

Oct 21, 2025

CEJSC Meeting

Invited [Aneca Atkinson -MDE-](#) [Brandon Brooks -MDE-](#)
[carmen.delegateboyce@gmail.com](#) [Cat Goughnour -DHCD-](#)
[crystalfaison@gmail.com](#) [ddeshields@me.com](#) [Donna Edwards](#)
[Devon Dodson -MDE-](#) [Dr. Reneé Carr](#) [drcarr@theproblemsolver.co](#) [Asha Smith](#)
[John Papagni -DHCD-](#) [Joseph Griffiths -MDP-](#) [kgait12@gmail.com](#)
[Lisa Jones -MDE-](#) [melissa.brown1@maryland.gov](#) [metoyercarmen@gmail.com](#)
[Andrew Miller](#) [Monica Brooks](#) [Noble Smith -MDE-](#) [patrick@chesapeakelegal.org](#)
[ralinda@greaterbaybrookalliance.org](#) [Regina T. Boyce](#) [Rebecca Rehr](#)
[Subha Chandar -MDH-](#) [Sacoby Wilson](#) [Molock, Voncia](#) [Yasmin Behram -MDP-](#)
[Robin Bailey -COMMERCE-](#) [Nevan Edwards -MDE-](#) [Katherine Carter -DHCD-](#)
[Kaitlin Walker -MDE-](#) [Burke, Camille \(BCHD\)](#) [David Simon](#)
[kpezza@marylandtaxes.gov](#) [lalcala1@jhu.edu](#) [Lesliam Quiros-Alcala](#)
[Boyce, Regina T. Delegate](#) [Tracy Garrett](#) [sara.love@senate.state.md.us](#) [Tyler Brice](#)
[Boyce, Regina T. Delegate](#) ~~[Alex Lima -MDE-](#)~~

Attachments [📁 CEJSC Meeting](#) [📄 CEJSC Bylaw Draft - Feedback \(2\).docx](#)

Meeting records [📺 Recording](#)

Summary

C Burke initiated the meeting, emphasizing the need for continued synchronization with CPAC for the upcoming legislative session, and Nevan Edwards -MDE- announced bylaw updates to clarify that appointments from the governor's office require the appointed individuals to be present, and that delegate participation will not be counted. The participants reviewed and debated several sections of the bylaws, including the Commission Structure, Voting Procedures, and the difficulty of digital voting, with Rebecca Rehr arguing for more flexibility and Aneca Atkinson -MDE- clarifying that an abstention counts towards a quorum; they also committed to quickly finalizing the annual report and its recommendations,

including a proposal from Rebecca Rehr to urge legislation supporting the MDE permit process to address cumulative impacts, and Sacoby Wilson's recommendation for the commission to engage with the Department of Housing on "Just Communities." Noble Smith -MDE- provided details on the Greater Baltimore Climate Summit, and the commission discussed various issues raised by the public, including Veronika Carella's concerns about sunshine laws and data gaps, Patrick DeArmey's information on the draft Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) permit, and Sacoby Wilson's emerging issue of data centers. C Burke, Noble Smith -MDE-, and Nevan Edwards -MDE- agreed to quickly determine and send out the final meeting dates for November and December.

Details

- **Joint Meeting and Legislative Priorities** C Burke initiated the meeting by thanking Noble and all partners from CPAC for the recent joint meeting, emphasizing the need for continued synchronization between the two commissions, especially as the legislative season approaches. C Burke highlighted that the agenda would cover attendance, bylaw updates, the annual report draft review, the Greater Baltimore Climate Summit, and public comment.
- **Attendance and Designated Voters** Nevan Edwards -MDE- discussed bylaw updates, including clarification received from appointing bodies regarding attendance accounting. Nevan Edwards -MDE- specifically announced that appointments from the governor's office require the appointed individuals to be present at the meetings, meaning votes or participation from delegates will not be counted. C Burke stressed the importance of updating and publicizing the attendance rules on the website to ensure clarity regarding designated attendees.
- **Bylaws Review and AG Approval** Nevan Edwards -MDE- presented the bylaws, noting that the shared version had received approval from the Attorney General (AG), which was important because there is no explicit statutory authority for SIEGES to develop and implement bylaws. Nevan Edwards -MDE- clarified that these policies are internally applicable, allowing for internal workings like establishing work groups, but cannot change things affecting the general public's

participation. Nevan Edwards -MDE- also confirmed that the AG approved all the group's proposed changes as they did not affect the statute.

