

Minutes of the Forty-eighth Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: October 7, 2020
TIME: 4:30 p.m.
PLACE: Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Aloysius Nelson Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;
Chair
Director, Division of Veterans Services, Kenosha County
Yolanda Adams Wisconsin Deputy State Director for the Elderly,
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Huda Alkaff Founder and Director, Wisconsin Green Muslims
Ella Dunbar Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee
Patricia Goeman Deputy Director, Local Initiatives Support Corporation-Milwaukee
Keith Martin Engineering Specialist - Advanced 2, Wisconsin Department of Transportation,
Southeast Region
N. Lynnette McNeely Legal Redress Chair, Waukesha County NAACP
Andrea Mendez Barrutia Director of Community Engagement, Hispanic Collaborative
Sandra Rubin Equal Opportunity Specialist (retired), Milwaukee HUD
Field Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
Theresa Schuerman Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach

Guests and Staff Present

Donna Brown-Martin Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;
Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation
Carly Hegarty Director of Consumer Environmental Health, City of Milwaukee
Gary Korb Public Involvement and Outreach Specialist, SEWRPC
Eric Lynde Chief Special Projects Planner, SEWRPC
Catherine Madison Senior Planner, City of Milwaukee
Benjamin McKay Deputy Director, SEWRPC
Kevin Muhs Executive Director, SEWRPC
Miranda Page Fellow, Lead for America
Nakeisha Payne Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Karyn Rotker Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU of Wisconsin
Jennifer Sarnecki Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC
Dana Shinnars Transportation Planner, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Bruce Wiggins Member of the Public

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Nelson called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to order at 4:30 p.m., welcomed those in attendance, and requested that EJTF members and guests introduce themselves.

APPROVAL OF THE JULY 29, 2020, MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any questions or comments on the July 29, 2020, meeting minutes. There were none. Mr. Nelson then asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Martin moved, and Ms. McNeely seconded the approval of the July 29, 2020, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

DISCUSSION OF THE COMMISSION'S UPCOMING REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING EFFORT

Mr. Nelson asked Mr. McKay and Ms. Page to review the Commission's upcoming regional food system planning effort. Mr. McKay introduced the effort and noted that the Commission was hosting Ms. Page, a fellow from Lead for America who will have the lead role in developing the regional food system plan. Ms. Page introduced herself and gave an overview presentation of the proposed planning effort and food systems in general (available [here](#)). Mr. McKay indicated staff was in the beginning stages of the planning process and was seeking initial input from EJTF members.

During Mr. McKay's review of staff's initial draft list of potential advisory committee members (available [here](#)), the following discussion occurred, including suggestions for additional advisory committee members:

1. Mr. Nelson noted there were city representatives from four counties and asked why there were no city representatives from the other three counties in Southeastern Wisconsin. Mr. McKay responded that this was due to a need to manage the size of the committee and is consistent with city representation on both the EJTF and Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee.
2. Ms. Brown-Martin expressed support for including nonprofits dealing with food insecurity and also recommended the Social Development Commission.
3. Ms. McNeely recommended obtaining input directly from consumers. Mr. McKay indicated that staff intended to obtain this input through the community organizations listed and through a robust public engagement effort during the planning process. Ms. McNeely added that consumers should be involved in the development of the plan rather than having others speak on their behalf.
4. Ms. McNeely recommended hospitals/healthcare professionals. Mr. McKay indicated that staff envisioned obtaining that type of input from county or local health departments, but recognized healthcare professionals could provide a different perspective.
5. Ms. Brown-Martin recommended Growing Power, which was founded by Will Allen. Ms. Dunbar indicated that Growing Power dissolved in recent years, but a collaborative is operating at that location. Mr. McKay indicated staff could reach out to the new operators.

[Secretary's Note: Growing Power dissolved in 2017 due to financial troubles. In 2019, Urban Farm Collaborative Inc. was formed and now operates The Collaborative Farm ([website](#)).]

6. Ms. Mendez Barrutia recommended Alice's Garden Urban Farm.
7. Ms. Schuerman recommended Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in East Troy and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.
8. Ms. Rotker suggested farmworkers and workers in food production facilities (e.g., meat or vegetable packing).
9. Ms. Hegarty suggested those involved in food assistance-related services (e.g., SNAP, WIC, Hunger Task Force, or Feeding America).
10. Ms. Rubin suggested looking into whether there are groups that coordinate the numerous farmers' markets held across the Region. Mr. McKay mentioned that Commission staff assisted in preparing the Fresh Food Atlas in the past. Mr. Wiggins noted that the Fondy Food Center facilitates the Milwaukee Farmers Market Coalition. Ms. Madison stated that UEDA manages the Food Enterprise Development Network, which supports micro-level food entrepreneurs and businesses in Milwaukee.
11. Ms. Schuerman recommended UW-Extension, which offers nutrition classes.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Ms. Schuerman provided the following additional suggestions for potential advisory committee members:

