

Meeting of the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice

January 28, 2025 | 10:00 AM

Hybrid Meeting held in Patrick Henry Room

Richmond, Virginia

Attendance

Excused

- Tom Benevento
- Theresa Burris
- Lisa Harris
- Morgan Whayland
- Eurika Tyree
- Hope Cupit

Virtual

- Janet Phoenix
- Meryem Karad
- Eddie Ramirez

In-room

- Karen Campblin
- Liz Williamson
- Faith Harris
- Harrison Wallace
- Kerry McAvoy
- Kendyl Crawford
- Lydia Lawrence
- Aliya Farooq (arrived 10:47)
- Courtney Malveaux (arrived 12:46)
- Lt Colonel Ronald Olswyn White (arrived 11:30)

Absent

- John Boyd
- Ron Howell

Staff

- Danielle Simms
- Kate Miller
- Gwendolin McCrea
- Melanie Davenport

Did not have quorum, 10 present (need 11)

10:15 Welcome and Roll Call

- Approval of notes moved to time when we have quorum

10:20 Report of Nomination

- Karen on the ballot for Chair
- Janet on the ballot for Co-Chair

10:22 Exercise to Introduce and Orient New Members

Council members were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Give us a BRIEF introduction to yourself including locations within Virginia, organizational affiliation, your background and pertinent interests.
2. Explain why you think environmental justice is important
3. What contribution do you see yourself making to the EJ Council?

- Take structured time to get to know who is in the room by answering the following questions:
 - Give us a BRIEF introduction to yourself including locations within Virginia, organizational affiliation, your background and pertinent interests.
 - Explain why you think environmental justice is important
 - What contribution do you see yourself making to the EJ Council?
- Harrison Wallace
 - Been on the council since 2020, based in Richmond
 - Director of grants and powerbuilding at the climate and clean energy equity fund, intermediary funder that works in 13 states
 - Been working in 10 years, climate, grassroots organizing
 - Got involved in climate as a volunteer as a kid watching Hurricane Katrina
 - Wants to make sure there is a voice for black and brown communities in state government, want to make sure those voices make it to the council
 - Want to push folks to think as progressively as possible and ask tough questions
- Meryem Wallace
 - Live in northern VA after spending a decade in Richmond
 - Communication advisor to the US dep of Energy
 - Prior to that was assistant sec to natural and historic resources during Northam administration
 - Been involved in a number of different issues, helped to staff the council
 - Community engagement and networks across Virginia
 - Key aspect is that we are making sure that communities have a voice
 - EJ is especially important at this time because of resilience building, energy transition (need to make sure folks have access to government)
 - Hope to contribute having experience being in an administration and wants to help support there, meeting notes, helping out with report
 - Energy expertise
- Rev. Dr. Faith Harris
 - Resident of Richmond
 - Native of NJ and army brat
 - Lived in a lot of different places in the world
 - Been director of VA IPL since 2022
 - Been involved with the org since 2015

- Ordained minister and theologian prior to VA IPL was a professor of ethics at VUU seminary
- Remembers Earth Day, ozone layer and acid rain
- Want to benefit human quality of life and health
- EJ is unfinished work of civil rights movement
- Brings an ethical lens
- Diverse lived and learned and work experiences
- Lydia Lawrence
 - Started doing this work looking at clean water with Potomac riverkeepers
 - How minority communities have borne the brunt of pollution
 - Then began working with Fairfax NAACP, founded their EJ committee (work around sustainable land use)
 - Now serve as director of conversation for Nature Forward
 - Unique lens – from a health care background
 - Passionate about land use, heat island impacts
 - Medical debt is crippling and impacts community that we serve
 - Broaden lens of work to housing and other land use issues
- Eddie
 - Columbian born, came to the US when he was 12 years old
 - Attended inner city schools, without power
 - Through education and opportunity ended up in corporate America
 - Worked with Dish Network, early employee there
 - Worked as a manager there
 - Decided to change careers and started Ramirez contracting LLC, his own company
 - Construction and resale company, rent commercial properties
 - Criminal justice major, serves as volunteer with sheriff's major
 - Grew up in third world country, lived next to creek with sewage running through it (would play around there)
 - Have installed sewage services in SW VA
 - Being involved in process gives opportunity to provide a voice
 - Brings business and individual experience,
 - In a place now to build infrastructure
 - As a kid lived in Miami and some of his backyard was taken away because highway was more important, residents voices weren't heard
- Liz Williamson
 - Lives in Richmond
 - Lawyer, environmental and air work for over 20 years
 - Works with companies to help them remain in compliance with env laws esp. with Clean Air Act
 - In law school was editor in chief of env journal
 - EJ is important because we live in a society dependent on the products created by industry, but we don't want to impact other people when making those products we use
 - A very complicated problem to solve for everyone
 - Land use is very important, zoning around industrial areas

