

## Meeting Minutes: CEJSC Meeting

Date: April 28, 2026

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Tracey O. Garrett Owusu, Dr. Renee Carr, Subha Chandar, Crystal Faison, Rebecca Rehr, Tyler Brice, Andrew Miller, Joseph Griffiths Lemir Teron, Robin Bailey, Asha Smith, John Papagni, Aneca Atkinson, Dorothy Morrison, John Papagni, Rebecca Rehr

### **Other Attendance:**

Mihir Parikh, Aiden Gregg, Dean Costales, Jon Mueller, Nevan Edwards, Kaitlin Walker, Alex Lima, Veronika Carella

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- Nevan Edwards -MDE- initiated the meeting by asking attendees to add their name and organization to the chat for attendance purposes. The agenda for the April 2026 meeting included updates on the legislative session, community updates related to the Pleasant Chase community conversation from the previous month, aligning commission actions with the annual report, and open discussions regarding the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities retreat. They also planned to discuss future collaborations with CPAC and inter-agency council meetings.

### **2. 2025 Legislative Session Review**

- The Maryland 2026 legislative session concluded on April 13th. Nevan Edwards -MDE- provided updates on three bills that the commission had previously voted on or discussed, including SB780/HP1287 and SB781/HP1268, collectively known as the Cherish Our Communities Act, which did not cross over after being pulled by the bill sponsor. SB0371/HB0395, concerning water pollution control discharge permits for animal feeding operations, passed the Senate and House and is awaiting the governor's approval.
- **Water Pollution Control Discharge Permits for Animal Feeding Operations (SB0371/HB0395):** The bill concerning water pollution control discharge permits for animal feeding operations passed both the Senate and the House and is currently awaiting the governor's approval. Nevan Edwards -MDE- clarified that this bill would become relevant in the next set of Animal Feeding Operations (AFOS) general permits, not the current set. Ana Atkinson -MDE- confirmed that the current AFOS permit is not affected and the bill will be applied in the next permit cycle, which is typically five years.
- **Relevant Environmental Justice Legislation (HB250 & HB252):** Nevan Edwards -MDE- reviewed other Environmental Justice (EJ) legislation. HB250 authorizes the department to impose administrative penalties for certain violations related to water use or dam safety. HB252 focuses on lead paint abatement services by authorizing the adaptation of regulations to include certain requirements for service providers accredited by the Department of the Environment to expand accessibility of these services.
- **Sewage Sludge, PFAS, and Water Quality Legislation:** HB925/SB719 establishes a regulatory framework for the land application of sewage sludge based on PFAS concentration, setting a limit on the amount allowed. Additionally, HB196 and SB940 require the Department of the Environment to develop a statewide action plan for enforcing maximum containment levels to address water discoloring, taste, and odor in

community water systems. This action plan is scheduled to be reported back to the General Assembly around 2028.

- **Carbon Removal Technology and Lead Housing Law Expansion:** SB625, regarding carbon removal technology and practices, requires the department by January 1st, 2028, to adopt regulations governing the permitting of carbon dioxide capture, removal, and sequestration projects utilizing biochar or wood vault technologies. SB872 expands the reduction of lead in housing law to include single-room tenancies, which were not previously protected. Crystal Faison inquired about the performance bond and liability insurance requirements for lead abatement services under HB252. Ana Atkinson -MDE- explained that while those figures may not be explicitly in the bill, the expanded authorization helps the department address "bad actors" and potentially recoup costs through insurance if there are issues.
- **Climate Change and Insurance Study:** Rebecca Rehr flagged a bill to study climate change and insurance, noting its overlap with environmental justice issues. This study is relevant because changing flood maps and rising flood risk are making it more difficult for people to secure insurance coverage, especially for certain homes, which could lead to issues with denial of coverage or inability to purchase homes.