- **Bylaws: Commission Purpose and Membership** Nevan Edwards -MDE- detailed the first section of the bylaws, which outlines the commission's statutory purpose and responsibilities, noting that this section has minimal edits due to statutory requirements. The subsequent section, Commission Membership, defines who holds seats and their allocation, highlighting that some seat descriptions use "at least," suggesting flexibility for increasing diversity in representation. Andrew Miller confirmed that the current document is similar to the draft previously received, with some small incorporated vocal comments and wording changes.
- **Bylaws: Commission Structure and Meetings** Nevan Edwards -MDE- explained that the Commission Structure section outlines term appointments, limits terms to no more than two consecutive times, and details the process for electing a new chair from among the current members of SIEGES. The Meeting section was edited to reflect the legal requirement to meet six times per year, including one joint meeting with the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Agency Advisory Council. The section also incorporated changes regarding rotating meeting locations, including at least one in a rural and one in an urban area.
- **Bylaws: Voting Procedures and Quorum** Nevan Edwards -MDE- introduced the new Voting Procedures section, which aims to standardize voting and ensure that only council members, not designates, participate in voting. Voting can be done in person, by phone, or via virtual meeting, and a vote requires a quorum (a majority of members) to be present. The chairperson will only exercise voting rights to break a tie.
- **Discussion on Public Input and Inter-Agency Coordination** Nevan Edwards -MDE- noted that members of the public will be allowed to address the council to give input on a vote, setting a particular time limit before the public comment period. Rebecca Rehr asked about including the requirement for coordinated public meetings with the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council (IEJEAC) in the Meeting section, which Nevan Edwards -MDE- agreed to include, acknowledging that it is a charge for IEJEAC via executive order rather than explicitly written in SIEGES's statute.
- **Debate on Voting Flexibility and Advanced Notice** Rebecca Rehr suggested the need for ample notice to commissioners if voting is restricted to only in-person or by phone, questioning the spontaneity of calling a vote during a meeting.

Andrew Miller suggested that a motion should be made and discussed before calling a vote, finding the current language vague. Rebecca Rehr argued for more flexibility, including secure electronic voting, to prevent commissioners from forfeiting their vote if they miss a meeting, especially during the legislative session when quick decisions, such as supporting legislation, may be needed. Nevan Edwards -MDE- responded that appointing parties strongly emphasize protecting non-designate voting and having council members participate in meetings, making digital voting a "hard ask".

- **Quorum, Abstentions, and State Agency Voting** Rebecca Rehr raised a concern that state agency representatives might need to recuse themselves from votes on legislation, potentially preventing the commission from reaching a quorum and fulfilling its advisory charge. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- clarified that in past practice, an abstention counts as a vote and contributes towards a quorum. John Papagni -DHCD- recalled that electronic voting had been used effectively in the past, such as for sending letters. However, Aneca Atkinson -MDE- reiterated that current advice suggests votes should be taken in person with all those who want to vote being present, though they will seek further clarification on potential variances for the legislative session. Subha Chandar -MDH- supported the simple, in-person approach, citing the difficulty of establishing a clear quorum virtually. C Burke also pushed back on voting restrictions specifically during the legislative session due to the fast-moving nature of legislation.
- **Bylaws Completion Timeline** Nevan Edwards -MDE- committed to seeking clarification on voting procedures, citing the need for quick decisions during the legislative session to the governor's office, and expects to finalize the bylaws document and communicate the results by the following week.
- **Annual Report Status and Timeline** C Burke moved the discussion to the annual report, noting some received changes and aiming to finalize it quickly. Noble Smith -MDE- acknowledged that the report, due on October 1st, is slightly behind schedule but earlier than previous years, and most comments received related to grammar and formatting. Noble Smith -MDE- also noted the re-addition of commission members' designations and new sections on the executive order, the screening tool, and recent actions. C Burke set an aggressive goal of finalizing the report by the end of the current week.
- **Recommendations for the Annual Report** Rebecca Rehr submitted a recommendation to add language urging the passing of legislation supporting the MDE permit process to address cumulative impacts in areas with high

environmental justice (EJ) scores. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- suggested a broader approach, recommending including a general statement that past, unmet recommendations remain commission priorities, in addition to providing the progress report on 2024 recommendations. Sacoby Wilson agreed with Rebecca Rehr's cumulative impacts recommendation and also proposed language for the commission's role in tracking accountability related to the implementation of the executive order and potential "cherish" legislation. Sacoby Wilson also suggested reviewing the governor's transition plan for other recommendations.

