

Governor's Commission on Environmental Justice

October 2013 Report to the Governor

Executive Summary

The principle of environmental justice requires that no segment of the population, regardless of race, national origin, age, or income, should bear disproportionately high or adverse effects of environmental pollution. In 2011, by the Authority 415 ILCS 155/10, the Illinois legislature created the Illinois Governor's Commission on Environmental Justice. According to the statute,

The Commission shall:

- (1) advise State entities on environmental justice and related community issues
- (2) review and analyze the impact of current State laws and policies on the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities
- (3) assess the adequacy of State and local laws to address the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities
- (4) develop criteria to assess whether communities in the State may be experiencing environmental justice issues
- (5) recommend options to the Governor for addressing issues, concerns, or problems related to environmental justice that surface after reviewing State laws and policies, including prioritizing areas of the State that need immediate attention.

The Commission on Environmental Justice is established and consists of the following 20 voting members:

- 2 members of the Senate, one appointed by the President of the Senate and the other by the Minority Leader of the Senate, each to serve at the pleasure of the appointing officer
 - 2 members of the House of Representatives, one appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the other by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, each to serve at the pleasure of the appointing officer
 - The following ex officio members:
 - the Director of Aging or his or her designee,
 - the Director of Commerce and Economic Opportunity or his or her designee,
 - the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency or his or her designee,
 - the Director of Natural Resources or his or her designee,
 - the Director of Public Health or his or her designee, and
 - the Director of Transportation or his or her designee
 - 10 members appointed by the Governor who represent the following interests:
 - (i) affected communities concerned with environmental justice
 - (ii) business organizations
 - (iii) environmental organizations
 - (iv) experts on environmental health and environmental justice
 - (v) units of local government
 - (vi) members of the general public who have an interest or expertise in environmental justice.
- Chair of the Commission, designated by the Governor, is Kimberly Wasserman.

The Environmental Protection Agency shall provide administrative and other support to the Commission.

The Commission met for the first time on August 14 in Chicago and Springfield via video conference. The initial meeting allowed the Commissioners a chance to meet each other, share ideas and experiences, and to start planning the framework for the work of the Commission. The Commission has agreed to meet quarterly in person, with conference call meetings as needed. Chairwoman Wasserman set next steps as defining the working goals of the Commission, establishing working groups for those goals and then moving into the communities.

The Commission membership has stated the importance of having opportunities to meet with people in impacted communities at their locations. The meetings are open to the public and media, and their participation is welcomed.

The attached report contains the minutes of the August 14 2013 meeting, a listing of the membership, position papers, and the meeting agenda.

Minutes

The “EJ” Commission met for the first time on August 14 in Chicago and Springfield via video conference. The initial meeting allowed the Commissioners a chance to meet each other, share ideas and experiences, and to start planning the framework for the work of the Commission. The Commission has agreed to meet quarterly in person, with conference call meetings as needed. Chairwoman Kimberly Wasserman set next steps as defining the working goals of the Commission, establishing working groups for those goals and then moving into the communities.

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Participants at the inaugural meeting included Commissioners Sylvia Hood Washington, Keith Harley, Millard Driskell, Kate Tomford, Kimberly Wasserman, Cheryl Johnson, Debbie Myers-Martin, Jerry Mead-Lucero, Veronica Kyle, Rep. Chris Welch, Alec Messina, Rep. Mike Fortner, Tamika Gibson, and Gloria Williams.

Observers were Tammy Webber, Associated Press, Rev. Mitchell Johnson and Christian Strachan of People for Community Recovery, Bryant Payne and Charles Parnell of Midwest Generation, Monica Rios of Hodge, Dwyer & Driver and Jerry Peck of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association.

State Senator Toi Hutchinson, Bola Delano of IDOT and Jeffrey Jones of IDNR participated via phone.

Illinois EPA Director Lisa Bonnett, Associate Director Elmo Dowd, Environmental Justice Officer Ken Page and six other Illinois EPA staff members also participated in the video conference. Illinois EPA is providing administrative staff support for the Commission.

Director Bonnett greeted the group and thanked them for their interest and for their desire to help bring environmental justice issues into the forefront as the Agency moves forward in making policy and permitting changes and updates. She said the EJ Advisory Committee (which is separate from this Commission, although it does have many of the same members) will continue to function separately along with the Commission. She sees the work of the Commission as finite, while the Advisory Group is ongoing. The Commissioners will decide the scope of work of the Commission, as well as the priorities and potential committees/subcommittees.

Issues for Discussion Raised by Commissioners at the Inaugural Meeting Included:

Jerry Mead Lucero, PERRO, spoke of the need to look at EJ laws and regulation and address the cumulative impact of pollution on residents and the environment

Sylvia Hood Washington, University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, spoke of a need to have an EJ resource repository for the information and resources that already exist. She has an educational video that she produced, (funded by the Illinois Humanities Council) for example, that could be used by others if there was a central place established. She stressed the need for the Commission to have “teeth.” She said she feels that DuPage County is lacking EJ awareness. She looks forward to a possible opportunity to move Illinois to sustain research and generate data to create policy and solidify EJ in state.

