

Education, Communications and Outreach Work Group (ECO) Meeting on Jan.15, 2020 at MDE.

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Chair John Kumm. There were 6 members in attendance (John Kumm, Paul Berman, Dana Cooper, Brittany Brothers, Tad Aburn), plus 3 staff and a member of the public. After welcome and introductions, the discussion centered mainly on the 2020 Work Plan and the need for some new members, and a co-chair.

WORK PLAN

Tad Aburn, Director of the Air and Radiation Administration, said the topics were open. He talked about needing more robust participation, plus members from nonprofit advocacy groups and the private sector. He said these work groups are now three years old and need to be refreshed. New members should be appointed by Secretary Grumbles by letter. Director Aburn said we have an old work plan that was ambitious with lots of good ideas but it never really took off among the members – only the government agencies staff worked it.

What are the tools in our toolbox asked Asst Secretary Suzanne Dorsey. How do we support MCCC's priorities?

John Kumm said we need more balance between private sector reps (via Chamber of Commerce?) and government, nonprofits. And we should add the element of diversity.

Tad Aburn reminded the group that the Commission is different than MDE. MDE can only help. Both Tad Aburn and Suzanne Dorsey stated that ECO's outcomes must be measurable, certifiable, and trusted. Reasonable, achievable goals need to be blessed by Director Aburn and the Secretary.

Chris Beck, MDE's Climate Change Program manager asked "how do we effectively communicate to the MCCC and the partner agencies the value & importance of ECO in communicating climate related issues?" How can ECO effectively educate and inform the public in the face of recent calls for urgent action, and how can ECO engage with the public in 2020?

Paul Berman made a point to ask the group to use the phrases "cost-effective" and "credit-worthy" instead of the word "voluntary" because our work is quantifiable and should be data-driven. That will impress the bond people like Standard and Poor's.

ROSTER REVIEW

Chris Beck said we have to give the ECO work group "more teeth." It should be more ambitious, and we should be able to get more value out of communications, which is important to the Climate. Right now the group needs to be re-invigorated – new members are needed, particularly a co-chair.

Assistant Secretary Suzanne Dorsey said talk of climate "doomsday" turns the public off, shuts people down. We need to provide and communicate solutions. She said our priorities should come down from the Commission (MCCC). She recommends two year terms for ECO members to clarify their

commitment. “We need more communication pros. ECO has to drive the communication train for MCCC.” Also, she said that we have a contract with UMCES, so we should be using and leveraging the measurements and infographics, and other data that they produce.

CLIMATE CHAMPIONS PROGRAM:

Tad Aburn said that this was a good program, as well as the Climate Challenge Program, but they have lapsed for a while now due to MDE resources being on hold.

John Kumm suggested that Ashley Duckman (Chamber of Commerce) and Laura Armstrong (MDE’s Green Registry Program) might be helpful in leveraging the private sector.

GGRA PLAN – PUBLIC OUTREACH UPDATE

Susan Casey stated that she has been busy updating old Climate Change Program and MCCC webpages and setting up a years’ worth of Commission and Work Group meetings and communicating them on the MDE website as well as on Facebook, as well as the public meetings for the GGRA draft plan; she also is emailing members asking them to forward information about meetings to their contacts. Susan asked the other communicators on ECO to help spread the word they get from MDE social media and asked that all ECO members follow, like and repost MCCC and Climate Change Maryland’s posts on FB. Also mentioned it would be good to set up other social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter because they cover different (younger) demographics than FB.

Suzanne Dorsey asked if we (ECO) are ready to communicate about the Plan? We define how the message is put out and communicate a sense of urgency but she acknowledged that this is complicated information to convey to the public.

Tad Aburn said we can make huge progress on the Climate Commission that has positive impact on the economy and jobs.

Paul Berman stated that there just isn’t enough attention given to the Climate Change issue in general and that there is a cost to doing nothing. ECO can help broaden the conversation. “Let’s look at the economy and stress bi-partisanship.”

Tad Aburn replied that while Maryland has reduced CO2 emissions and Ozone in Maryland, it can’t be just Maryland. We need a national and international program, but Maryland can show leadership to other states. Leadership is a critical piece. TIMING is another issue. How do we get where we want to be from here? Fossil Fuels is difficult – jobs are at stake. We’ve been working with about 15 organizations (including underserved communities). What they care about are coal plants and diesel trucks. (Volkswagen Mitigation Fund spending is an example – Turner Bay Station, Curtis Bay.) But, they are confused about the big picture of “Climate Change” with all its implications.

Suzanne: Put infographics on our website and social media – visuals are needed to distill and tell the story about what we’ve been doing to address underserved communities’ priorities. Less words – more visuals.

She ended with: What ECO needs to do is to make a work plan for 2020 that is based on just two priorities (and mandates from the legislation). Who is MCCC's audience? (Everyone answered, "All Marylanders"). BOTTOM LINE: What can ECO focus on in 2020 to support the MCCC objectives, in particular how to build important partnerships, communicate w/ public, and address EJ issues

Meeting ended at 12:00 noon. Next ECO meeting at is scheduled for February 19 at MDE.

Proposed Action Items before February meeting:

- Define two priorities (that align with mandates from the MCCC legislation)
- identify support mechanisms (MCCC) and resource needs
- map out milestones and announcements to the MCCC to solicit more support and collaboration
- Evaluate current roster and propose new members (including co-chair)
- Identify better strategies to enhance ECO's role in climate communication, policy decision making, and strategic planning