



**Minutes of the Environmental Justice Task Force
September 30, 2019**

Clover Park Technical College McGavick Conference Center,
4500 Steilacoom Blvd SW, Lakewood, WA, 98499

Task Force members present:

Victor Rodriguez
David Mendoza
Larry Epstein
Cassie Bordelon
Michael Furze
Allison Camden
Lauren Jenks
Ignacio Marquez

Tomás Madrigal
Emily Pinckney
Rowena Pineda
Peter Godlewski for (Gary Chandler)
Judy Twedt
John Stuhlmiller
Millie Piazza

Task Force members absent:

Sonia Bumpus

Task Force staff present:

Elise Rasmussen, Environmental Justice
Task Force Project Manager
Esmael Lopez, Community Outreach
Coordinator to the Task Force

Christy Hoff, Health Disparities Council
Manager
Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant

Guests and other participants:

Senator Rebecca Saldaña
Deric Gruen, Front & Centered
Jennifer Sabel, Department of Health
Tina Echeverria, Department of Health

Lauren Freeland, Department of Health
Edmund Seto, University of Washington
Esther Min, University of Washington

David Mendoza, Co-Chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., read from a prepared statement (on file). Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair, introduced himself and asked others to do so. He said it was important for members to get to know each other as individuals and so he asked people to add something important about themselves that they would like other Task Force members to know when they introduced themselves. Co-Chair Mendoza referred individuals in the room to the note paper on the wall and let the public know they can add comments, questions, and other thoughts on sticky notes throughout the meeting.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Approve September 30, 2019 agenda

Motion/Second: Allison Camden/Peter Godlewski. Approved unanimously

2. PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Co-Chair Rodriguez, said public comment is an important part of this process and read from a prepared statement (on file).

Bob Baker, concerned citizen and member of Save the Cedar River, described how the river is a main tributary for salmon, trout, etc. He said they are planning to build an asphalt plant in his community. He said the work will involve reconstructing asphalt, which consists of tearing up asphalt, burning it, and that carcinogens and dust will enter the river and the community because of this process. He said the King County Council has ignored their pleas against the build. He is asking for assistance. He said they sought legal help and don't know where to turn, but he said it might come down to a legal battle. Emily Pinckney, Task Force Member, said they are not finding any salmon in the river this year and thanked Mr. Baker for his comments.

Anthony Steele, Pastor Allen AME Church in Tacoma Washington, said the opportunity to provide comment is important and he asked the Task Force to meet directly in the churches where the communities meet. He said the churches are a good place to hear from underserved communities, such as the African American community. He said we need to address how we engage the very communities that need to have input and when we make decisions, we make decisions to fund communities in second and third hand approaches. He said if we want to know how to reach the community, we should stop by on a Sunday and talk to them directly, rather than through other organizations. He said African Americans are being greatly affected by environmental injustices across the country and provided the example of drinking water pollution in Flint Michigan. Co-Chair Rodriguez thanked him for his comments and said that one of the recommendations the Task Force is charged with is about improving meaningful community engagement, and thanked Pastor Steele for already providing this important piece of information pertaining to community engagement.

Chris Van Allen, Shift Zero Alliance a zero net carbon building alliance joined together in alarm over the climate crisis. He said they are working to address inequities and scale up healthy efficient homes and engaging with affordable housing organizations. Affordable housing isn't just the cost of housing it's also the cost of energy that disproportionately effects frontline communities. If we can work together to get all homes up to standard to improve energy efficiency. It has been shown these homes can be built for the same cost up front and then save money for the residents through the life of the buildings. We need to retrofit current buildings and then work on standards for the development of future buildings. He asked the TF to incorporate some of these housing and building considerations into their work.

Maria Batayola, El Centro de la Raza, thanked the Task Force for its work and added two comments: First to make sure community engagement is easy, direct, and that community has real power when it comes to making decisions. Second, she asked the Task Force to add to their values capitalizing on existing and emerging opportunities.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DISCUSSION

Co-Chair Mendoza provided an overview of environmental justice (presentation on file). He is representing Front and Centered, a statewide environmental justice coalition of over 60 organizations and groups rooted in communities of color and people with lower incomes that are affected by environmental injustices. The goal of Front and Centered is to build "...power and capacity for a Just Transition to a clean energy economy that centers equity and is led by frontline communities." He then shared information about the history of the environmental justice movement and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) definition of environmental justice. Co-Chair Mendoza then asked the Task Force to consider how Washington can adopt environmental justice at the state level, and prompted the Task Force to consider what would Washington's definition of environmental justice look like.

