

**Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice & Sustainable Communities
(CEJSC) Meeting
September 3, 2014, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Baltimore City Community College (BCCC)
2901 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21215-7807**

Attendance:

Commissioners: Arabia Davis, Calvin Ball, Lisa Nissley, Rebecca Rehr, Rachel Hess-Mutinda (for Cliff Mitchell), Larissa Johnson, Meredith Moise, Benoy Thomas, Caroline Varney-Alvarado, Stephan Levitsky, Molly McKee (for Senator Ferguson)

Guests: Megan Ulrich, Dr. Gordon May, Kristen Harbeson, Associate Dean Evans, Del. Shawn Tarrant, Sen. Joan Carter-Conway

Introductions:

Dr. May welcomed everyone and said that BCCC has many plans to move forward. He noted that he has only been on the job for three weeks and that everyone has given him a warm welcome. He also recognized that Calvin is running a complete degree program through BCCC.

Calvin thanked Dr. May for coming and said the CEJSC is pleased for the opportunity to expand the EJ community to other institutions of higher education.

Associate Dean Evans said that his Department works on a lot of sustainability issues and encourages students to engage in sustainability. They have student forums on sustainability. The CEJSC can help advance this.

Calvin said the CEJSC has partnered with other institutions in the past and is interested in partnering with BCCC.

CEHPAC Report

Rachel said DHMH is working on pesticide issues. She said that Benoy Thomas is going to be serving as the joint member on CEHPAC and the CEJSC. His paperwork is currently being processed. He should be officially appointed as of November.

Rachel said that DHMH is also focusing on asthma and looking for some ways that they can use the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to get reimbursement for asthma services. They are also looking at the environmental triggers for asthma, as well as health triggers.

Legislative Black Caucus (LBC) Update

Larissa said she has been doing research, but there are no website updates yet regarding new staff and information about the annual conference.

Lisa said we might have to wait a little longer to get information due to the elections. The current chair not running for re-election.

Larissa noted the dates are posted as Nov. 14th-15th. A few ways to reach out were noted. Larissa will reach out about the potential for participating.

Joint Hearing

Lisa has reached out to the committees about a briefing, but notes that sometimes it is tight in the first session after an election. Kristen said it might be possible to brief the Environmental Matters Committee, but they will not start looking at briefings until the beginning of December. They need to figure out other things first like who will be their vice-chair and subcommittee chairs.

Identify Relevant Data Sets and an Environmental Champion

Steve asked exactly what the CEJSC is looking for regarding data sets. He reached out to a couple professors on the issue and needs to get back to them with more specific details.

Calvin said he thinks the idea is to bolster EJ concerns with data, i.e. do a more refined job of focusing on what communities are adversely affected.

Steve asked if there is any health data in Maryland that can be assessed alongside environmental data.

Megan said that is part of the conversation that the Cumulative Impact Workgroup is having. DHMH has designated health enterprise zones and part of the conversation is whether the Workgroup can utilize those to assess health impacts in communities. Cliff Mitchell also hired an intern to look at this issue. Megan suggested Steve talk to Cliff.

Rebecca Rehr said that the CDC has good program and the University of Wisconsin has some good information. Dr. Sacoby Wilson also recently published an article on double disparity in Maryland. There are some ongoing limitations related to privacy issues with health data that also need to be worked out.

Steve asked once the CEJSC has the data, what does the Commission want to do with it?

Calvin said the Commission can use it to talk to legislators with a data informed approach.

Calvin asked for approval of the May, June, and July minutes. The minutes were approved.

Benoy asked about the number of migrant workers in Maryland and if we are going to monitor pesticides? EPA recently came out with new pesticide standards.

Megan and Lisa said that the numbers had been discussed last fall. DLLR reported there were 673 H2 visa workers in the State and an estimated 2000 undocumented workers.

Sea Level Rise

Arabia said that she is waiting to hear back from Zoe Johnson on whether Zoe is available to present in November or December to the CEJSC on her work on Sea Level Rise.

Caroline said that the Coast Smart Council is working on issues in coastal communities in Maryland. The effects on the built environment might be a good way to address the intersection with the sea level rise.

Kristen said that there is an intersection between historical preservation and environmental impacts.

Calvin said he agreed, he has participated in discussions on how to preserve old buildings, churches, etc. that are threatened by sea level rise and climate change.

Delegate Tarrant said this discussion is exciting because the environmental health side of healthcare is important. He is not sure which Committees in the House of Delegates discuss the health of communities and the unhealthy foods, drinks, etc. that are sold in them, but it is a big issue, i.e. people going grocery shopping at 7-11. He asked Kristen if Environmental Matters looks at the issue.

Kristen said Environmental Matters has dealt with food desserts, but maybe this isn't in the same scope.

