

Minutes of the Sixty-Fourth Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: September 10, 2024

TIME: 5:00 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Aloysius Nelson, Chair Sigma Pi Phi (the Boulé)
Yolanda Adams Board of Education Member, Kenosha Unified School District
Huda Alkaff Founder & Director, Wisconsin Green Muslims
Donna Brown-Martin Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;
Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation;
Liaison to Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation Planning
Annabell Bustillos Bilingual Outreach Advocate, BeLeaf Survivors
Brad Holz Board Member, Independence First
Keith Martin Construction Representative Senior, Wisconsin Department of Administration
N. Lynnette McNeely Legal Redress Chair, Waukesha County NAACP
Andrea Mendez Barrutia Director of Milwaukee Chapter of Techqueria
GeorgeAnn Stinson President, African American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Racine

Members Excused

Gina Sanchez Juarez Director of Financial Stability, La Casa de Esperanza
Jackie Schellinger Indian Community Representative, Retired Judge
Theresa Schuerman Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach

Guests Present

Madalena Maestri Civil Rights Program Manager, FHWA
Julie S. Majerus Environmental Justice Policy Advisor, DNR
Natalia Minkel-Dumit Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
Karyn Rotker Legal Action of Wisconsin

Commission Staff Present

Eric Lynde Chief Special Projects Planner
Benjamin McKay Deputy Director
Nakeisha Payne Public Involvement and Outreach Manager
Jennifer Sarnecki Deputy Chief Transportation Planner
Dana M. Shinnars Transportation Planner

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Nelson called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to order at 5:05 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. Mr. Nelson shared that Gina Green-Harris has resigned from the EJTF and Commission staff are working to fill the opening.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON JUNE 25, 2024

Mr. Nelson asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 25, 2024, meeting ([link](#)). Mr. Martin moved, and Ms. Mendez Barrutia seconded the approval of the 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 UPDATE

At the request of Mr. Nelson, Ms. Payne provided an update on Commission Public Involvement and Outreach (PIO) within the past six months (available [here](#)). The following discussion occurred after Ms. Payne's update:

1. Mr. Nelson asked how PIO staff select schools for educational outreach. Ms. Payne responded that the Commission works with schools in Milwaukee County through programs including STEM Forward and GPS Ed. The GPS Ed program also includes schools in Racine County and Ms. Payne also has connections with Racine Unified School District and Kenosha Unified School District. She explained that PIO is always open to new educational connections and that the Commission also works with colleges and universities across all seven counties.
2. Ms. Maestri asked if PIO staff are connected with apprenticeship programs that provide a pipeline to the trades. She commented that she was impressed with the work highlighted during the Commission's federal certification review, including public involvement and outreach efforts.

[Secretary's note: Commission staff have worked with Milwaukee Public Schools to discuss green jobs and existing apprenticeship programs as part of work under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program.]

PRESENTATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES BY WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STAFF

At Mr. Nelson's request, Ms. Majerus presented on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Environmental Justice initiatives (available [here](#)). She said that her position, the Environmental Justice Policy Advisor, was created in 2022 and that she works closely with the Tribal Liaison and the Climate and Resilience Policy Advisor. Ms. Majerus shared a new internal toolkit for WDNR staff to identify groups impacted by programs and services and address potential disparities from impacts. She welcomed feedback on the toolkit and feedback on a draft Environmental Justice statement for the agency. The following discussion occurred during the presentation:

1. Mr. Nelson asked Ms. Majerus to elaborate on the Environmental Justice toolkit. Ms. Majerus explained that the toolkit is an internal tool for the WDNR intended to be broad enough to apply to the wide range of programs within the agency. There will also be internal Environmental Justice 101 training for all staff in the future.
2. Mr. Nelson asked for more information about EPA's Environmental Justice Government-to-Government (EJG2G) program. Ms. Majerus informed EJTF members that the program was created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and provides each awardee \$1 million over three

years. WDNR's EJG2G grant will fund work by HOLA, Inc. and the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy Service in Central Wisconsin beginning on October 1, 2024. She said that funding will be used to hire community health workers to share information about water quality, conduct water testing, and lead outreach on safe fish consumption.

