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DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE  
**INLAND BAYS**  
Research. Educate. Restore.

## DEIJA COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, June 20, 2024

TIME: 6 - 7:30pm

LOCATION: Meeting Room A1, Georgetown Public Library

123 West Pine Street, Georgetown, DE 19947

Remote via Zoom:

By computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83871927116>

By phone: (301) 715-8592 Meeting ID: 838 7192 7116 #

Meeting called by: Lisa Locke, Vice Chair

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Attendees: Chris Brosch, Bob Collins, Penny Dryden, Jerry Esposito, Anna Fagan, Steven Hohman, Jane Hovington, Marissa McClenton, Nivette Perez-Perez, Jazz Peterson, Flavia Rutkosky, Christophe Tulou, Melina Vella

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Welcome / Call to Order

6:06pm

L. Locke

Juneteenth Commemoration

J. Hovington

*-J. Hovington led a commemoration of Juneteenth and detailed the historical events marking the end of slavery in the US. She also shared the story of the Richard Allen School in Georgetown, its rich history, and future plans for renovations.*

Meeting Agenda Review

L. Locke

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

A. Fagan

*-L. Locke made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. N. Perez-Perez seconded. Unanimous approval.*

Perspectives from the Next Generation

ReNEW Essay Contest  
Winner(s)

*-L. Locke reported on the ReNEW Essay Contest conducted by Interfaith Power and Light under her leadership. The contest is organized for high school students and focuses on environmental issues. The contest received a record-breaking number of entries from 30 high schools, with 78 submissions. Winners were invited to attend for discussion, but could not make it.*

*-L. Locke shared a storytelling exercise involving 15 quotes from top essays focused on environmental justice.*

*-N. Perez-Perez acknowledged L. Locke's success in engaging diverse youth in the contest and ask about strategies used. L. Locke stated she'll put together some thoughts and suggestions for the Center to consider. C. Tulou stated there may be an opportunity for these students to work with the Center to conduct an education program at the James Farm—in other words, students teaching students.*

*-F. Rutkosky recalled an earlier meeting in which there was discussion about certain communities not feeling comfortable or empowered enough to engage on issues that they're facing. She suggested an oral history conducted in locations where they're comfortable would*

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*capture that same information in a different way. Done well, it could be submitted to decisionmakers. If we can get these students to participate in design and implementation, that could be very beneficial—i.e., intergenerational history between a grandchild and grandparent. Dan Parsons, Historic Presentation Planner for Sussex County, would be a great partner and resource. A. Fagan stated that the Delaware Humanities may have funding available for a project like this.*

Continued Discussion of Committee Structure and Operation

All

*-Agenda item moved to a future meeting.*

People's Anti-Pollution Bill Updates

M. McClenton

*-M. McClenton reported on the current status of HB422, the People's Anti Pollution Bill in Delaware. Due to scheduling conflicts, a public hearing has been delayed, but is expected to occur next Tuesday, June 25 at 10am. This means that the bill will not pass during this year's session. This is not a surprise given that the bill is calling for such significant overhauls in the permitting process.*

*-M. McClenton provided some background to clarify any confusion between HB422 and HB248. She explained that the two bills are trying to address the same problem in a different way, but there are concerns that HB248 not sufficient solution to the overall problem, which is lack of a mechanism to prevent further overburdening communities already subjected to pollution. The Delaware Environmental Accountability Coalition is fully supportive of HB422 and has worked closely with the bills sponsor. They are neutral on HB248.*

*-The Coalition is now in the power-building phase for HB422. This means there is a need for community engagement and education, particularly in overburdened communities, about the bill and the permitting process more generally. She expressed the need for downstate partners to assist with some of this work in Sussex County, since she and her organization are located in Wilmington, and is hoping that the Center can assist in this capacity. This work will likely being in August.*

*-C. Tulou stated that the Center will assist, though power-building may not be what helps this bill pass. He stated they may need to figure out a way to get results with a less burdensome approach. M. McClenton emphasized the importance of maintaining the bill's original intent while navigating upcoming discussions and technical adjustments. Beyond passing this piece of legislation is helping Delawareans rethink what it means to be a business-friendly state, i.e. we don't have to sacrifice our health to be business-friendly.*

*-N. Perez-Perez inquired about involvement from the State's EJ office. M. McClenton stated that so far, their focus has been on community engagement, rather than permit reform, and there is need for more resources and staff in the EJ office to engage more meaningfully on issues like this.*

*-The Committee agreed upon the urgency of making this a priority for candidates running for governor and getting their commitments to the principles of the bill, including adjustments to the permitting process to reflect overburden and community.*

*-M. McClenton offered to discuss the bill further beyond the confines of the meeting with anyone interested.*

Upcoming Community Engagement Efforts

A. Fagan

*-A. Fagan provided a brief overview of upcoming community engagement efforts through the Southern Delaware Critical Coastal Resilience plan, a NFWF funded project,*

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*which aims to engage the entirety of the Inland Bays watershed in employing nature-based solutions toward climate resilience and habitat quality.*

*-One particular task in the grant calls for up to 25 roundtable discussions with six vulnerable communities to hear directly from them on their needs, priorities and values, in the hopes of identifying projects to boost their resilience that we can engage them on from the very beginning.*

*-A. Fagan stated that the Center will be seeking help from the Committee to connect with these communities and participate in the roundtable discussions. More information forthcoming.*

Open Forum

*-C. Brosch cautioned Committee members and participants to be mindful of jargon and acronyms. There were parts of the meeting that were difficult to follow for someone new to these sorts of discussions.*

Adjourn

7:29pm

L. Locke