

Minutes of the Fifty-Fifth Meeting of the  
**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

DATE: June 23, 2022  
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 ..... Board of Education Member, Kenosha Unified School District  
Ella Dunbar ..... Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee  
Gina Green-Harris.....Director, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Center for  
Community Engagement and Health Partnerships in Milwaukee  
Brad Holz .....Board Member, Independence First  
Fabi Maldonado ..... Racine County Supervisor, District 2  
Keith Martin..... Engineering Specialist – Advanced 2, WisDOT  
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

Members Excused

Huda Alkaff ..... Founder & Director, Wisconsin Green Muslims  
Pastor Ernest Ni’A ..... President, Racine African American Roundtable of Leaders  
Jackie Schellinger ..... Indian Community Representative, Retired Judge  
Donna Brown-Martin.....Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;  
Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation;  
Liaison to Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation Planning

Guests and Staff Present

Deborah Blanks..... Partner, Kairo Communications  
Eric Lynde.....Chief Special Projects Planner, SEWRPC  
Benjamin McKay ..... Deputy Director, SEWRPC  
Kevin Muhs..... Executive Director, SEWRPC  
Nakeisha Payne..... Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC  
Jennifer Sarnecki..... Principal Transportation Planner, SEWRPC

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Nelson called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to order at 4:30 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

## **APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 16, 2022, MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any questions or comments on the March 16, 2022, meeting minutes (available [here](#)). Mr. Nelson then asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Maldonado moved, and Ms. Adams seconded the approval of the March 16, 2022, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH DIVISION OUTREACH UPDATE**

At Mr. Nelson's request, Ms. Payne gave a presentation that provided an update on outreach being conducted by the Commission's Public Involvement and Outreach Division (available [here](#)). The following discussion occurred during Ms. Payne's presentation:

1. Mr. Nelson thanked Ms. Payne for her work, specifically for engaging him to participate in a Juneteenth event in Racine where he was able to connect with many high school students. He noted a program he's been involved in that recently awarded scholarships to eight African American high school seniors going off to college.

## **PRESENTATION REGARDING THE COMMISSION'S PUBLIC OUTREACH APPROACH BY DR. DEBORAH BLANKS**

Mr. Nelson asked Dr. Blanks to give a presentation summarizing her evaluation of the Commission's public outreach approach, which included recommendations for improving public outreach efforts and for maximizing the effectiveness of the EJTF (available [here](#)). The following discussion occurred during Dr. Blanks' presentation:

1. Mr. Muhs thanked Dr. Blanks for the work she put into this effort and the level of detail of her report, noting it was exactly the type of outside perspective the Commission was looking for as staff continues to try to enhance the Commission's work. He asked the EJTF members present for their perspectives on Dr. Blanks' report, specifically on her recommendation to focus more on outcomes than outputs given the advisory roles of the Commission and EJTF.
2. Mr. Nelson expressed support for focusing on outcomes and making a difference in the communities served by the Commission and EJTF. He also expressed support for increasing community awareness of the EJTF and so the EJTF can better support their communities. He noted that the Commission is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and looks for every opportunity to improve. Dr. Blanks' report provided several ideas for improving the Commission's work.
3. Ms. Dunbar indicated an outside perspective like Dr. Blanks' report is valuable and can help to avoid past mistakes made in the Region, such as the impacts caused when the I-43 freeway was originally built.
4. Ms. Green-Harris stated that, as a newer member of the EJTF, Dr. Blanks' report was very helpful in improving her understanding of the Commission. She conveyed her excitement with the report, recognizing that the Commission is making an intentional move to develop strategies to address

and avoid past impacts to the community. She said she looked to seeing what the EJTF can do to make changes to benefit the residents of Southeastern Wisconsin.

5. Ms. McNeely indicated that it is important to be honest about the past to move forward in achieving racial equity.
6. Ms. Adams expressed appreciation for Dr. Blanks' report and thanked the Commission's Public Involvement and Outreach staff for all their work. She asked for talking points on the EJTF that EJTF members could use to speak about the EJTF to raise community awareness of the EJTF. Ms. Payne noted that Commission staff often hands out a flyer that summarizes environmental justice (EJ) principles, what the EJTF does, and how the Commission engages EJ populations and evaluates plan recommendations based on their potential benefits and impacts to EJ populations. Mr. Nelson indicated that many residents think environmental justice is only focused on environmental issues and suggested that it is important to clearly describe the EJTF's role and the population groups it represents.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Commission staff sent the Commission's *Ensuring Environmental Justice* flyer ([link](#)) to the EJTF.

## **DISCUSSION OF APPROACH TO UPDATING EJTF BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

At Mr. Nelson's request, Mr. Lynde gave a presentation describing Commission staff's proposed approach to updating the EJTF background document, including initial lists of possible changes to the document and of individuals outside the Commission to involve in the update process (available [here](#)). The following discussion occurred during Mr. Lynde's presentation:

1. Mr. Nelson asked how Commission staff planned to get input from the external group. Mr. Lynde indicated staff would engage them and determine how they would prefer to provide input. Mr. Muhs noted that several of the external members were selected because they were involved in developing the initial background document. Mr. Nelson stated that updating the background document could be an opportunity to increase the EJTF's exposure to people in the communities that the EJTF serves and that their suggestions could be beneficial to updating the document and informing the Commission's planning efforts.
2. Ms. Mendez Barrutia asked whether Dr. Blanks' recommendation to focus on outcomes for the communities served by the Commission and EJTF would be considered when updating the background document. Mr. Muhs stated staff initiated the document updating process largely in response to feedback from EJTF members and that Dr. Blanks' report comes at a good time as it provides an opportunity to consider how the report's recommendations could potentially be incorporated into the document. He noted that focusing on outcomes is challenging and that staff would encourage EJTF members to provide input on how best to navigate that challenge. Mr. Lynde added that Commission staff does track whether plan recommendations are being implemented and to what extent and that staff could provide more regular updates to the EJTF on those tracking efforts.
3. Ms. McNeely asked if there have been any additional executive orders that impact the work, structure, and duties of the EJTF. Mr. Muhs responded that there have been and that most recently the Biden Administration issued an executive order that created the Justice40 Initiative ([link](#)), which aims to deliver 40 percent of the overall benefits of federal investments to disadvantaged communities. Commission staff have been following Justice40, particularly as it impacts a lot of

the federal programs the Commission is involved in. Mr. Muhs indicated staff would consider Justice40 and other updated federal guidance and regulations when updating the background document.

4. Ms. McNeely asked about opportunities to utilize American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Mr. Muhs indicated that ARPA funding is mostly controlled by the State and local/county governments and that many in the region are applying an equity lens to how they utilize the funding.
5. Referring to the external group to involve in the update process, Dr. Blanks suggested increasing the diversity of the group by inviting representatives of the EJ community, not just those who advocate for the EJ community, and individuals who represent a younger demographic.

[Secretary's Note: Following the meeting, Commission staff solicited input from the EJTF on additional individuals to invite to the external group. Staff identified one addition individual to invite: Richard Diaz, Midwest Regional Field Organizer for BlueGreen Alliance.]

## **REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE ACTION ITEM LIST**

At Mr. Nelson's request, Ms. Sarnecki reviewed the current action item list, which was linked within the agenda for review (available [here](#)).

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any public comments. No comments were made.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. Nelson asked if there were any announcements or correspondence. There were none.

## **NEXT MEETING DATES**

Mr. Nelson indicated that Commission staff will contact EJTF members to identify the specific meeting date for the next meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Nelson 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 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric D. Lynde  
Recording Secretary

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