

**Virginia Council on Environmental Justice (VCEJ)
Public Health and Climate Change and
Resilience Joint Subcommittee Meeting
October 30, 2019 – 11:00am-2pm
Department of Environmental Quality, 3rd Floor
1111 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219**

Executive Summary

The Virginia Council on Environmental Justice (VCEJ) Public Health Subcommittee and Climate Change Subcommittee held a joint public meeting on Wednesday, October 30, 2019 at the Patrick Henry Building in Richmond.

In the Public Health Subcommittee, the text of Executive Order 29 was reviewed. Dr. Phoenix then facilitated a discussion of possible policy issues for investigation, and shared a draft charge for the Public Health subcommittee. At 12:00pm, members of the Climate Change Subcommittee joined members of the Public Health Subcommittee to convene jointly. Dr. Phoenix and Rev. Dr. Faith Harris facilitated a discussion to identify areas where the Climate Change and Resilience Subcommittee and the Public Health Subcommittee can collaborate or have overlapping interests

Members of the Climate Change Subcommittee received a presentation from Josh Kelly at the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation regarding the state's recently implemented Universal Recycling Law. Further discussion relating to the scope and framework of the Climate Change and Resilience Subcommittee would take place at the December meeting.

Public Health Subcommittee - 11:07am to 11:55am

Welcome & Introductions, *Dr. Phoenix, Chair*

Virginia Council on Environmental Justice members present for the joint and individual meetings of the Public Health Subcommittee and Climate Change and Resilience Subcommittee included Hope Cupit and Dr. Janet Phoenix. Tom Benevento, Rev. Dr. Mike Ellerbrock, Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson, and EJ Scott participated by phone. Also in attendance were Meryem Karad and Katie Sallee representing the Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources, Trieste Lockwood representing the Department of Environmental Quality, and Isaac Sarver representing the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Michael Skiffington representing the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy. Members of the public present were Mary and Wayne Roberts representing Concerned Citizens of Charles City County, Barbara Adams from the Richmond Interfaith Climate Justice League, and Cumberland County resident Kevin Halligan.

Executive Order Review, Mission, and Scope Discussion

Dr. Phoenix provided some brief framing remarks, and referred members of the council, staff, and public to the text of Governor Northam's Executive Order 29 for review. Dr. Phoenix noted that the previous annual report had identified several specific issues relevant to the area of public

health. Issues referenced included: recurrent flooding in Hampton Roads and Southwest Virginia, the associated issues of mold and infectious disease spread, coal dust, coal mining, health issues associated with minors, and associated respiratory and air quality issues transportation (in the contexts of smog and fume emissions) as well as lack of transportation access as a barrier to receiving health care.

Additional issues raised by Dr. Phoenix and Dr. Cupit included: the Radford Army Ammunition Plant (specifically asthma, cancer, miscarriage, and birth defects), high fluoride in the drinking waters of Isle of Wight, Suffolk County, and Caroline County, the Hobson community within Suffolk City's recent connection to public water through the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program (SERCAP), and lead pipes in water systems around the state, and specifically noted that in Richmond City there were currently lead pipes being replaced that serve the school system. Ms. Scott noted her agreement with the issues raised thus far, and expressed that they encompassed the work of the committee well.

Public Comment

Mr. Wayne Roberts and Mrs. Mary Roberts, Concerned Citizens of Charles City County.

Mr. and Mrs. Roberts are members of Concerned Citizens of Charles City County, a citizen group formed in response to a need for local residents to more readily receive information about the permitting processes surrounding the Charles City Combined-Cycle Power Project by power producer C4GT, and the proposed Chickahominy Power Plant currently going through the permitting process at the request of Balico, LLC. Mrs. Roberts expressed concern that very few participated in the initial public meetings surrounding the proposed C4GT facility. Charles City County is also home to the land owned by the Chickahominy Tribe. Mrs. Roberts added that her concerns relative to the natural gas plants were related to air quality, water quality, noise, lack of public transportation in the event of an emergency evacuation, and a lack of adequate emergency response capabilities relative to the size of the proposed natural gas projects. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts invited members of the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice to tour the proposed site.

Barbara Adams, Richmond Interfaith Climate Justice League

Ms. Adams from Virginia Interfaith Power and Light noted that after seeing the issues surrounding Charles City County's permitting process she felt compelled to speak on these issues. Ms. Cupit inquired about news reports regarding local support from the Chickahominy area related to jobs associated with the proposed plant. Ms. Adams shared concerns that the proposed Chickahominy Power Plant project included 35 permanent positions. Ms. Adams expressed further concern that, while members of the Chickahominy Tribe had received outreach during the permitting process, she felt that members of the African American community had not received as much outreach.