- Open Arms Free Clinic in Elkhorn
- The Aging and Disability Resource Center
- Meals on Wheels
- Culinary and agricultural programs at Milwaukee Area Technical College and Gateway Technical College]

12. Ms. Brown-Martin indicated that it is important to mitigate issues with the food supply chain, noting that food distribution to markets is not integrated with food distribution to restaurants, which resulted in food waste as restaurants closed due to the pandemic.
13. Ms. Dunbar recommended Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), noting that Vincent High School has an agriculture focus. Ms. Hegarty noted that Vincent is also part of the Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee, which is working on several MPS schoolyard redevelopment plans that have a food access/security component. Ms. Payne stated that Commission staff has worked with the Consortium and participated in their annual conferences.
14. Mr. Wiggins indicated that the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change is not really a conservancy organization and it may disband once it provides its recommendations to the Governor. He noted there are other land trusts in the Region and land holding entities in the City of Milwaukee that could be explored to obtain a conservancy perspective. He also expressed support for obtaining input related to climate change.
15. Ms. Mendez Barrutia asked about the role of technology in connecting people. Mr. Muhs indicated staff had included members knowledgeable about advancements in agricultural technology, but not necessarily from a connectivity standpoint in terms of distribution and the consumer end. Mr. Wiggins added that a fast-growing segment of the food industry that uses technology involves new food delivery systems.

16. Ms. McNeely asked about the intent of including members from the Finance membership group. Mr. McKay indicated the hope was to obtain input related to the financial struggles of smaller local farm operations and ideas for attracting or supporting food outlets within food deserts. Ms. Page added that another goal related to economic development and increasing investment in black and brown businesses. Ms. McNeely asked about involving HUD Community Development Block Grant representatives. Mr. McKay responded that there may be an opportunity for input from entitlement jurisdiction offices, which may be particularly valuable at the point in the planning process when staff is identifying programs and sources of funding.
17. Ms. Adams asked about representation from Kenosha on the committee. Mr. McKay responded that there would be two government representatives, one from Kenosha County and one from the City of Kenosha, and the potential for more from the other membership groups as staff identifies the specific individuals to invite. He added that geographic representation is an important consideration when staff forms advisory committees.

Mr. McKay thanked everyone for their suggestions and staff will consider all the suggestions, noting that it was also important to keep the committee to a manageable size. He indicated a next step would be to obtain input on the potential committee membership from the Commission's Planning and Research and Executive Committees. Mr. Muhs noted that staff also needs to identify individuals for each of the groups in the membership list and that some individuals or organizations may decline. Mr. Nelson indicated his only concern with the membership was the size because too many members can be counterproductive. He asked about the possibility of creating sub-groups of the committee. Mr. Muhs indicated the Commission has had committees of this size in the past but agreed the large size can be counterproductive. He indicated staff would consider creating sub-committees. Mr. Nelson asked about the role of the EJTF related to the plan. Mr. Muhs responded that staff envisions the EJTF having an active role throughout the planning process unless EJTF members request otherwise.

The following discussion occurred during Ms. Page's review of preliminary report outline (available [here](#)):

1. Ms. Rubin asked if Chapter 2 would include discussion on vacant properties in urban areas. Ms. Page responded that it would likely be covered in Chapter 2 and possibly in other locations in the plan. Mr. McKay added that vacant properties would likely be discussed when looking at areas for urban agriculture.

Mr. Nelson emphasized that the report outline was preliminary and encouraged EJTF members to review the outline in greater detail after the meeting and provide any input to staff. Mr. McKay indicated that staff welcomes input and is open to making changes as the planning process progresses.

DISCUSSION OF TRANSPORTATION ACCESS TO POLLING PLACES AND OTHER GOVERNMENT CENTERS

Mr. Nelson stated that he had asked Commission staff to add this item to the agenda, recognizing the potential political sensitivities, because it is important to increase awareness and ensure access to voting. He indicated he wanted to make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to vote and that it is also important to acknowledge the sacrifices of military men and women to allow us the freedom to vote. He encouraged people that need information on how and where to vote to visit iwillvote.com.

The following discussion occurred after Mr. Nelson's introduction of the agenda item:

1. Ms. Rotker stated that myvote.wi.gov is a great resource for voting, including polling places, registration info, how to request an absentee ballot, and other information. She also provided a link to brochures with information on how to obtain an ID to vote even without a birth certificate or other documentation (available [here](#)) and indicated that the Wisconsin Election Protection Facebook page is a resource for obtaining answers to voting-related questions. Ms. McNeely suggested Commission Public Involvement and Outreach staff include this type of information in outreach communications leading up to the election.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH DIVISION OUTREACH UPDATE

Ms. Payne provided a summary of the PIO Report for July through August 2020 (available [here](#)). She listed several recent or upcoming meetings and events, either socially distanced or virtual, that PIO staff has or will be attending. She noted that staff has been giving virtual presentations about the VISION 2050 equity analysis to community partners. She also noted that staff recently held its annual meeting with its community partners and surveyed them on how they are conducting outreach, which will help PIO staff as they consider ways to improve their outreach as the pandemic continues.

