

Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: March 9, 2021

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Aloysius NelsonCommissioner, 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
Brad HolzBoard Member, IndependenceFirst
Fabi Maldonado Supervisor, District 2, Racine County
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
Jacqueline Schellinger Indian Community Representative, Retired Judge
Theresa Schuerman..... Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach

Liaison to Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation Planning

Donna Brown-Martin.....Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;
Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation

Guests and Staff Present

Tim Casey Director of City Development, City of Kenosha
Carrie Cooper..... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC
Chris Donahoe ACLU of Wisconsin
Kaleb Kutz Planner, SEWRPC
Andrew Levy Systems Planning Supervisor, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Eric Lynde.....Chief Special Projects Planner, SEWRPC
Kate Madison.....City of Milwaukee, Department of City Development
Benjamin McKay Deputy Director, SEWRPC
Kevin Muhs..... Executive Director, SEWRPC
Christopher Parisey.....Senior Planner, SEWRPC
Nakeisha Payne..... Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Karyn Rotker.....Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU of Wisconsin
Jennifer Sarnecki..... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC
Dana Shinnors Transportation Planner, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Ed St. Peter.....Project Manager, City of Kenosha
Brenda Wood Intergovernmental Policy Manager, City of Milwaukee
Jim ZehnerDirector of Economic Development Programs and Communications, Milwaukee 7

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Nelson called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to order at 4:35 p.m., welcomed those in attendance, and requested that EJTF members introduce themselves. He welcomed Mr. Brad Holz and Rev. Ernest J. Ni'A as new members to the EJTF. Mr. Holz, who was in attendance, provided the EJTF with a brief overview of his experience, which included working for 24 years at Direct Supply, an organization that provides long-term care for individuals with disabilities and seniors. Mr. Holz stated his work experience provided him with a perspective on individuals with different needs. Mr. Holz is currently a board member of IndependenceFirst, which provides programs and services for people with disabilities, and provides programs on disability awareness and access to the general community. The EJTF and attendees welcomed Mr. Holz.

APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 16, 2020, MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any questions or comments on the December 16, 2020, meeting minutes. There were none. Mr. Nelson then asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Schellinger moved, and Mr. Martin seconded the approval of the December 16, 2020, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any public comments. Ms. Rotker requested to defer public comments until prior to item #5, Presentation on the draft 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, which was granted by Mr. Nelson.

UPDATE ON KENOSHA INNOVATION NEIGHBORHOOD

Mr. Nelson indicated that Mr. Casey and Mr. St. Peter were available to provide a presentation on the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood (available [here](#)). The following discussion was generated from the presentation:

1. Mr. Muhs thanked Mr. St. Peter and Mr. Casey for the presentation and requested that Mr. Nelson allow Ms. Adams to provide comment and ask questions, as she requested the presentation.
2. Ms. Adams requested the names of the partner organizations that are part of the outreach effort for the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood. Mr. Casey responded that the three community groups include the Mahone Family Foundation, YMCA, and the Kenosha Unified School District. Mr. Casey noted that each group has programs that complement efforts to increase workforce training. Specifically, the Mahone Family Foundation has a career employment program and sponsors scholarships, the YMCA has a youth leadership program, and Kenosha Unified School District has youth employment programs. It is anticipated that middle school and high school students would be housed in the location currently occupied by the "brown bank," allowing for strategic proximity to the community-based partners and access to UW-Parkside, Carthage College, Gateway Technical College, and Herzing University, which anticipate offering academic counseling and financial assistance staff on site. The services offered by community partners and academic institutions may also include small business development assistance and entrepreneurial development.

3. Ms. Adams noted that although she has received updates on the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood through her position on the school board, community members are also interested in what is happening with the project and expressed concerns about the potential traffic impacts resulting from the development. Mr. St. Peter indicated that the City of Kenosha will study the traffic impacts and are looking at public transportation opportunities to reduce automobile traffic.
4. Ms. Brown-Martin requested additional background regarding how the concept will benefit nearby neighborhoods and individuals so that they are able to access services anticipated as part of the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood. Mr. Casey noted that the selection of community partners provides connections to organizations and individuals within the local neighborhood. Mr. Casey noted that the outreach process is envisioned to involve working with local leaders, community groups, and churches to generate input on the plan. Mr. St. Peter indicated that there is interest in learning from community members who would like to start or expand businesses, including younger community members. Ms. Brown-Martin inquired if community colleges are also involved in the process. Mr. Casey noted that Gateway Technical College will be a partner.
5. Mr. Casey thanked Ms. Adams for the invitation and requested additional input from all EJTF members regarding strategies to engage the communities and solicit input to assist in the planning process. Mr. St. Peter noted that public outreach is a priority for the planning team.
6. Ms. Payne asked if there were grocery stores planned for the neighborhood. Mr. Casey responded that a nearby development, on 63rd Street between 22nd Avenue and 23rd Avenue, will include retail and housing. The retail in that development is anticipated to include a neighborhood grocery store. Mr. Casey noted that the City shares the concern that the area around the Innovation Neighborhood is considered a food desert.
7. Mr. Nelson thanked Mr. Casey and Mr. St. Peter for their presentation and commented that the most important part of this process is outreach and noted that he thought the project team was heading in the right direction. Mr. Casey offered to provide regular progress reports to Mr. Nelson, and Mr. Nelson indicated he would contact the project team to receive more information.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Nelson invited members of the public who had deferred comments to speak. Ms. Rotker requested the opportunity to present comments related to the draft 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Ms. Rotker noted that more detail regarding how strategies address equity would be appreciated and requested that the CEDS incorporate more information about the lack of broadband access in the Cities of Milwaukee and Racine, which disproportionately impacts communities of color. She noted that strategies to address hiring discrimination should be further described. Ms. Rotker indicated that she will likely provide written comments and noted her appreciation that the CEDS acknowledged the racial disparities in the Region. Mr. Nelson thanked Ms. Rotker for the comments and indicated that her comments will be reflected in the meeting minutes.