Co-Chair Mendoza provided examples of tribal nations' environmental justice work, the environmental justice work of other states such as California and Oregon, and then discussed environmental justice work by community-based organizations and state agencies in Washington. Millie Piazza, Task Force Member, shared that former State Senator Rosa Franklin laid a lot of foundation for environmental justice work in Washington when she created the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities and set aside money to do a statewide study of environmental justice in Washington State in 1994. She added that the State Board of Health also issued a report on environmental justice in 2006.

After this presentation, Co-Chair Mendoza asked members to break up into small groups and discuss:

- What does environmental justice mean to you?
- What is missing from the EPA's definition of environmental justice?

Task Force members shared their reflections from their small group discussions. Many members shared that the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) definition of environmental justice was lacking the human connection to the environment. Task Force members also wanted to address the lack of power that often exists in highly impacted communities and what building community efficacy to be stewards of their own environment might look like. Much of this discussion focused on the need to conduct meaningful engagement and involvement with highly impacted communities that already have solutions leading to environmental justice. Several members of the Task Force would like there to be a more explicit mention of what meaningful community involvement and engagement looks like in environmental justice work in Washington.

The Task Force took a break at 10:40 a.m. and reconvened at 10:46 a.m.

4. PRESENTATION ON WASHINGTON TRACKING NETWORK & MAPPING EXERCISE

Co-Chair Mendoza said a key responsibility for the TF is to make recommendations for how state agencies can use the Environmental Health Disparities map.

Deric Gruen, Front & Centered, discussed the development of this map with partners, including the Department of Health's environmental tracking network. He also discussed how risk in the map is quantified: linking environmental hazards and exposures to socioeconomic factors. He also shared how listening sessions in various areas of the

state informed which indicators to include in the map. Esther Min, University of Washington, PhD candidate in Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences, shared the various indicators of Environmental risks included in the map. Edmund Seto, University of Washington, talked about how the Environmental Health Disparities mapping tool is updated with the most recent data and how various mapping indicators are defined, and articulated the importance of having statewide available data to create and update this tool. Tina Echeverria, Department of Health, program manager of the WA Tracking Network, introduced the panel members, saying the creation of this map was a two year process. She led an exercise for the Task Force members to become more familiar with the Environmental Health Disparities map, and also to visualize current environmental health disparities in Washington depicted on the map. Jennifer Sabel, Department of Health, the Principle Investigator for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) grant to continuously update and upkeep the Environmental Health Disparities map and Lauren Freeland, Department of Health who does much of the mapping data work, helped Task Force members with the mapping exercise.

Task Force members split into four groups to do the mapping exercise with the Environmental Health Disparities Map.

Following this exercise, Co-Chair Mendoza asked for Task Force comments and reflections. This discussion included suggestions for improvement and general questions about the map and the methods used to create the map. This discussion touched on several topics, including:

- The potential for including historical data on the map to see changes over time
- Questions about what specific indicators are and how they are defined
- Questions and comments about how state agencies can use the map
- Questions and comments about how communities and community partners can use the map
- Clarifications about how the map should be used, with an emphasis on it being a "pre-decisional tool" to inform agency decisions

Deric Gruen, Front & Centered commented that the Environmental Health Disparities map is a high level tool that is best complimented with qualitative data from people experiencing these environmental health hazards.

5. BRIEFING ON HEAL ACT

Co-Chair Mendoza said the HEAL Act was legislation sponsored by Senator Saldana in the Senate and Representative Reeves in the House. He said this agenda item was an opportunity to hear the motivations and hopes from the legislative sponsor for the Task Force.

Senator Rebecca Saldaña, said she is happy with the HEAL Act's outcome from legislative session with the formation and funding of this Task Force from a budget proviso. She said state policies do not always take historic inequities into account. She said the Environmental Health Disparities map provides a fuller picture to understand that all communities are not starting from the same place. Senator Saldaña said she is interested in figuring out how we can use the tool responsibly and also engage local

communities in the work to ensure the outcomes they eventually see reflect communities' desires. She said she hopes this Task Force and its recommendations will be about how we do our work to make sure this process is aligned with the outcomes we want to see. Senator Saldaña said the legislation was turned into a proviso because they needed to do a reset move a little slower to make sure the work was done thoughtfully and didn't lead to unintended consequences. She added that she is happy to engage with the Task Force and plans to bring what this Task Force discusses and learns to the legislature so that legislators are ready to receive the recommendations from the Task Force.

The Council recessed for lunch at 12:23 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m. for a group Task Force photo.