3. Ms. Mendez Barrutia appreciated the description of Environmental Justice as holistic equity. She asked about Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Environmental Justice initiatives at WDNR and how the Commission can continue to be involved. Ms. Majerus replied that benchmarks include documentation of initiatives, and that strategic planning will help inform future benchmarks. She shared that the Commission may be eligible for funding on water quality planning. Mr. McKay confirmed that the Commission is engaged in that work and referenced the Regional Water Quality Management Plan prepared by the Commission as the areawide water quality management planning agency for Southeastern Wisconsin.
4. Ms. Brown-Martin asked about using KPIs to measure the success of the program from the perspective of Environmental Justice communities. Ms. Majerus indicated this will be integrated into KPIs.
5. Ms. McNeely asked which Environmental Justice communities were impacted by the grant in Central Wisconsin. Ms. Majerus explained that the grant is one of many Environmental Justice projects and that the agency is involved in Southeastern Wisconsin in many ways, such as through the Water Equity Task Force. She said that the G2G grant will serve low-income, Hmong, and Hispanic populations in Central Wisconsin.

UPDATE ON U.S. EPA'S CLIMATE POLLUTION REDUCTION GRANT PROGRAM

At the request of Mr. Nelson, Ms. Sarnecki provided an update on outreach strategies related to the Milwaukee metro area's EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) effort (available [here](#)). She asked for feedback on the outreach strategies and input on groups that Commission staff should consider engaging. Ms. Sarnecki said that the next deliverable, a Comprehensive Pollution Reduction Action Plan, will work to knit together existing initiatives and organizations within the context of regional planning. The following discussion occurred during the presentation:

1. Ms. Brown-Martin asked staff to consider the Youth Commission for Milwaukee County as a group to engage with for the planning effort. She directed staff to contact County Board Supervisor Kathleen Vincent and Nichole Yunk Todd about being added to a meeting agenda.
2. Ms. Rotker asked if transportation will be included as a greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction measure. Ms. Sarnecki replied that the first deliverable included shovel-ready projects, and that staff expect to cover transportation more holistically in the Comprehensive Pollution Reduction Action Plan. Ms. Rotker also asked about the technical colleges and environmental justice programming at those institutions. Ms. Sarnecki replied that staff will be engaging with technical colleges through workforce planning efforts required for the grant.
3. Mr. Nelson asked for information on how federal financial resources are being directed to economically distressed areas with a map as a visual resource for the EJTF.
4. Ms. McNeely asked if the plan would include implementation actions and existing programs, specifically around building energy efficiency, solar energy, and building net zero housing. Ms.

Sarnecki shared that the plan will be an action plan that identifies strategies, co-benefits, and implementation actors. The final grant deliverable, a status report due in 2027, will show progress made from baseline on GHG emissions and co-benefits. Mr. McKay clarified that the grant has two components: planning and implementation. The City of Milwaukee, in coordination with local partners in the Milwaukee metro area, applied for an Implementation Grant through the EPA's CPRG Program utilizing strategies identified in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Priority Pollution Reduction Action Plan (available [here](#)), including commercial building energy efficiency programs, electric vehicle charging plans, and a regional sustainability staff to assist with local policy development. The grant was not awarded as the program was very competitive. Ms. McNeely expressed support for a GHG reduction measure around electric and hybrid vehicles.

REVIEW OF EJTF ACTION ITEM LIST

At Mr. Nelson's request, Ms. Sarnecki reviewed the current action item list, which was linked within the agenda (available [here](#)). Ms. Sarnecki highlighted that one new item from the June 2024 meeting was a request for a presentation from the Director of the Office of Environmental Justice in the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The presentation at this meeting on Environmental Justice initiatives from the WDNR represents one recently closed item.

Ms. Sarnecki noted that it would be beneficial to review outstanding action items with the EJTF at a future meeting to determine items that could be updated or removed. Mr. Nelson agreed that it would be beneficial for the EJTF to review the outstanding action items.

OVERVIEW OF COMPOSITION OF APPLICANTS FOR RECENTLY FILLED COMMISSION POSITIONS

At Mr. Nelson's request, Mr. McKay shared that the Commission recently filled a Water Resources Engineer position with a white male. There were twelve eligible applicants, ten of whom reported race. The applicants included six white individuals, two black individuals, eight males, and four females.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Brown-Martin stated that Milwaukee County recently decided to pause the CONNECT 2 Bus Rapid Transit project due to ongoing funding challenges.

Ms. Adams announced that Forward Latino is hosting an Emergency Gun Violence Summit in Milwaukee on October 10, 2024.

NEXT MEETING DATES

Mr. Nelson indicated that the next meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2024. The meeting is currently scheduled as a hybrid meeting. Mr. McKay said that the Commission will only hold an in-person option if there is a quorum of people to attend in-person. Mr. Lynde asked EJTF members to provide suggested locations the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nelson adjourned the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana M. Shinnars
Recording Secretary

BRM/EDL/DMS
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