- **Consensus on Recommendations and Next Steps for Report** Rebecca Rehr advocated for including both her specific cumulative impacts legislation recommendation and Aneca Atkinson -MDE-'s broader statement, stating that legislation is key to adopting a cumulative impact approach. C Burke agreed that more work is needed on the recommendations and proposed a quick meeting with Noble Smith -MDE-, Aneca Atkinson -MDE-, and Nevan Edwards -MDE- to "hammer this out" by the end of the week. Andrew Miller supported language that reflects pursuing issues over multiple years, especially regarding accountability for passed legislation.
- **Recommendation on "Just Communities"** Sacoby Wilson introduced a new recommendation for the commission to engage with the Department of Housing in the implementation of "Just Communities," which they framed as an environmental justice issue related to housing, segregation, and redlining. C Burke suggested a step back, recommending that the commission first review and discuss Just Communities in a future meeting, potentially through a presentation by Assistant Secretary Genaue, before including it as a recommendation. John Papagni -DHCD- supported the idea of inviting Assistant Secretary Genaue to discuss the Just Communities work.
- **Commission Capacity and Resources for Accountability** Asha Smith raised a question about the resources allocated to the commission, asking if the capacity exists for the commission or staff to perform the proposed tracking and accountability functions, suggesting that a request for resources should be included if necessary. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- responded that MDE supports the commission and that they can assess the resource needs for each recommendation, suggesting tools like forming work groups to assist with internal workflow. Nevan Edwards -MDE- confirmed that the bylaws can include language allowing for the establishment of work groups to improve internal workflow, as it does not change the commission's structure.

- **Greater Baltimore Climate Summit** C Burke closed the discussion by confirming the plan to finalize the annual report recommendations quickly and then moved to the next agenda item, the Greater Baltimore Climate Summit in November.
- **Greater Baltimore Climate Summit** Noble Smith -MDE- provided details on the second annual Greater Baltimore Climate Summit, scheduled for November 3rd, focusing on the intersection of climate and environmental justice and featuring keynote speakers and presentations. C Burke confirmed they will attend to assist and speak about Black farmers across Maryland and farming in Baltimore City. Noble Smith -MDE- committed to following up with the lead organizer, Curry, to ensure the event flyer is distributed to those interested, as C Burke noted some people had been asking for it.
- **Meeting Schedule Adjustments** C Burke initiated a discussion about adjusting the November and December meeting dates due to the approaching holiday season. Noble Smith -MDE- proposed moving the last meeting of the year to the first week of December, as the usual last Tuesday of the month falls during the holidays for both months. C Burke agreed to send out the new dates shortly and requested commissioners to provide any concerns via chat or email.
- **Public Comment on Sunshine Laws and Data Gaps** Veronika Carella raised concerns during public comment, noting that the meeting agenda was not posted a week prior, which she believed was required by sunshine laws for attendees to prepare relevant input. Veronika Carella also highlighted the lack of data on the use of hazardous chemicals approved by the MDA as pesticides, stating that this data gap needs to be closed. Furthermore, Veronika Carella emphasized the commission's statutory requirement concerning the human right to safe drinking water, which includes eliminating known sources of PAS contamination, and asked when these issues would be addressed as priorities.
- **Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) Permit** Patrick DeArme, a senior attorney at the Chesapeake Legal Alliance, informed the commission about the Maryland Department of Environment's (MDE) draft public notice for the new statewide Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) permit, primarily covering chicken farms on the Eastern Shore. Patrick DeArme noted that the public comment period is open until January 2nd and provided the MDE web page link in the chat for the permit and public comment hearings, including virtual and in-person sessions. Sacoby Wilson suggested the commission should establish an AFO work group due to the permit's potential environmental justice impact on adjacent communities.