Keith Harley, IIT Chicago-Kent Chicago Legal Clinic, has created a position paper that he would like to circulate among the Commissioners for consideration of priorities/action items. He used the phrase “Winning Strategies” to cover the positive results that a solid EJ Policy in Illinois could provide for legislators, communities and regulators.

Veronica Kyle, Faith in Place, discussed the role of the faith-based community and environmental stewardship and strategically using this segment to move forward EJ education and awareness. She also stressed the need to not forget about the rural communities when discussing environmental justice; she feels it is important to provide EJ Education and awareness across the state.

Cheryl Johnson, Executive Director of People for Community Recovery, suggested that it would be important to hold future meetings in EJ communities so that those who live there can also have a voice, and that Commissioners and others can get a firsthand experience. She then posed the question of what comes after the education. She talked about technology needs and a desire to cooperatively build EJ education with industry.

Millard Driskell, Grand Master of Prince Hall Masons of Illinois, stated that the Mason’s are in place. They believe in a green state (environmental justice) and that implementation should come through public relations. Mr. Driskell suggested meeting monthly, and also the conversion of the Mason Building to a Green building.

Debbie Myers-Martin, Mayor of Olympia Fields, is looking forward to sharing the perspective of municipalities in this Commission work.

Deputy Director Bola Delano of IDOT, was on the phone and wanted to share that Agency's perspective on environmental justice and transportation issues. She stated that they use planning to address EJ issues. She also stated that the federal highway reauthorization law now highlights EJ, linking transportation Initiatives with planning. She stressed that Interagency Partnerships are needed and it would be useful for working through remediation issues with the State.

State Rep. Chris Welch, (D)7th District, said he was there to offer input, to listen and offered to carry legislation that might come out of this Commission's efforts. He is interested how he can promote the Policy Perspective of how to move forward with EJ work in the State.

Alec Messina, Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group (IERG), representing 52 member companies, and former chief legal counsel at IEPA, stated that he wants to be able to understand the obligations of the regulated community. He believes some decisions made by the Agency were made "in a box" and he is interested in hearing concerns.

Jeffrey Jones of Illinois Department of Natural Resources ,IDNR (on the phone), said that he would like to see corporate partners be responsible citizens in recreational areas, both Rural and Metro areas. He would also like to be able to translate the benefit of EJ to these areas.

State Rep. Mike Fortner,(R) 49th District, representing western DuPage County over the years in different elected capacities, has an interest in becoming proactive and more involved in environmental justice in the state.

Jerry Peck of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA) was there as an observer. He said that he represents 4,000 members that employ 600,000 workers. He would like to see the regulatory process streamlined and also to provide benefits to manufacturers. He would like to serve as a resource to the Commission going forward.

Tamika Gibson, Illinois Environmental Council (IEC), stated the Illinois Environmental Council serves as the environmental community's eyes, ears, and voice in Springfield and she will continue that work in her capacity as a Commissioner.

Kate Tomford, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), stated her interest on behalf of her director and agency to work towards ensuring that their different divisions and programs consider EJ as they provide various funding and investments on behalf of the state.

Elmo Dowd, Illinois EPA, stated that he thinks the Agency is moving forward in its quest to ensure financial, economic and social justice in environmental justice. He also said that the feds are looking at "cumulative impact" issues and it will probably trickle down to the state level.

Commission Chairwoman Kimberly Wasserman, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO), stressed the need to get public input, to be proactive versus reactive, and to engage in meaningful conversation with industry and manufacturing. She discussed that the future meetings and

conversations may not be as friendly as today's meeting has been, as there will be varying thoughts and opinions on how to move forward. She stressed the need to listen thoughtfully and to be respectful of the difference.

Senator Hutchinson was on the phone and stated her desire to work proactively with the Commission.

Sylvia Hood Washington added that she thought it would be important to also bring a representative from the Catholic Church or the Catholic Bishops into the fold, to add to the great potential to move things forward in the faith community. Veronica Kyle did assure her that Faith in Place does indeed have Catholics among their membership and that they would indeed be receiving the information that would be disseminated by the Commission.

Jerry Mead-Lucero, Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization (PERRO), reiterated his desire to meet again soon, perhaps in September. He feels strongly in the need to establish priorities and create committees.

There was discussion about how long members would like to have to be able to read over the various documents and minutes, to have discussions with memberships so that the discussion of priorities could take place. A time frame of two to three weeks was generally agreed upon.

There was discussion of what the report to the Governor's Office that is due in October would consist of. Ken Page, Illinois EPA stated that he thought it would include the minutes of this and any other meeting we would have prior to then, and the results of the work that the Commission hopes to do. He said that the report that is created for the October 2014 time period will be the report with the real work and discussions, mainly due to the timing of this meeting and this year's reporting deadline.

Commissioners will receive information over email in the next few days and information will also be posted to the Website. A link to the Website will also be given to the Commissioners.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am

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