



DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Quarterly Meeting
Thursday, August 10, 2023
3:00 PM –6:00 PM
Green Square Training Room
217 West Jones St, Raleigh NC

At 3:08 pm, Vice Chairman Marian Johnson-Thompson read the ethics statement and called the meeting to order.

Board Members Present

Vice Chair Marian Johnson-Thompson
Carolina Fonseca Jimenez
Carlos Velazquez
Marilynn Marsh-Robinson
Ranee Haven-O'Donnell
Dr. Danelle Lobdell
Veronica Carter
Sheri White Williamson
Naeema Muhammad (online)
Jeff Anstead (online)
Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler Jr.
Dr. Deepak Kumar

Board Members Absent

La'Meshia Whittington
Chairman Dr. Jim Johnson
William Barber III

I. Secretary Elizabeth Biser, NC DEQ: Welcoming Remarks

Secretary Elizabeth Biser followed up on the topic of PFAS discussed in the EJEAB quarterly meeting in May sharing details of the Bernard Allen Emergency Drinking Fund Pilot Program which provides funding to treat private drinking water wells for PFAS contaminants. Based on income to ensure that those who least able to afford treatment are able to access clean water. She said she was looking forward to upcoming presentation on the Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC) coming to North Carolina and the opportunities this partnership will provide to support communities that need funding. Finally, she recalled that the tour of Sampson County was informative and looked forward to hearing the board's reflections.

II. Dr. James Harrington, RTI; Dr. Janelle Armstrong-Brown, RTI; Dr. Undi Hoffler, NCCU: "Resource for Assistance and Community Training (REACT4EJ) EPA Region 4 Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC)"

Dr. Janelle Armstrong-Brown presented on the REACT4EJ TCTAC program in North Carolina as one of 12 centers providing resources, assistance, and community training for environmental justice. The goal of this program is to establish a network that provides technical assistance. The program was created in partnership with Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Deep South Center will be acting in EPA Region 4, located in Louisiana. While Research Triangle International (RTI) is leading this project, they are in partnership other universities and organizations across EPA Region 4. Their top priority is to offer grant-writing support. They hope to collaborate with libraries and churches to reach areas without broadband access. In 2022, North Carolina Central University (NCCU) and RTI established The Center for Applied Environmental Research to provide professional development for students.

Dr. Undi Hoffler described the recent efforts of NCCU's community engagement through service-learning initiatives and community-engaged leadership including Health Disparities Research (RCHDR), the Advanced Center for Covid-19 Related Disparities (ACCORD) Project and the BRAVE Project.

Ms. Randee Haven-O'Donnell asked if the ACCORD program will still be active this fall and winter. Dr. Hoffler responded that it is an ongoing project. Ms. Haven-O'Donnell clarified that she wanted to know if vaccination services will still be available. Dr. Deepak Kumar confirmed that both vaccination and health information will be available.

Ms. Veronica Carter asked for clarification on the term 'communities' to see if faith-based groups and municipalities were included. Dr. Hoffler responded that they are reaching out to faith-based communities, and they will take note to reach out to municipalities as well. Ms. Carter asked what denominations are being reached out to. Dr. Hoffler responded that they aim to reach out to all denominations.

Mr. Carlos Velazquez thanked the presenters for providing a Spanish copy of their materials.

Ms. Sheri White-Williamson inquired on what can be done to make sure rural communities will not be left out of the program. Dr Hoffler responded that they want to have listening sessions and collaborate with community organizations. Dr. Armstrong-Brown added that with that outreach, they want to hear what types of strategies/methodologies would be the most useful for the rural communities from the rural communities themselves. Mrs. White-Williamson replied that the issue will be that the rural communities don't know about these programs and they will need extra help.

Ms. Carter asked who potential ambassadors will be, how will they be found, and what roles will be expected of them.

Dr. James Harrington entered and introduced himself.

Ms. Carolina Fonseca-Jimenez asked what the program's experience has been with language access. Dr Harrington replies that they have provided town halls in Spanish and in addition to materials translation for ACCORD program information.

Rev. Rodney Sadler Jr. recommended faith groups for outreach and asked what the larger goal is for the TCTACs across the United States. Dr. Harrington responded that the goal is to increase access and the role that underserved communities play in environmental processes, from local to federal levels. Dr Armstrong-Brown added that TCTACS will be a systematic approach to change the system that has historically privileged others and put decision-making in the hands of the most impacted.

Dr. Armstrong-Brown also added that they want to be able to compensate community organizations for their services. Dr. Harrington clarified that it will be fair compensation for time and effort.

Ms. Marilyn Marsh-Robinson asked how long the TCTACs will be funded and how much that will be. Dr Harrington clarified that the start date will be Sept 1st. They expect funding to be between \$18-20,000 per year.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson suggested for the presenters to discuss specific problems people are having when talking about environmental health, such as swine, wood pellets, climate change, and flooding. She also asked if they have been in contact with the NC EJ Network. Dr. Armstrong-Brown affirmed and said they want to do this once the contract is in place.