PRESENTATION ON DRAFT 2021-2025 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Mr. Lynde, at the request of Mr. Nelson, provided an overview of the draft CEDS, noting that the draft CEDS does include a stronger equity focus than the previous 2015-2020 CEDS. Mr. Lynde indicated that developing the CEDS is a joint effort with the Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Partnership (M7), which

covers the same seven counties as SEWRPC. Mr. Lynde noted that the draft CEDS (available [here](#)) was informed by input received during outreach conducted in fall 2020 and that there is an upcoming public meeting on March 16 and public comment period through March 31. After Mr. Lynde's overview, Mr. Parisey provided a presentation on the CEDS (available [here](#)).

The following discussion occurred during the CEDS presentation:

1. Mr. Nelson inquired about the factors that indicated that the Southeastern Wisconsin Region has slower population growth when compared to our peers and requested the data source for the information, specifically, if the data was from the 2020 U.S. Census. Mr. Muhs responded that the factors considered include growth in population, jobs, and households. Mr. Muhs noted that, when compared to peers of similar size to the Milwaukee metro area, the Region tends to rank lower when compared nationally, and in the middle when compared to our Midwestern peers, given the slower growth rate in the Midwest. Mr. Muhs noted that the data utilized for the CEDS are from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey and that the data from the 2020 Census had not yet been released. Mr. Muhs indicated that the Region is growing very slowly when it comes to population, while jobs are growing more quickly, although also at a slower rate than many peers.
2. Ms. Brown-Martin indicated that she has concerns that racial equity and resilience are not being emphasized enough in the CEDS. She recommended that Goal 1 in particular could be revised to capture and add detail about how to address resiliency and equity. Regarding the growth strategy that targets investment and new opportunities, she indicated that the CEDS must include workforce training and address how to assist current residents in accessing these new economic opportunities, particularly those individuals who have been traditionally underserved. Ms. Brown-Martin stressed that it is important for the CEDS to consider how to ensure everyone has a seat at the table and to measure how well the strategies benefit individuals who have been underrepresented. Mr. Muhs noted that Goal 3 discusses training and accessing the untapped potential of our existing population groups and indicated that Commission staff appreciates the comments related to how the CEDS can expand on equity.
3. Ms. Mendez Barrutia noted that the acceleration of the digital economy during the COVID-19 pandemic and combined with broadband access issues have problematic implications for Latino and Black communities, particularly related to the types of jobs that can be done remotely.
4. Ms. McNeely recommended that the CEDS include more action items given the Region's racial equity challenges and noted that the CEDS appears to be more of a marketing strategy rather than an action item list. She indicated that there is a need to unpack the existing organizational and economic frameworks with an equity lens in order to identify specific changes. Mr. Muhs thanked Ms. McNeely for the comments and noted that the CEDS is required to meet certain criteria set forth by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the Region to qualify for EDA grants. These grants target investment in EDA-defined "economically distressed areas," which are areas that have high concentrations of unemployment and/or low-income populations. Mr. Lynde indicated that Commission staff will revise the presentation prior to the next public meeting to emphasize specific actions that address equity and noted that EJTF members and interested parties have additional opportunities to comment on the CEDS through written comments or by contacting Commission staff directly.

REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE ACTION ITEM LIST

Prior to this agenda item, Mr. Nelson excused himself from the meeting and asked Ms. Brown-Martin to assume the responsibilities of Chair for the remainder of the meeting, to which Ms. Brown-Martin agreed.

Ms. Sarnecki summarized the action item list (available [here](#)), focusing on recent open and ongoing action items and noted that Commission staff archived the closed action items from past meetings in an effort to focus on recent and ongoing items.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Brown-Martin asked if there were any public comments. No comments were made.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Muhs indicated that the Commission has established a scholarship fund with the UW-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning, which will offer a scholarship to pay slightly less than half tuition during the two-year Urban Planning Master's Degree program and provide an internship at the Commission. Mr. Muhs noted that the program is in response to the conversations regarding racial equity in hiring practices that have occurred with the EJTF and that additional efforts will continue to be pursued to try to increase the diversity of the Commission staff and planning profession. Students for the scholarship program will be recruited starting in fall 2021 and eligible applicants would include individuals who are students of color, residents of the Region, and pursuing a degree in urban planning.

Mr. Muhs noted that the Commission will have two staff positions available, one in the Transportation Division and one in the Land Use Division. Mr. Muhs indicated that an email will be shared with EJTF members when the openings are posted. Ms. Brown-Martin thanked Mr. Muhs for the report and expressed her support for the scholarship program with UW-Milwaukee.

NEXT MEETING DATES

Mr. Muhs indicated the next meeting is anticipated to occur in June and that Commission staff will contact EJTF members to identify the specific meeting date.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Brown-Martin requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. McNeely moved, and Ms. Adams seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer B. Sarnecki
Recording Secretary