- o Contribution is to bring different perspective as a lawyer with experience and knowledge of environmental laws that protect people already. I can help identify where we can add new layers of protection and collaborate with businesses in the room to solve the problem)
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- Karen Campblin
 - o NOVA/Fairfax
 - o Planner and EJ chair for VA NAACP
 - o Background in planning for highways, through interaction with the community and seeing impacts on the community (public meetings, another intrusive project)
 - Currently avoid highway projects, but works on alternative transportation modes/community development
 - o Now uses advocacy hat, providing feedback on complex documents for community engagement shortfalls for projects
 - o EJ is important – for decades came to common ground from various movements around the same time
 - Multiple polluting projects in the same community
 - Work of Dr. Robert Bullard has been foundational – added black and brown communities voice to the “Save the Planet” narrative
 - o Health of communities is important, “our health is our wealth”
 - o Contribution – long-range planner (brings strategy and long-term perspective), don’t want band aid solutions and how do those solutions work together
- Kerry
 - o Work for One Environmental, small environmental consultant company
 - o Happy to be here and listen
 - o Bring a different viewpoint as in industrial factories on daily process to help them do better and meet regulations
 - Work with and for polluters
 - They see she is on council and want her to help them set up committees and new ways to educate them and implement
 - o Doing her part, thinking through regulations
 - o Want to see how we can implement solutions
- Aliya
- o Community volunteer, serves on d
- § Chairperson of VA IPL & Refugee Committee for Islamic Center of Virginia. Board member for VICPP, Friends of Chesterfield County, Co-lead for Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom
- § Center of Islamic Center of VA
Board Member of Friends of Chesterfield County
- § Seven Hills School
- o Involved in numerous orgs
- o Moved to Chester about 30 years ago, ever since she arrived, she has served with nonprofit orgs
- o Community member asked if Muslims cared about the environment because they did not see many in this space
- § Was involved with the Richmond Interfaith Climate Justice League

- o Islam preaches equality, every human being has fundamental right to clean air, clean water and env, brings social justice background
- o Business degree
- o Has been working with social justice orgs, brings a different lens, wants to continue supporting in any way possible
- Kendyl
 - o Hampton, RVA
 - o College - Clean City Commission and teen con
 - o Asthma, coal terminals, fertilizer
 - o Coalitions, community engagement, cumulative impacts Health, infrastructure of council, addressing legacy of pollution
 - o VCN
 - o Contribution -, EJ council past - -helped to advocate for its creation,
- Janet
 - o Been on the council since first established
 - o Bring health background to EJ council
 - o Env conditions bring impact to human health, doesn't impact all of us in the same way
 - o Early in career served on CDCs federal advisory committee on Lead Poisoning Prevention
 - o Also served on EPAs Children's Health Protection federal advisory committee
 - o Children's environmental health is at the core of what she does
 - o In the past had lead in paint, in gasoline
 - Took lead out of things to help states and localities address the issue
 - o Worked with Bob Bullard, Charles Lee, Vernice Miller Travis
 - o Participated in drafting of EJ principles at 1990 summit
 - o EJ has shaped her work
 - o Currently teach health policy and has academic appointment at GWU
 - o Advocates for improved conditions of DC
 - o Also has a second home in Northern Neck, appreciates marshes and herons and ospreys, but only gets to go down a few times a year; that part of the state is a treasure that needs to be preserved
 - o Contribution – finding common ground between members, want to structure work well together, policy experience working on federal legislation, also had an opportunity to work on the hill for Senator Orrin Hatch (senior Senator from Utah) as part of a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellowship.
 - o The goal of the Fellowship was to bring health care professionals to the Hill to craft better health policy,
 - o I sought a spot in that office so that I could see policymaking from a good vantage point.
 - o I was selected from those competing for the spot because my father was a member of the Mormon church.
 - o That office had a strong faith tradition which I respected.
 - o Senator Hatch and Senator Ted Kennedy had a long-standing friendship. They used it to craft many important pieces of legislation that did a lot of good for the country
 - o That experience helped me to see the value of partnerships