### 3. Pleasant Chase Community Engagement

- Nevan Edwards -MDE- reported on the Pleasant Chase community's presentation about their history and engagement with Savage Stone LLC Quarry. Savage Stone holds multiple permits, including a state permit to operate from Air and Radiation, a surface mining permit, an MPDES general discharge permit, a water appropriation permit, and a non-title wetlands permit. MDE has held internal meetings with community representatives and administrations to ensure continuous collaboration throughout the summer and to address future compliance practices.
- MDE is planning summer engagements, including dust enforcement checks and creating events for conversation between Savage Stone LLC, the community, and MDE to foster clear communication. Joseph Griffiths -MDP- confirmed that the Pleasant Chase community is classified as overburdened or underserved by the Environmental Screen methodology. Andrew Miller raised concerns about community reports of permit violations, specifically related to the frequency of blasting causing physical damage to homes, though Ana Atkinson -MDE- noted that recent inspections have found no violations of the conditions of the current permit as written.
- Rebecca Rehr suggested that the commission consider actions to address the "county issue vs. state issue" tension, proposing a motion to write a letter of support for the community's complaint to the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning. Rebecca Rehr clarified that this letter would ask the local board to look at the community's complaint, rather than making an independent recommendation. She also suggested requesting a timeline from MDE regarding key dates for the renewal of permits held by Savage Stone and considering Pleasant Chase as a location for a future in-person meeting or community visit.
- Joseph Griffiths -MDP- mentioned that they might have to abstain from voting on a locally directed motion without further guidance. Nevan Edwards -MDE- suggested organizing a separate, short meeting for the vote to allow commissioners time to consider the information, similar to emergency legislation meetings. Tracy Garrett expressed frustration regarding the lack of response from the commission on similar local issues in the past and requested the establishment of a standardized protocol for addressing community requests for letters of support.

- The Pleasant Chase representatives on the call confirmed they could share a copy of their complaint to the Department of Planning and Zoning. Nevan Edwards -MDE- committed to sending out a poll later today or tomorrow morning for a short, independent meeting to vote on the motion for the letter of support, emphasizing the need for quick participation to establish a quorum. Jon Mueller of the law clinic stressed that the issue is time-sensitive as the county has indicated they will not open the file to review the complaint. The process for creating community-based protocols will be a discussion point for the upcoming commission retreat.
- Nevan Edwards -MDE- provided a geographic breakdown of activities in Pleasant Chase and confirmed that a major action item is scheduling a meeting to vote on the letter of support motion offered by Rebecca Rehr. Crystal Faison suggested leveraging the time during the scheduled meeting to vote on multiple issues, including the in-person meeting location, to maximize efficiency. Nevan Edwards -MDE- agreed to attempt to include the in-person visit motion, noting that the immediate priority is issuing the letter of support for Pleasant Chase.
- Nevan Edwards -MDE- responded to a question regarding the process for selecting an in-person meeting location, indicating that an in-person live meeting may not be necessary for the decision unless there are many conflicting options. If there is general agreement on a location, like Pleasant Chase, coordination could be handled through a poll. Nevan Edwards -MDE- stated that the in-person meeting selection is considered a more casual item compared to the urgent letter of support.
- In response to a request from Aneca Atkinson -MDE-, Nevan Edwards -MDE- provided the expiration date for the air state permit to operate for the Savage Stone LLC quarry. This permit expires on September 30, 2026, requiring the quarry to obtain a renewal to continue operations. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- later clarified that surface mining permits expire on December 31, 2028, and they would need to check the specific requirements for public comment associated with the mining permit.
- Rebecca Rehr noted that the September air permit expiration date is only five months away and asked if the Environmental Justice (EJ) commission should recommend a public comment period, given the community inquiry. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- explained that under their leadership, the policy is to involve their office—which includes using discretion to hold comment periods—for permits in communities with a high environmental justice score. Rebecca Rehr suggested the EJ commission should formalize a letter to support a public comment period for this permit before the May meeting and standardize this procedure for similar permits in underserved communities.
- Rebecca Rehr emphasized that the motion to support the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) hosting a public comment period for the air permit must occur during the May meeting, as waiting until the June meeting would be too late to meet the required 120-day mark before the permit expiration. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- mentioned that the renewal application is not yet in-house, but renewals typically arrive 90 to 120 days before expiration, providing some time for preparation. Nevan Edwards -MDE- committed to developing a timeline for all Pleasant Chase permits to assist the commission in tracking long-term engagement goals.

#### **4. Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council**

- Nevan Edwards -MDE- discussed the required meetings with the Inter-Agency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council, with the goal of incorporating them into the normal monthly meeting cadence. These collaborations are crucial for providing feedback on state agency strategic plans, discussing community outreach, and setting

legislative priorities. Crystal Faison suggested a reciprocal approach where the commission visits one of the council's quarterly meetings, and the commission hosts one of the council's meetings.

#### **5. MDE Public Participation Guide**

- Alex Lima -MDE- announced that the Public Participation Guide for Environmental Permits is open for public comments, with an extended deadline of May 4th. The 14-page guide details the permit process and requirements for applicants to inform and engage communities with high pollution levels. Feedback should be submitted to the EJ email, and requests for additional time can also be made through that channel.

#### **6. Public Comment**

#### **7. Adjournment**