



**Minutes of the Environmental Justice Task Force  
November 21, 2019**

Henry Beauchamp Community Center  
1211 South 7<sup>th</sup> St. Yakima, WA 98901

**Task Force members present:**

Victor Rodriguez

David Mendoza

Leah Kintner (alternate)

Cassie Bordelon

Sarah Vorpahl (alternate)

Megan White (alternate)

Laura Johnson

Ignacio Marquez

Tomas Madrigal

Emily Pinckney

Rowena Pineda

Judy Twedt

Millie Piazza

Sonia Bumpus

**Task Force members absent:**

John Stuhlmiller

Gary Chandler

**Task Force staff present:**

Elise Rasmussen, Environmental Justice  
Task Force Project Manager

Esmael Lopez, Community Outreach  
Coordinator to the Task Force

Hannah Fernald, Administrative  
Coordinator

Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant

**Guests and other participants:**

Jean Mendoza

Paul Tabayoyon

Dan Peplow

Steve Hill

Ileana Ponce

Maribel Pike

Mayela Acuervo

Carlos Jimenez

Rogelio Montes

Mary Lopez

Coleen Anderson

Ryan Ibach

Keith Hurley

Sameer Ranade

Gustavo Carvareon

Felipe Rodriguez-Flores

Ryan Rogers

Aarmani Par

Sage Park

AJ Cooper

Lorena Lopez

Bradley Farsar

Ryan Anderson

Tiffany Mendoza

Jennifer Gindt

Sarah Augustine

Janie Wrights

Elvia Bueno

Briana Carballo Wilcox

David Mendoza, Co-Chair, called the public meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file). Adrienne Garner, Director of Henry Beauchamp Community Center welcomed attendees, giving the history of the Center as well as the work they do today.

## **1. PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

Jean Mendoza, Executive Director of Friends of Toppenish Creek, asked people to think critically about the public comment she provided. She shared that it is very important to be clear what this Task Force can and cannot accomplish. She said this work is a big deal to people in the Yakima Valley. Ms. Mendoza noted that there are a lot of things the government cannot fix, and that there is a disconnect when we talk about environmental justice when so many are currently living in injustice. She told the story of the Grand Coulee Dam and the effect it has on the salmon population. She said that it is important for policy members to pay attention to the voices of people of color.

## **2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** Approve November 21, 2019 Agenda

**Motion/Second:** Tomas Madrigal, Sonia Bumpus. Approved unanimously.

## **3. ADOPTION OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2019 MEETING MINUTES**

**Motion:** Approve the September 30, 2019 minutes

**Motion/Second:** Judy Twedt, Ignacio Marquez. Approved unanimously.

## **4. ADOPTION OF TASK FORCE MEETING DATES**

**Motion:** Approve the January 14, 2020 meeting date

**Motion/Second:** Tomas Madrigal, Leah Kitner. Approved unanimously.

**Motion:** Approve the April 2, 2020 meeting date

**Motion/Second:** Ignacio Marquez, Judy Twedt. Approved unanimously.

## **5. TASK FORCE AGREEMENTS**

Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair invited members to provide their input for Task Force community agreements (on file) while they introduced themselves. The purpose of these agreements is to ensure a respectful and productive meeting space for all Task Force meetings. Chair Rodriguez also provided opportunities for public input on Task Force Agreements.

**Motion:** Approve the Task Force Community Agreements

**Motion/Second:** Emily Pinckney, Judy Twedt. Approved unanimously.

## **6. TASK FORCE OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

Co-Chair Rodriguez spoke about the Task Force Operating Principles and the revision process to create a second draft of the Operating Principles, which included Task Force member feedback prior to this meeting. Task Force members had time to read over the edits prior to a discussion.

In addition to providing feedback specifically on the Operating Principles, Task Force members and the public discussed the direct link between anti-racism and environmental justice work. Members requested educational tools and literature for diversity, equity, and

inclusion work that values the perspectives of marginalized communities when conducting environmental justice work. Members requested the following for future meetings:

- Region specific maps and historical and environmental justice-related information during each Task Force meeting
- Reading materials focused on anti-racism and environmental justice
- Increased meaningful public involvement at all meetings where communities have power to shape Task Force decisions

Felipe Rodriguez, member of the public, stated he was at this meeting to speak about intersectionality. He spoke about racism and colonialism and said he would like to see indigenous rights honored in the policy development that comes out of this Task Force. He would also like to include intersectionality and equality in the Operating Principles because racism isn't the only factor that impacts people's lives. He thinks that this is a good start but it is not enough to just talk about racism, especially people in rural communities. Several members agreed with Felipe's comments and discussed how to more explicitly incorporate intersectionality into the Task Force's Operating Principles. Co-Chairs Rodriguez and Mendoza called for a 20-minute recess to provide time to incorporate member and public feedback on the Operating Principles.