Discussion and Draft Work Plan, Dr. Janet Phoenix, Chair

Dr. Phoenix shared a draft charge for the Public Health subcommittee: "To explore, provide comments, and make recommendations on public health issues related to issues the Virginia

Environmental Justice Council works on, as well as to be a resource to the VCEJ and other subcommittees of the group on issues pertaining to public health.” Formal approval of the charge language would need to take place at the upcoming December meeting of the VCEJ.

Joint Subcommittee Meeting – 12:10pm to 1pm

Welcome and Introductions, *Dr. Janet Phoenix and Rev. Dr. Faith Harris*

The Joint meeting of the Public Health Subcommittee as well as the Climate Change and Resilience Subcommittee meeting was called to order by Rev. Dr. Faith Harris and Dr. Janet Phoenix at approximately 12:13am.

Discussion and Draft Work Plan, *Dr. Janet Phoenix and Rev. Dr. Faith Harris.*

Rev. Dr. Faith Harris noted that the purpose of this joint meeting was to identify areas where the Climate Change and Resilience Subcommittee and the Public Health Subcommittee can collaborate or have overlapping interests.

Rev. Dr. Harris shared the need to gather appropriate data to inform the work of both subcommittees as well as the full Virginia Council on Environmental Justice. The subcommittee discussed possible maps that would identify overlapping issues and key geographical areas. Maps to consider included: air quality issues, socioeconomic status data, EPA’s environmental justice screen, Virginia Poverty Law Center’s energy poverty, and the Science Museum of Virginia’s heat mapping program, and sharing of food energy and quality.

Dr. Phoenix shared issues mentioned earlier which were relevant to the Climate Change Subcommittee including: flooding in Hampton Roads and Southwest Virginia, health impacts of coal mining on workers, as well as health impacts of coal dust and coal ash throughout the state. Rev. Dr. Faith Harris noted that there was an annual report released in the last month that demonstrated that places on the Atlantic Coast in the Northeast are where impacts of climate change are likely to be most concentrated, and questioned whether data exists relative to the Mid-Atlantic and Virginia. Ms. Cupit noted that she had just attended a Chesapeake Bay Funders Network meeting with Department of Environmental Quality staff, discussing the impact of climate change in Hampton Roads and the backwash of contaminants. Ms. Cupit inquired as to whether or not such a presentation could be made to the VCEJ subcommittees.

Ms. Cupit expressed that the public comments that had occurred earlier had made reference to inadequate communication to communities of color. The subcommittee identified new possible means of notification including: bulletin boards at grocery stores, staff with tables and educational materials could be more effective, Greek letter organizations, such as Alpha Kappa Alpha or Delta Sigma Theta, regional publications, and live broadcasts online through social media may generate greater engagement from the public. Rev. Dr. Faith Harris acknowledged that expense is a consideration.

Rev. Dr. Faith Harris identified public evacuation resources and emergency management planning as another intersecting issue. Rev. Dr. Johnson shared that through her professional

work at NASA, she had been in contact with environmental management supervisor PJ Foreman, and noted he may be able to provide relevant information related to emergency planning.

Climate Change and Resilience Subcommittee – 1:07pm to 2pm

Welcome and Introductions, *Rev. Dr. Faith Harris*

The subcommittee heard a presentation from Josh Kelly, from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. Members of the public present and participating by phone included Josh Kelly from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, and James Madison University Professor Jared Stoltzfus.

Conference Call with Vermont Staff, *Tom Benevento and Vermont DEC Staffer Josh Kelly.*

Mr. Kelly, from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, is one of the team members leading the implementation of a universal recycling law in Vermont:

- The premise of the law is to increase recycling rates, and recent composition studies conducted which sampled residential trash, which indicated that 72% of the items that could be recycled were being recycled
- Vermont has had various ambitious recycling goals, such as a 50% recycling rate, for many decades but that recent legislative momentum had produced a universal recycling law
- Legislation banned disposal of yard waste, compostable items, and basic recyclable materials in municipal waste facilities, and required municipal trash collectors to implement simultaneous parallel collection of waste, recycling, and compost materials
- Referenced recent troubles in identifying markets for recyclable materials, including overseas purchase of recycling by China, and public confidence in recycling
- Environmental justice considerations were not explicitly included in the law or the development process; however the waste disposal process equalized somewhat, between urban areas and rural areas of Vermont
- Uptick in food donations: legislation increased partnerships between waste management, grocery stores, and food banks brokering an arrangement for donations of fresh produce, dairy, and other inventory that needed to be donated
- In order to build out the infrastructure and educational base to support the law's implementation Vermont's state government had conducted several statewide media campaigns, radio advertisements, YouTube, cable, digital television ads, and other educational efforts, and worked with localities and the solid waste sector.

The joint subcommittee discussed the need to get more information on Virginia's existing recycling rates, rules, regulations, and the cost-effectiveness of recycling in various contexts.

Adjournment

Ms. Karad recommended utilizing time at the December meeting to have the Climate Change and Resilience subcommittee meet to discuss their framing and scope of work.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:05pm.