6. GUIDANCE TO THE TASK FORCE

Co-Chair Rodriguez said another goal for this meeting was to ensure we were on the same page with expectations and process for the Task Force. He said that the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities was charged with convening the Task Force and he provided a brief overview of the Council. Elise Rasmussen, Task Force Project Manager, gave an overview of the Task Force responsibilities outlined in the budget proviso (presentation on file). She shared information on member representation as outlined in the proviso. She said the purpose is to recommend strategies to incorporate environmental justice principles into future state agency actions. She also shared the responsibility to create a report by October 31, 2020 with recommendations for four required study areas: (1) how to use the environmental health disparities map to identify highly impacted communities, (2) increasing meaningful community engagement, (3) establishing measurable goals to reduce disparities, and (4) providing model policies to prioritize highly impacted communities.

Co-Chair Mendoza said after the Task Force creates the recommendations, advocacy organizations may follow up with legislative priorities. Ms. Rasmussen said they are proposing two subcommittees—one focused on the map and guidance to agencies for how to best use the map, and a second subcommittee focused on community engagement and asking both subcommittees to also work on measurable goals and model policies. She also shared a timeline for the Task Force's work deliverables and meeting schedule (on file).

7. APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Esmael Lopez, Task Force Staff, introduced himself as the community engagement coordinator for this Task Force as well as the Office of Equity Task Force. He said both Task Forces are doing broad community engagement through email listserves and partner distribution lists. He said there are more focused outreach efforts as well such as attending and organizing community meetings to build lasting community relationships with the goal of inviting communities from around the state to participate in this work, with a strong emphasis on reaching communities and individuals that are on the margins of society and often do not participate but are often the most highly impacted by the issues this Task Force is focused on. He is also hoping to give back to the community. For example, by sharing how to use the environmental health disparities mapping tool to help communities advocate for themselves.

Lauren Jenks, Task Force Member said the Task Force's subcommittees will also be meeting throughout the course of the Task Force's work and is wondering how subcommittee members will get the information that Mr. Lopez is hearing from the community. Mr. Lopez said he will be sharing information with Ms. Rasmussen, Task Force Project Manager, and is also planning to attend as many subcommittee meetings as possible. Cassie Bordelon, Task Force Member asked if the draft report will be sent out to community and if the report could also document successes and challenges that comes out of this process. Rowena Pineda, Task Force Member asked how she can work with Mr. Lopez to be the bridge for him since she is the one who has the relationships in her community. Mr. Lopez said he is developing a list of standard questions to take out to the community so that we are asking for information that will directly inform Task Force work. Co-Chair Rodriguez suggested that all members connect Mr. Lopez to groups and networks that he should connect with.

8. TASK FORCE BYLAWS

Co-Chair Rodriguez asked members to take a few minutes to read through the draft bylaws (on file) and then they would reconvene to discuss. Lauren Jenks, Task Force Member asked about the appointments and that members can appoint alternates. Allison Camden, Task Force Member suggested that alternates should be limited to one additional person for the sake of continuity. Co-Chair Mendoza said that members can appoint alternates and clarified that individuals who are not Task Force members can serve on subcommittees. Tomás Madrigal, Task Force Member said the Task Force needs to consider tribal considerations and suggested consulting with Dr. Abigail Echohawk (UIHI) to see if they could provide a person to participate.

Motion: [Strike article 6 from the bylaws.](#)

Motion/Second: [John Stuhlmiller/Peter Godlewski. Failed.](#)

Motion: [Approve Environmental Justice Task Force Bylaws](#)

Motion/Second: [Lauren Jenks/Tomás Madrigal. Approved.](#)

9. TASK FORCE OPERATING PRINCIPLES – POSSIBLE ACTION

Co-Chair Rodriguez said the operating principles (on file) have been adopted by the Health Disparities Council and are being proposed for this Task Force to consider. He suggested that members review the principles and focus on the overarching meaning. He then prompted the Task Force to begin a discussion of the operating principles after all members had a chance to review the document. The discussion then focused on how to ensure the operating principles are actionable, realistic, and grounded in the Task Force's purpose. The conversation covered several topics, including:

- Allison Camden, Task Force Member said the operating principles were missing socioeconomic factors such as poverty.
- More clarification around what it looks like for this Task Force to be "vigilant for unintended consequences". Larry Epstein, Task Force Member stated that he thinks of unintended consequences as exploring various tradeoffs and considering the obstacles to making these tradeoffs actionable. For example there are tradeoffs between economic development and environmentalism. Mr. Epstein asked the Task Force if we are going to value our decision making around our current population, or around what the state will look like in 2050 or

2100. He is hoping that at some point we can unpack “unintended consequences” some more in terms of tradeoffs.

- How to operationalize other operating principles included in the draft document
- The possibility of the Task Force talking part in some kind of change management training to ensure that our recommendations can move through bureaucracy
- How to incorporate community engagement into the operating principles

John Stuhlmiller, Task Force Member suggested the Task Force needs community agreements in addition to operating principles. Members concurred.