- Hoping we can build relationships with each other and partner with each other to get things done on the Council

11:26AM Discussion of Framing Documents

- EJ principles, indigenous network just transition, Jemez principles
- Want to look at those three and pull-out relevant items for the Commonwealth
- First of many discussions
- Will create a small working group of Council members to create a framing document from these 3 historical documents, but also incorporating the EJ Act language
- Over the next few months, the working group will create something that the full Council can review in April
- Group Discussion of Key Takeaways
 - What is purpose of the framework?
 - Don't want to spend too much time on the framework, want to spend more time engaging
 - Thought that the Jemez document was most pertinent (except 2)
 - EJ principles were focused on what was happening in the early 1990s, refreshing of the language would be helpful
 - Jemez Principles important to work with impacted communities
 - Indigenous – bring together secular and non-secular world, want to pull in those pieces
 - Both EJ and Jemez principles, terminology should be integrated
 - Jemez focused on how we should work as body and EJ principles what recommendations should focus on
 - Laying out foundation integral to function
 - Principles of EJ – guiding principles as how we want to focus on the work (2, 5, 8 and 3 talk about everyone having a voice and being included)
 - Definitions could help us move forward with our recommendations
 - Principles include statements that not everyone agrees on, does not think we should adopt them wholesale as an advisory board, not necessary to our work and excludes
 - All three documents provide broader context to work that we do, give us some grounding a place to start
 - Would be great for our version to be simple, directed, focused, and short vs long term – to be cleaner and more easily digestible
 - Pull out more general that are widely agreed upon from the list and add them to our version and for more specific issues, take them as they come
 - Hope to put together a committee to find common ground on a framework, want to share prior to next meeting and then it would be something that we could put into the next report as introductory doc
 - Jemez principles are extremely succinct (for council to function) and could be good to go through other two documents and
 - Principles provide human piece
- Will be space on agenda in April for Council review of the framing document and hope to have it settled by August

12PM Public Comments

Kelly Hengler

- Physician assistant and ex-military
- Was in Cali for 20 years
- Witnessed h1n1
- Located on lower James, Suffolk
- Heart disease and cancer and aging health issues
- Comprehensive planning
- Disaster response systems
- Excited to see SB1254, which suggests an EJ strategy for comprehensive planning
- Executive president of local civic league
- Communication issue as people don't know about boil water issues in Oakland (rural)
 - Communication is a major issue especially around disaster response

Kim Sudderth, Norfolk

- Berkely neighborhood
- Multiple industrial and hazardous waste sites
- Important to consider inequities in public policy and cumulative impacts, need a cumulative impact bill
- Storm surge concerns – her neighborhood was not included in the Army Corps of Engineers hard infrastructure project
 - Army Corps declared that the cost of the wall is more than the value of the neighborhood
 - Want to reflect on the past and not commit to perpetuating past harms
- Asked the city to help them advocate to the Army Corps of Engineers, process started in 2015, very difficult
- Would be nice to have resilience centers that are solar powered – community would know that's where to go
 - Especially in vulnerable neighborhoods
- Make community meetings more accessible, 5pm meetings are very hard for working parents to make

