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DEIJA COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, April 11, 2024

TIME: 6 - 7:30pm

LOCATION: Delaware Center for the Inland Bays
39375 Inlet Road, Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971

Remote via Zoom:

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

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

Meeting called by: Dr. Marlene Saunders, Chair

Attendees: *Nicole Ashton, Bob Collins, Penny Dryden, Jerry Esposito, Bonnie Hall, Anna Fagan, Lisa Locke, Marissa McClenton, Meghan Noe Fellows, María Payan, Michael Payan, Nivette Perez-Perez, Ragghi Rain, Melina Vella, Chanta Wilkinson*

Welcome / Call to Order *6:01pm* M. Saunders

Meeting Agenda Review M. Saunders

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes A. Fagan

-C. Wilkinson requested an amendment to the minutes to account for her attendance at the February meeting. A. Fagan apologized for this oversight. B. Hall made a motion to approve the minutes with this amendment. L. Locke seconded. Unanimous approval.

Introduction of New Committee Members M. Saunders

-M. Saunders acknowledged and thanked those who formalized their membership on the committee since the last meeting: Bonnie Hall, Marissa McClenton, María Payan, Michael Payan, Ragghi Rain, and Flavia Rutkosky.

Discussion of Committee Structure and Operation All

-M. Saunders proposed the development of subcommittees and asked for feedback and ideas from the committee. One prospect identified was an outreach subcommittee. M. McClenton supported this, seeing lots of potential in such a subcommittee. L. Locke suggested that this committee could engage businesses and corporations. M. McClenton and Maria Payan were both apprehensive. In their experience, businesses are often on the other side of the table from the communities we're hoping to reach. J. Esposito shared that, in his experience, the Delaware business community is often aligned with the work of the Center and believes they would be supportive. M. McClenton stated that the People's Anti-Pollution Bill could be a litmus test. M. Saunders proposed an evidence-based approach: start with who we know and identify those we don't know or are on the fence. The committee could use the assessment to drive decision-making about businesses to engage. Perhaps the outreach committee could focus on people and communities first, then businesses. L. Locke suggested a sustainability assessment for businesses in different areas.

- C. Wilkinson suggested a Legislative Action subcommittee. This could be the vehicle for engaging with communities around how to advocate for themselves.
- N. Pérez-Peréz suggested an Education subcommittee that could gather information and identify speakers and training opportunities to bring to the committee and the staff. M. Saunders and C. Wilkinson supported this. L. Locke emphasized the importance of storytelling in DEJA work.
- M. Saunders stated that she would like to develop a list of subcommittees that should be in place, accompanied by a couple of sentences about their charge and any tools that might be required. She asked committee members to draft up their own lists and submit them by May 30 for review ahead of the next meeting.
- N. Pérez-Peréz suggested that members also choose a specific principle(s) of Environmental Justice that resonates with them and think about how that principle can be incorporated into the committee's work.

People's Anti-Pollution Bill

M. McClenton

- M. McClenton provided an overview of the People's Anti-Pollution Bill to the committee. In summary:
 - Currently, DNREC cannot consider the existing pollution burden on a community as a condition for approving or denying permits. This is significant because individual facilities may not seem impactful, but several facilities in a singular geography overburden communities. The People's Anti-Pollution Bill came about to address this. It was initially introduced as the Cumulative Impacts Bill by Rep. Kendra Johnson and did not pass.
 - Since then, K. Johnson, her colleagues and community representatives have workshopped the legislation and the resulting People's Anti-Pollution Bill (Bill) will be introduced soon. The Bill means to interrupt the runaway train of pollution in overburdened communities, which are defined by specific standards like race, ethnicity, linguistic isolation, poverty level, etc. A community must meet any one standard, not all of them. This is more inclusive than the current state definition.
 - The Bill also extends the definition of facilities to include Certified Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) Facilities as defined by the Bill must prepare an Environmental Justice Impact Report that details how the facility could impact the surrounding community. DNREC must consider this report as part of the permit decision-making process.
 - The Bill requires a mandatory public hearing regarding facilities in overburdened communities. This is currently offered on a case-by-case basis. This is an effort to create as many opportunities as possible for communities to understand that permits are in the works.
 - Finally, the Bill establishes an Environmental Justice Board to conduct oversight. Members will be appointed and it must include community representatives. Once formed, the Board will review permits and can adjust definitions in the Bill. DNREC must consider the guidance of the Board.
 - The Bill will likely start in the House Natural Resources Committee. Advocates for the Bill are planning a lobby day in Dover.

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-N. Pérez Pérez asked when the Bill will need committee and Center support. M. McClenton stated this can begin now. She made two calls to action: (1) call your legislators and (2) talk about the Bill within Sussex networks.

-N. Perez Perez stated that the legislative process can be intimidating. She asked what can be done to prepare people to feel empowered about supporting this and what the committee's role might be. Maria Payan stated she has translation contacts (Spanish, Haitian Creole) that can help translate materials. She identified the Laurel Health Fair as an opportunity to engage Latino community organizations. C. Wilkinson suggested presentations to churches and church bulletins, newsletters, etc. L. Locke identified Interfaith Power and Light and the Lewes-Rehoboth Association of Congregations as potential advocates.

Watershed Communities' Challenges and Opportunities

All

Continued discussion on specific challenges and how the Center can engage with communities

-M. Saunders invited additional discussion about watershed communities' challenges and opportunities for the remainder of the meeting time.

-B. Hall identified increased development, deforestation, flooding, and impacts from Mountaire as major challenges in the Millsboro/Oak Orchard area. She acknowledged these are County-wide concerns. R. Rain confirmed this, stating that development, loss of old growth forests and wetlands, and Mountaire were also challenges in Selbyville. She also raised affordable housing as a challenge.

-Due to time constraints, M. Saunders invited committee members to submit additional problem areas ahead of the next meeting.

-On how best to engage with communities, the following feedback was provided:

-Michael Payan suggested engaging with trusted community partners to bring you in to community spaces, and to review cultural sensitivities and other pertinent information ahead of time.

-Maria Payan added that information on issues and initiatives should be provided to communities ahead of time whenever possible. This information should be presented in such a way that's easy to understand (i.e. image/graphic heavy, simplified terminology, etc.)

Open Forum

Adjourn

7:29pm

M. Saunders

NEXT MEETINGS:

Thursday, June 20, 2024 at 6pm - Location TBD

Thursday, September 26, 2024 at 6pm - Location TBD