John Stuhlmiller, Task Force Member shared his concern around the proposed principle to “Focus on Racism” and proposed this principle instead read “Focus on Solutions.” Various Task Force members and the public advocated for keeping the “Focus on Racism” operating principle for the following reasons:

- To give more institutional power to people of color and ensure that people of color are seen and heard by the government
- Race is the strongest predictor and income is the second strongest predictor for where environmental hazards exist in this country
- It is critical to name the root cause of health disparities so we can work toward solutions by targeting this problem

The possibility of the Task Force taking part in some kind of ongoing anti-racism training or discussion was also discussed by the Task Force. To conclude this conversation, Co-Chair Rodriguez summarized the discussion and asked if we would like to approve the main headings of the operating principles, and perhaps change the content beneath each operating principle to reflect this conversation.

Motion: Approve the main topic headlines of the Environmental Justice Task Force Operating Principles with the understanding that more revisions will be done to the descriptive text.

Motion/Second: Lauren Jenks/Tomas Madrigal. Approved.

The Council took a break at 3:34 p.m. and reconvened at 3:45 p.m.

10. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROPOSED SUBCOMMITTEES – POSSIBLE ACTION

Co-Chair Mendoza described the responsibilities and timeline for proposed subcommittees (on file). Task Force members, staff, and public attendees then spent time thinking about possible members for the mapping and community engagement subcommittees.

11. PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Maria Batayola, El Centro de la Raza, thanked the members for their public service, and asked the Task Force take action to:

1. Advocate and support the City of Seattle’s effort to amend the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2050 Plan to affirm its responsibilities under RCW

- 47.80.030 to conduct integrated air and land transportation planning critical to climate and environmental justice solutions and advocate for resources accordingly.
2. By Executive Order affirm compliance with Title 6 of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to ensure “equal access to programs, services and facilities” regardless of race, color and national origin and direct state agencies and departments to integrate it the existing accountability programs. This will provide federal legal basis for environmental justice and health justice efforts until the passage of HEAL successor act.
 3. At the 2020 Legislative Session, advocate and support the passage of HB1947 to extend the noise abatement area from 6 to 10 miles to include Beacon Hill to the north and Federal Way to the south.

Lua Pritchard, Executive Director of Asian Pacific Cultural Center and Chairperson for Asian Pacific Coalition for Pierce County stated she spent over 30 years working on social justice issues and currently represents Pacific Island nations in Washington, particularly in King and Pierce County. There are over 70,000 Pacific Islanders in Washington. The majority of them are Samoan, then Hawaiian, than Tongan. People from the Marshall Islands are here now too and many have left the islands due to climate change. She stated that our population is hard to reach and that 94% of us are on reduced lunch, and our health disparities are due to obesity and lack of nutrition values. Heart attacks, cancer, diabetes, asthma are also all big issues. Much of our population lives where the environment is not very great, and concluded by saying that environmental justice is very important to the Pacific Islanders, not only in our countries, but also here in America.

Dr. Espinoza, Community Health Work Coalition, would like the Task Force to address best practices for engaging populations for policy and systems change to create a better and just future for our future generations. Dr. Espinoza stressed the importance of focusing on grassroots organizations doing advocacy work in this arena.

12. TASK FORCE MEMBER COMMENTS & REFLECTONS

The Task Force Co-Chairs concluded the meeting by providing time and space for the comments and reflections of Task Force members.

Tomás Madrigal, Task Force Member stated how we manage conflicts or disagreement is important. He said that as this Task Force begins to make difficult decisions, we should have a plan for how to move through conflict and disagreement, especially because our timeline is only a year. Ignacio Marquez, Task Force Member suggested getting materials ahead of time for future meetings. Co-Chair Rodriguez spoke to operationalizing the issues they talked about and the importance of relationships. He feels one issue that can bring us together is the need to have a clean and healthy environment. We all need water, food, air, land. We need to have the love for our land to be the force that binds us together to find common ground. He encouraged members to bring themselves, their thoughts, and their solutions. Co-Chair Rodriguez also encouraged the public and the Task Force to please reach out to him and staff to bring ideas forward. Michael Furze, Task Force Member said it’s humbling to be a part of this process and that he looks forward to working together. Co-Chair Mendoza concurs and he thinks there’s a lot of opportunity to learn from each other, to grow and to meet the challenges for the health of the environment and our communities.

ADJOURNMENT

David Mendoza, Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:43 p.m.

GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES – ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair; David Mendoza Co-Chair

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