Calvin said he thinks it may relate.

Meredith said that in NYC there are more fruits and vegetables at corner stores. It all relates to creating sustainable communities. If people don't deposit trash in the right receptacles, it brings rats, etc. Liquor stores and what they can sell are a Baltimore City zoning issue.

Del. Tarrant said that maybe local County/City Councils can start working on what is sold in corner and liquor stores. He used the example of banning smoking indoors, the County Councils acted on it and then the state legislator was able to pass it.

Calvin said banning indoor smoking was a big issue in Howard County and they were one of the first County Councils to ban it.

Lisa said that on a related note she had a meeting with a company that is going to be vertical gardening. The company is currently looking at space it would like to use at Montgomery Park. The business is trying to get their lettuce in corner stores, but business owners don't know how to preserve the lettuce and convince customers to buy it. The CEJSC might be able with ideas to help educate the public on the issue.

Del. Tarrant asked if this Commission could be involved in giving the businesses incentives to sell more vegetables.

Associate Dean Evans said that educating students is also a big step. For instance the students he works with didn't realize you can get a small plant and put it on your balcony.

Caroline said that a lot of schools have cut Home Economics, art, etc- those classes added value to the education experience. It would help to have a more modern form of home economics to educate the students on these sorts of issues.

Molly said that there is a park that is 88 acres in Curtis Bay/Brooklyn. The community is talking about doing farming, and also potentially doing a canning kitchen. They are hoping to have field trips and establish other ways to engage the local students at Benjamin Franklin High School.

Cumulative Impact Workgroup

Lisa said that the Cumulative Impact Workgroup will have a meeting next week on 10/2. This third meeting will be to discuss what can work in Maryland. So far the Workgroup has discussed SB 706 from last session, the state of the science, and what other states are doing. MDE thought it was a good idea to come together and discuss the issue before the next legislative session. All of the information from the Workgroup meetings is available on MDE's website under cumulative impacts.

Other Business/Agency Updates

Lisa said MACRO will be doing trainings for MDE staff that she believes will prepare the Department to better address issues surrounding EJ, among other things.

Arabia said the Planning Director's Roundtable is really interested in the CEJSC doing a presentation on EJ in the Spring.

Caroline said DHCD is working on neighborhood stabilization and home owner group meetings. Environmental issues are being addressed for multifamily development issues and ways you can build green, such as LEED. They are also starting to address siting, indoor health, etc. The Maryland Green Building Council is looking at the IGCC standard for state buildings. Baltimore City and Montgomery Counties are also looking at the IGCC.

Calvin introduced Senator Joan Carter Conway.

Senator Conway thanked Lisa for inviting her. She is very interested in environmental issues, and she leads the Environmental Health and Education Committee in the Senate.

Calvin said the CEJSC is working on partnering with State Legislators on EJ issues. He said the goal is that they can come to the CEJSC for data on EJ.

Senator Conway said is familiar with Senator Benson's bill from last session and the existing problems are largely a zoning issue. She said zoning is a problem as it relates to EJ.

Calvin agreed and said the Commission reached out to the local zoning and local environmental health departments. The CEJSC sent them letters and an EJ information sheet for local governments.

Presentation on Energy Awareness Month

Larissa said right now the goal is to get people to participate in EMPOWER Maryland and to get people to reduce their energy bills. The big goal is to reduce Maryland's energy use by 15% by 2015. Energy is also an EJ issue. Energy affects us every day. As an EJ issue, it is something that directly impacts our health, for example- asthma is an issue caused in part by environmental factors. Larissa can send a blurb on National Energy Awareness month that can go into organization's newsletters. Larissa handed out kinetic flashlights (flashlights that require no batteries) for use in emergency kits.

Meredith asked Larissa to send her the banner on Energy Awareness for her magazine.

Larissa said she can also contact Dean Evans at BCCC. Everyone in Maryland pays for EMPOWER already, so we want citizens to use the incentives. EJ is related because if you make less than 10K a year, you are paying 70% of your total income on energy. The average Marylander pays \$129 a month on utilities.

Rebecca said the School of Public Health has released its public health study on hydrofracking in the Marcellus Shale. The public comment period is open. Maryland is the first state to actually conduct a health study on fracking before it starts. The Maryland Environmental Health Network has compiled some information on where there are data gaps. Rebecca is happy to discuss more details on the issue. Public Comment closes on Oct. 3rd at 12:00 pm.

Senator Conway said this is one of the most contentious issues in her Committee. She noted that we need to find out what the studies say and decide if Maryland should extend the de facto moratorium in the future. It is important to look at the science, and she noted, there is not a single permit in Maryland yet. The Senator also offered to disseminate the EMPOWER MD information to her constituents.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held Tuesday, October 28th, 2014 at Montgomery Park.