Mr. Jeff Anstead provided resources for tribal community outreach.

III. Josh Kastrinsky, NC DEQ: "General Permits Renewal Animal Feeding Operations"

Mr. Josh Kastrinsky provided an overview of the Animal Feeding Operation Permit Renewal and the public comment opportunities for the animal operations and digester General permits

which will become effective in Fall 2024. Comments can be submitted at four public hearings, over email, on the phone, and via physical mail. Comments may be made in any language, translation services will be available, and translated materials will be provided in Spanish. Outreach will be performed as recommended by the Draft Environmental Justice Report.

Mr. Velazquez asked about implementation of alternative farming options. Mr. Kastrinsky referred Mr. Velazquez to the Department of Agriculture.

Ms. Naeema Muhammed asked what times the public hearings will be held. Josh responded that the meetings are planned to start at 6pm, with registration opening at 5pm, and will last until 9pm. Ms. Muhammed inquired what will people get from those meetings and if comments will really be taken into consideration. Mr. Kastrinsky responded that comments submitted through any means will be taken into consideration and encouraged comments to be submitted.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson commented public meeting times were not visible on the DEQ website. Mr. Kastrinsky will follow up and see that gets added.

Ms. Rande Haven-O'Donnell requested software for public comment where people can input concerns in a way that is documented and provides public access to that documentation.

Ms. Carter requested to include language that the permits will be reissued if the permit recipients comply with health and welfare of the residents.

Ms. White-Williamson introduced a draft from the board to Secretary Biser for consideration.

IV. EJEAB: Sampson County Tour Reflections

Ms. Sherri White-Williamson thanked the board for coming to Sampson County. She provided updates from the public hearing held in Sampson County in June.

Mr. Velazquez reflected on the hope coming from the community members during the tour.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson said it was an educational experience to have first-hand interaction with conditions she had only heard described to her.

Ms. Marsh-Robinson thanked Ms. White-Williamson for organizing the tour and seeing how people's health and lifestyle have been impacted. She expressed frustration that infrastructure is not being provided to those communities.

Ms. Fonseca-Jimenez added that it was interesting to be able to hear the accounts of the tour because they get to connect meaning to the work of the board members.

Dr. Kumar said he was shocked by the tour and it made him appreciate the work that Ms. White-Williams does. His firsthand account showed how much is done to a community that has gone undocumented.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson emphasized that giving the people data is important.

Ms. White-Williams confirmed that Sampson County has not been studied or documented, there are just anecdotes.

Ms. Carter said the woman visited on the tour should have had a reverse osmosis filter, but she has to pay for water of poor quality. She affirmed that everyone should have access to clean water and air.

Rev. Sadler Jr. expressed regret for not being able to make it to the trip. He urged the board to make recommendations for health and economic impacts in NC.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson said that the board should work toward legislative changes to support their recommendations.

V. EJEAB: Cumulative Impacts Updates

Ms. White-Williams introduced the reformatted set of recommendations for cumulative impact analysis that was previously voted upon by the board.

Ms. Haven-O'Donnell highlighted that recommendation #3 is very important in light of the reflections from Sampson County.

At 4:45 pm, Vice Chair Dr. Marian Johnson-Thompson adjourned the meeting.

Public Comment

Vice Chair opened the public comment period at 5:02pm. Commenters had 2 minutes each to present.

1. Jasmine Washington, *Southern Environmental Health Center*: Thanked the board for addressing cumulative impacts. Commented on the 2023 Animal Waste Permits. Asked the board to be vocal about this draft permit, as they have done in the past. Suggested adding requirements for technological improvements in waste management to the general permit.
2. John Dreyfors: signed up for comment but did not speak.
3. Rania Masri: signed up for comment but did not speak.
4. Anita Cunningham: signed up for comment but did not speak.
5. Belinda Joyner (online): Requested public comment periods after each presentation. Commented that the public hearings are not present in Northampton County. Wanted to know how much more needs to be seen and heard before responding to animal feeding operation pollution. Did not feel that people are prioritized and does not feel represented in government. Expressed that there should be more oversight for industries to ensure compliance with regulations.
6. Karen Bearden: Said record heat and wildfires show that the climate emergency is here. Discussed the mountain valley pipeline system through Rockingham and Alamance County and said that the proposed pipeline is an environmental justice issue. Asked the board to intervene and write a resolution against the mountain valley south gate pipeline.
7. Chris Hawn, *NC EJ Network*: Voiced support for moving forward with cumulative impacts work. Heard information about how pollution is getting into the lives of residents in NC systematically. Said collective impact must be examined to see how pollutants enter the environment and that the permit process is not sufficient to limit impacts. Called for other pathways to stop harms outside of the permitting process.