Lorna Taylor, Suffolk

- Flooding, sand pits, trucks and noise
- Wants her community to be taken into consideration in the report
- Oakland Village still on boil water alert, still using pipes from the 1930s

Mary Hill, Suffolk

- Represents historic African American village

- Needs action and specific shovel-ready projects now to resolve flooding issues
- Working with Wetlands Watch and Del. Hernandez carrying a bill about flood risk disclosure for selling homes

Carolyn White, Pughsville

- Took a look at the May 14 draft which looks good
- Submitted pictures from Pughsville, but unfortunately had an email bounce back
- Neighborhood dealing with old African American movie theater. The theater had asbestos found in it.
- It has since been demolished but the site that may still contain asbestos is being redeveloped
- There is not enough attention being paid to the potential for the asbestos to be disturbed and redistributed during the redevelopment process

Public Comment Discussion

- Norfolk speaker cumulative impacts, far-reaching issue (grandfathered industrial projects)
- One of the council's recommendations was an executive study that perhaps could have results in 2026
- Del. Tran has been working on a cumulative impacts bill, which has not been introduced
- Important to look at historical decisions, policies, and legacies to even the playing field
- Very hard to work with the Army Corps of Engineers
- Need to plan how to make people whole after severe weather events and climate impacts, what can the state do, particularly when people lose everything, and it is not feasible to rebuild?
 - Can address in future report recommendation
 - Money for resilience in Regional Green Gas Initiative (RGGI), resilience definition could be widened
 - How a redlined community could end up on the wrong side of the plan (historically valued lower, this should have some type of weight to be included in the value decision)
- How are plans being developed? Do communities have access to emergency provisions right after a storm?
- Want to figure out a way to get Technical Assistance to community members, perhaps a future speaker
- Richmond and Oakland Village are on a boil water alert, so it would be good to have a speaker discussing this topic (money allocations, what communities have benefited, what happened, rural and urban, how word gets out)
 - A report is due in April for Richmond, which would be good to discuss for the next meeting

1:32PM Annual Report Schedule and Meeting Dates

- 2024 report will be sent out on February 3rd, the first Monday in February

- Will be submitted to a portal by DEQ staff
- Karen Campblin will also disseminate to the General Assembly and other key stakeholders
- 2025 Tentative Meeting Timeline
 - Jan 28 - Richmond
 - Apr 24 – Montgomery-Radford
 - June 17 – Virtual Meeting
 - Aug 21 – Richmond or virtual
 - Nov 21 - Pittsylvania/Danville or Northern Neck (concerns raised for this date – too close to holidays)
 - A new timeline with changes to the April and November dates will be sent out to Council members after consultation with DEQ on their availability
- Topics Discussion (original topics deriving from public comments)
 - Want to start the topic conversation today
 - Suggested Topics:
 - Radford artillery/SNR
 - Drinking water/water bodies and flooding
 - Site suitability
 - Data centers
 - Transportation and Equity
 - Additional topic ideas:
 - education and collaboration between communities, DEQ, and industry
 - disaster response/emergency management/resilience (state response, especially in light of the flooding in SW VA -people still living in tents and how to be proactive/planned for)
 - revisiting past recommendations that are still pertinent/accountability
 - perhaps a call for topics via email?
 - Important to spell out topics more with a description so clear to everyone
 - Topics should be coming from communities that are experiencing these issues (public comments)
 - Remind the public each time that we don't solve the problems, that we make recommendations
- **Thoughts for Upcoming Report**
 - Election for governor coming up this year– if there is redundancy in this year's report, it may be beneficial for the new governor coming into power
 - Be mindful of the number of topics, workload, and capacity of the council
 - This time we will submit to the governor and GA and request a meeting with the governor
 - Don't have a Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources (for the past three years), they normally had sponsored the council out of their office
 - EJ council members can reach out to GA members and other elected officials to join (Eddie volunteered)
 - Perhaps need to tweak a few working groups to ensure that they fit with this year's work/report

- The report is a useful policy document for the state of VA (networks, advocates, and policymakers)
- Desire to move chapters/teams from the 2024 report to the 2025 report was intended to move up the timeline to ensure we are on time with the report this year. This doesn't mean the content of the chapters will repeat from 2024 to 2025; the outline will be similar.