- **Emerging Issue of Data Centers** Sacoby Wilson raised the emerging environmental justice issue of data centers, citing two proposed centers in Prince George's County. Sacoby Wilson stated that data centers place a major strain on the energy grid and cause concerns regarding water pollution, water availability, and combustion byproducts that could affect local residents. Although the governor rejected a data center study bill, Sacoby Wilson asked the commission to weigh in, potentially by supporting a statewide moratorium or the development of municipal ordinances to restrict data centers in overburdened communities.
- **Just Transition Network Letter** C Burke informed the attendees that a four-page letter was received from the Just Transition Network, addressed to themselves, Megan Conton, and Secretary Maw Wayne, which touches upon several topics, including Justice40, and is signed by many concerned parties. C Burke decided not to read the letter during the meeting but committed to sending it out with the final recommendations for the annual report to provide context.
- **Finalizing November and December Meeting Dates** Rebecca Rehr confirmed the meeting dates, noting their calendar currently shows December 16th. Noble Smith -MDE- proposed December 9th, but C Burke mentioned the 9th conflicts with CPAC. Rebecca Rehr suggested keeping the 16th and proposed using the November meeting for an MDE presentation on the AFO permit, as the public comment period is open, and the December meeting for a legislative preview. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- indicated that a commission-specific AFO presentation might be difficult due to scheduling with the relevant MDE team, but confirmed many other virtual and in-person public meetings are scheduled, and they would look into the possibility.
- **AFO Permit Presentation and Commission Meetings** C Burke agreed to share the dates of MDE's already scheduled AFO permit meetings so that commissioners could attend those, supporting the goal of working smarter, not harder. Noble Smith -MDE-, Nevan Edwards -MDE-, and C Burke committed to quickly determine and send out the final meeting dates for November and December. Nevan Edwards -MDE- agreed that one meeting in December makes the most sense, arguing that emergency meetings will likely be necessary during the legislative session regardless of the voting situation.
- **Data from Public Input and Commission Recommendations** C Burke questioned whether any of the issues raised by Veronika Carella during public comment, such as those related to sunshine laws, were ever included in the commission's recommendations. Noble Smith -MDE- clarified that the commission has taken

the position not to include recommendations submitted by non-commissioners like Veronika Carella, but if a commissioner submitted a similar recommendation, it would likely be included. Nevan Edwards -MDE- added that multiple commissioners have offered to collaborate with Veronika Carella on issues like POS.

Suggested next steps

- Nevan Edwards -MDE- will finalize the revised bylaws by next week, including language that confirms the commission's ability to establish internal work groups, and send them out with a short explanation of the answer received from the governor's office regarding voting flexibility.
- Nevan Edwards -MDE- will ensure that the updated bylaws, once finalized, are posted on the commission's website to clearly outline attendance policies, including those regarding designates.
- Nevan Edwards -MDE- will seek clarification from the governor's office regarding the possibility of electronic or flexible voting procedures during the legislative session, explicitly citing the need for quick decision-making flexibility during this period.
- Noble Smith -MDE- will incorporate context into the bylaws before the explanation of the voting procedures to clarify the specific types of internal operational decisions that can be put to a vote.
- Noble Smith -MDE- will add language to the annual report's recommendations section about passing legislation to support the MDE permit process and address cumulative impacts, and include a general statement highlighting that previous unmet recommendations are still priorities of the commission.
- Sacoby Wilson will review the governor's transition plan, particularly the environment and climate chapter, to identify relevant environmental justice aspects for inclusion in the commission's annual report recommendations.
- Sacoby Wilson will review or discuss just communities and recommend that Assistant Secretary Gnau present on just communities at a future meeting.
- C Burke, Noble Smith -MDE-, Aneca Atkinson -MDE-, and Nevan Edwards -MDE- will meet by the end of the week to resolve outstanding recommendations and finalize the annual report draft.
- Noble Smith -MDE- will resend the flyer for the Greater Baltimore Climate Summit to the group and follow up with Quiry to determine how to get it out to folks.

- Rebecca Rehr will send a draft of the cumulative impacts recommendations language to C Burke.
- C Burke will send out the letter received from the Just Transition Network with the final recommendations for the annual report.
- Subha Chandar -MDH- will share the annual report with the group.
- Noble Smith -MDE- and Nevan Edwards -MDE- will send out all the updated information and changes related to the meetings and the annual report to the commissioners by Thursday morning.
- Noble Smith -MDE-, Nevan Edwards -MDE-, and Aneca Atkinson -MDE- will check with the relevant MDE team to see if a commission-specific presentation on the APHO permit can be scheduled for the November or December meeting.
- Noble Smith -MDE-, Nevan Edwards -MDE-, Aneca Atkinson -MDE-, and C Burke will figure out the dates and topics for the next two meetings.

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