees can put their names in the chat for attendance purposes.

2. VOICE Executive Order

- **Overview:** Nevan Edwards initiated a presentation on the executive order recently signed by Governor Moore, aiming to advance environmental justice for communities affected by pollution. The order mandates actions for state departments and emphasizes collaboration with underrepresented communities and new agencies like the Interagency Council. The executive order has four main mandates, including engaging communities for feedback, submitting progress reports on environmental justice strategies, and increasing opportunities for historically underrepresented populations, particularly rural farmers, by addressing issues like land access and financing.
- **Environmental Justice Officer:** The executive order mandates each agency to designate an environmental justice officer responsible for developing and promoting environmental justice strategic plans.
- **IEJEAC:** The order also established the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council to coordinate efforts across departments and levels of government. This council is tasked with identifying and leveraging state and federal resources to develop outreach, adaptation, and mitigation strategies, and will serve as a hub for building resources and improving environmental health outcomes.
- **Data:** The executive order's emphasis on data-driven solutions, mentioning tools like the Maryland EnviroScreen. This tool is designed to help review internal programs, target underrepresented communities, and refine public outreach strategies. The MD EnviroScreen also facilitates the creation of data-driven strategies with community members, ensuring that relevant indicators are used to address issues faced by Maryland communities and foster innovative solutions.
- **IEJEAC - CEJSC:** Nevan Edwards- detailed the collaborative relationship between the commission and the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council, including mandated public meetings to further public engagement in environmental justice strategy.
- **Timeline:** Joseph Griffiths inquired about the timeline for the executive order's implementation, and Nevan Edwards clarified that guidance would be issued within six months of the order's signing. Subha Chandar asked about the strategic plan

due from each agency within 12 months, and Nevan Edwards confirmed that guidance for this would come from the Interagency Council once it is fully established and meeting. Dr. Sacoby Wilson suggested a set timeline for agencies to complete their strategic plans, allowing the commission time to review and provide feedback in a dedicated meeting. Aneca Atkinson agreed with this approach, aiming for an efficient and consistent process modeled after federal practices to avoid agencies coming to the commission at different times for engagement.

- **Commission Seat Availability:** Dr. Sacoby Wilson raised a question about whether the executive order would lead to a shifting of seat availability on the commission to allow for more frontline community members. C Burke responded that the commission is mandated by statute, requiring statutory changes to alter its makeup, but acknowledged the overlap and stated it was a conversation worth having.
- **Agency Communications and Participation:** Subha Chandar asked about the status of communications with state agencies regarding the executive order's implementation. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- responded that notifications would be sent from the Secretary to agency secretaries, aiming for this week or next, to initiate the process of identifying participants for the council.
- **Inclusion of MEES:** Dr. Sacoby Wilson inquired if the Maryland Environmental Service (MEES) would be included as one of the agencies in the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council due to their infrastructure work. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- stated that while MEES is not explicitly called out in the executive order, a "catchall" provision exists to bring in other departments as needed for short stints.
- **Tool Development and Data Proximity** Sacoby Wilson inquired about the basis for the 2-mile/5km radius in the tool and the rationale behind the three-domain approach. Noble Smith confirmed that the proximity measures, as well as the use of proximity rather than facility points, are codified in law. They also emphasized that the tool is not stagnant and will incorporate new and better data sources, while the initial version established the legal baseline of required information.
- **Climate Vulnerability and Health Data** Sacoby Wilson suggested reviewing the CDC CVI tool and California's climate mapping tool for climate vulnerability indicators, noting that extreme temperatures (both hot and cold) and co-pollutants should be considered in addition to greenhouse gases. Noble Smith agreed on the future inclusion of health data in the climate vulnerability score, acknowledging its importance for indicating vulnerability. Sacoby Wilson reiterated the utility of the California map and the CVI as robust tools for future versions of the Maryland tool.
- **Access to Data and Collaborative Work** Andrew Miller inquired about exporting map layers for offline use, to which Noble Smith confirmed that efforts are underway to allow map downloads and data set exports. Sacoby Wilson elaborated on ongoing collaborative work with MDE, funded by NIH, to develop their own mapping tool (version 4.0), conduct expanded literature reviews, perform integrated analysis of federal and state tools, and conduct cross-comparisons, with materials to be shared by the end of September. Aneca Atkinson announced that geo data layers are already available on IMAP.

- **Annual Report Recommendations: Commission Representation** Noble Smith presented initial recommendations for the annual report, including reserving community seats for a Spanish-speaking community member and a youth or youth-facing organization to improve representation on the commission. Regina T Boyce suggested broadening the language to include individuals from other immigrant communities beyond just Spanish-speaking. Rebecca Rehr proposed prioritizing more inclusive community representation rather than reserving specific allocations, allowing for expansion.
- **Annual Report Recommendations: Tool Utilization and Legislation** Joseph Griffiths recommended regular use of the EnviroScreen tool in commission meetings and sharing case studies of its use by various government agencies or organizations. Sacoby Wilson added that the tool should be integrated into each agency's strategic plan for operationalizing the executive order. Rebecca Rehr highlighted unfulfilled recommendations from the previous annual report, specifically formalizing a 40% state fund allocation to communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts and legislating cumulative impacts analysis in MDE's permitting.
- **Defining Cumulative Impacts** Regina T Boyce emphasized the importance of the commission defining what cumulative impacts mean specifically for the state of Maryland, rather than just recommending its discussion. Aneca Atkinson noted that MDE has already conducted literature reviews on different EJ laws and policies across the country, including those related to cumulative impacts, and could present this information to the commission. Sacoby Wilson affirmed their extensive work and expertise on cumulative impacts, including participation in federal working groups and journal publications, and expressed willingness to help synthesize the existing knowledge.
- **Strategic Planning and Emerging Issues** Sacoby Wilson advised consulting the governor's transition plan for environmental justice, as it contains substantial information informed by the commission and EJ advocates. He also suggested integrating strategic planning comments into recommendations and addressing emerging issues like data centers. Additionally, Sacoby Wilson stressed the importance of tracking funding related to CVI and NWAC to assess return on investment and co-benefits, and highlighted the significance of building "just communities" through investments and development, rather than solely focusing on blocking projects.
- **Federal Data Sets** Subha Chandar suggested a joint meeting with CPAC to discuss cumulative impacts. She also recommended including in the annual report a call for maintaining the accuracy and public availability of federal data sets, especially those used by EnviroScreen, due to concerns about their potential removal or modification.

3. Public Comment

4. Action Items:

- Rebecca Rehr will propose including recommendations in the annual report for the state to (1) pass a law requiring cumulative impacts analysis in permitting, and (2) continue

investing in environmental justice and sustainable communities work.

- The group will work on defining cumulative impacts for the state of Maryland as a project.
- Aneca Atkinson -MDE- will present the literature reviews and evaluation of EJ laws and policies across the country to the commission for discussion.
- The group will look at the governor's transition plan, especially the environmental justice section, for recommendations for the annual report and integrate the strategic plan comment into these recommendations.
- Nevan Edwards -MDE- will make the further implementation or guidance through the environment a part of the annual report.
- Subha Chandar -MDH- will make a recommendation about maintaining federal data sets, their accuracy, and public availability.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

Sources:

- https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nzXLB94QKr2DjhYwOLVX-dB_4WeAH6LI/view?usp=sharing