2:50PM Discussion of Conflict and Bias Policy

- Want to avoid being put in a position that requires us to have to fill out COI forms as other regulatory councils are required to do
- But want to create a process where potential conflicts and/or biases can be acknowledged by the members who have them
- Make it clear to the public and to the people we serve where you as a Council member feel you have a potential conflict and may need to step back from a conversation and/or a vote because of that conflict
- Wanted our members to be comfortable in the discussions that we have or abstain from discussions
- Came up with a brief statement listed in the report that was reviewed by our contact within the Attorney General's office:

Statement from 2024 Report:

NOTE: Organizational affiliations are for identification of members only. Members are individually appointed using a framework of regions of the state as well as academic, environmental and grassroots affiliations. In any organization, the integrity of decision-making is paramount. However, we recognize at times, members may face conflicts and/or potential biases. We further recognize opting not to vote, or abstain, is a reasonable choice, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of the Council and its purpose. This practice not only upholds the integrity of the voting process but also encourages a culture of accountability and trust.

- Want the council liaison in the AG office, Kate, to join us to provide guidance on how we should continue to comply with the state policy on conflicts.
 - She can respond in a closed meeting
- Following up on our conversation last year, want to create an environment where we feel comfortable moving together as a group and create a culture of trust
 - Want to clarify areas where we don't have common ground
- Discussion:
 - The council is not creating laws or regulations or making rulings, which provides the council with more flexibility, like the brief statement
 - What is the expectation for discussions and votes? What is the thought process?
 - About a potential financial conflict of interest, the governor has not designated this council as an entity that needs to fill out the conflict-of-interest form that some regulatory councils are required to fill out
 - The wording reflects a policy conflict instead of a financial conflict of interest

- What is the process if other council members feel like there is a “professional conflict/bias” (with another council member around a potential issue)?
 - There should be a process
- Multiple council members wanted to make sure that they were not representing their employers in the report/on the council
- It was confirmed that organizational affiliations are just that (affiliations for purposes of identification) and that Council members don’t represent those organizations
- Would be great to have a recommended policy for this Council and a process for declaring potential conflicts and articulating those so we can all be on the same page

3:25 Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Report

- Won a SWIFR grant (solid waste management)
- EPA Pollution Prevention Grant (autobody shops in EJ community)
- Three plans for water planning to meet water quality standards
 - Chesapeake Bay goals being reestablished past 2025, feedback period this summer
 - Water supply office outreach and engagement for planning for regional water plan
- DEQ received a CPRG (Climate pollution reduction grant)
 - Developing PCAP – high impact solutions to reduce ghg, comprehensive long-term plan, regional meetings across the commonwealth
 - Has a stakeholder steering group
- Streamlining processes around language access and title VI
- Updating Virginia EJScreen+
 - Current census data (will not be paid out of federal EPA EJ grant)
- Trump administration EO to stop federal money – there is a memo, but no one knows what is happening, there is a lot of uncertainty and confusion in the DEQ
 - Federal money supports about 40% of DEQ work
 - A lot of nuances to promised money vs money in an account
 - Multiple states filed lawsuits
 - DEQ financial folks are looking into it
- Upcoming virtual education series (landfills, bay, water, grants)
 - Flyers are available
- EJ at the GA
 - HB2030 – EJ task force, report
 - HB2267 – fenceline air quality monitoring program for certain communities; DEQ to establish, report
 - SB1254 – comprehensive plan; EJ strategy

3:25PM Debrief/Close

- Next Steps
 - Karen and Janet will circulate the revised date and meeting report schedule
 - Harrison, Karen, and Kendyl will work on the governance draft

- Note: After the meeting, Courtney Malveaux replaced Karen C. on the team
- All reach out to Karen and Janet to serve on a working group
- All email topic ideas to Janet and Karen (with description and who could speak to it)
- Karen looking into processes for resolving conflict/bias

3:30PM Meeting Adjourns

DRAFT