The following discussion occurred after Ms. Payne's review:

1. Ms. Adams suggested reaching out to the Kenosha Senior Center and sharing information with their members. Ms. Payne indicated she has been participating with the Kenosha Senior Center and that she has also been participating in workshops at UW-Parkside dealing with seniors.

REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE ACTION ITEM LIST

Ms. Sarnecki summarized the action item list, focusing on open action items staff is currently working on addressing and the action items that staff has addressed since the previous meeting (available [here](#)).

1. Ms. McNeely asked if EJTF members could contact staff after the meeting if they had items they would like added to the action item list. Mr. Muhs responded that they could.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPOSITION OF APPLICANTS FOR RECENTLY FILLED COMMISSION POSITIONS

Mr. Muhs provided an overview on the composition of applicants for Commission positions filled so far in 2020. He stated that 57 individuals had applied for six positions filled by the Commission so far in 2020. Of the 35 applicants that completed an optional affirmative action form, two indicated they were Hispanic, one was African American, and one was Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the six individuals hired, two were white females, three were white males, and one was an Asian/Pacific Islander male. He indicated the African American individual that applied for a position appeared to be qualified, but staff was unable to reach the individual for an interview despite multiple attempts. Staff did talk with the two Hispanic individuals that applied for positions, but neither applicant had experience applicable to the positions applied for. Mr. Muhs expressed disappointment in the diversity of the applicants so far in 2020 and indicated that staff was working on ways to increase the diversity of applicants. One effort he noted includes partnering with schools with a high percentage of students of color, such as MPS or the Racine Unified School District, to encourage them to consider careers in planning, engineering, biology, and other fields applicable to the Commission's work. Another partnership being pursued is with programs at UW-Milwaukee, such as the Urban Planning, Urban Studies, and Engineering programs, to encourage

students of color and underrepresented populations to enroll in one of these programs. This partnership would also seek to help students have a successful financial experience, earn their degree, and obtain an internship at the Commission.

The following discussion occurred after Mr. Muhs' review:

1. Ms. Mendez Barrutia noted that The Commons has a Virtual Career Accelerator, which may be an opportunity to engage students about career opportunities in fields applicable to the Commission's work.

[Secretary's Note: Ms. Mendez Barrutia contacted staff after the meeting to provide a link to the Virtual Career Accelerator (available [here](#)) and to suggest that Carmen Schools of Science & Technology and Cristo Rey High Schools could be opportunities to reach Latino students.]

2. Ms. Dunbar asked about progress in outreach regarding job opportunities to African-American fraternities and sororities. Mr. Muhs indicated he was not sure if progress had been made on this outreach, but that staff would follow up. Ms. Dunbar offered to provide contact information to organizations she was familiar with. She noted she also knew alumni of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the Milwaukee area that she could ask to connect with staff.

[Secretary's Note: Prior to the meeting staff had not reached out to African-American fraternities and sororities and HBCU alumni specifically regarding job opportunities. Going forward, staff will work with Ms. Dunbar to conduct this outreach as open positions at the Commission become available.]

3. Mr. Nelson indicated he usually forwards Commission job announcements to his contacts and encourages them to apply. Mr. Muhs encouraged members to forward those announcements to their contacts and added that members are encouraged to contact staff if they know of any individuals that they believe would be qualified for an open position. Mr. Nelson thanked staff for their transparency regarding filling open positions at the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Nelson asked for any announcements from the EJTF members, public, or Commission staff. Mr. Nelson encouraged people to complete the 2020 Census. Mr. Muhs indicated that the deadline for completing the census is October 31. Mr. Lynde announced that staff was working with M7 to create a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). He noted that a first round of public input would be occurring this fall through an online survey and a virtual meeting to be held on October 26th, and that a second round of input would be held in early 2021. Ms. Dunbar announced that the NAACP Milwaukee Branch would be holding its Annual Freedom Fund Dinner virtually on October 23rd and she would forward information to Ms. Payne.

NEXT MEETING DATES

Mr. Muhs indicated that Commission staff will contact EJTF members to identify a future meeting date, which is anticipated to occur in December and focus on reviewing the Commission's primary organizational list for 2021 and other items identified by staff as well as any items identified by EJTF members.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nelson requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Dunbar moved, and Ms. Rubin seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric D. Lynde
Recording Secretary