The Task Force took a break at 3:00 p.m. and reconvened at 3:20 p.m.

After the break, Ms. Rasmussen read the updated Operating Principles aloud and asked for any remaining feedback.

**Motion:** Approve the Task Force Operating Principles

**Motion/Second:** Leah Kintner/Cassie Bordelon. Approved unanimously.

## 7. TASK FORCE SUBCOMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Elise Rasmussen, Task Force Project Manager, explained that the Task Force will be supported by two subcommittees to do the required work outlined in the Budget Proviso that gives the authority for this Task Force to convene. She introduced three sets of objectives for the Task Force, Community Engagement Subcommittee, and Mapping Subcommittee, respectively. Task Force members worked individually and in small groups to review all objectives outlined in the work plan (on file). After which, members provided feedback and asked clarifying questions pertaining to this work plan and the general trajectory of Task Force work. The Task Force discussed:

- How to include community input, the perspective of workers and the organized labor force, and qualitative information to inform Task Force recommendations
- How the two Subcommittees and the Task Force should collaborate
- Specific objectives having to do with the Environmental Health Disparities Map such as: future processes for agencies to provide feedback on the map, how agencies are currently using the map, why agencies are not currently using the map, and how agencies can be held accountable for using the map if this is the guidance set forward by the Task Force
- Direct guidance for how to agencies can successfully use the Environmental Health Disparities Map and conduct meaningful community engagement

**Motion:** Approve the December 2019 and January 2020 Task Force Objectives and Timeline

**Motion/Second:** Ignacio Marquez/Emily Pinckney. Approved unanimously.

**Motion:** Approve the December 2019 and January 2020 Mapping Subcommittee Objectives and Timeline

**Motion/Second:** Laura Johnson/Leah Kintner. Approved unanimously.

**Motion:** Approve the December 2019 and January 2020 Community Engagement Subcommittee Objectives and Timeline

**Motion/Second:** Sarah Vorpahl/Judy Twedt. Approved unanimously.

Co-Chair Rodriguez suggested that subcommittees share any big changes to these objectives or timeline with the Task Force to get member feedback.

The Task Force recessed for dinner at 5:35 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m.

## 8. COMMUNITY WELCOME

David Mendoza, Task Force Co-Chair welcomed newly arrived community members to the meeting and gave an overview of what was covered earlier in the meeting, and what to expect for the duration of the meeting.

## 9. PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Carlos Jimenez, Yakima Resident, worked for the Peruvian government and presented in Paris at the Climate Change Conference. In last 3 years here in the US, he's been involved in community organizing within the Latino Community in Yakima. He stated that this area has a large Latino population, many of whom are farmworkers who are discriminated against and have no protection against pesticides and insecticides. Mr. Jimenez was surprised by the lack of support and protection this community receives. He stated that although he would like to see more organic products, even those products are subject to the contaminated air and water. He has 43 years of experience in climate work, and would like to continue this work in partnership with the Task Force. He ended by saying that the environment doesn't have a flag, a gender, a country, or money and that this environment belongs to all of humanity.

Micaela Razo, Latino Community Fund, works with communities in the lower Yakima Valley, including on issues of poor air quality due to wildfires. She spoke about the power of storytelling, and that we have community already doing environmental justice work. She told a personal story of her family's experience with environmental injustices due to severely high nitrates in the well water on her family's property which has led to health complications in her family. She stated that organizations like Friends of Toppenish Creek got funds to test the wells in the area, and that it was over \$10,000 to replace her family's well. Ms. Razo also stated that there are still injustices that are occurring after the well was replaced, such as dumping dead cow carcasses in a manner that can contaminate the well water again. She stated that many Latinos are not coming to the table either because they are sick, or otherwise.

Another community member from White Swan, WA stated that many small communities do not have community groups working to support or provide services to rural areas and that there are a lot of people who are not represented who have problems with pesticide. They spoke about the importance of going to these rural communities to understand their perspectives and problems.

A representative from Yakima 350 spoke about the organized efforts to go to the Department of Energy, but that community members are largely being ignored. They asked about measures of accountability for the government that are allowing environmental injustices to persist.

Gustavo Carvareon, local business owner, has a renewable energy company that mainly focuses on solar panel sales.

## **10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

Esmael Lopez, Task Force Community Engagement Coordinator shared his recent visits with the Yakima community and his conversations with local tribal leaders. He has spoken with leaders on Nation to Nation relations to address the issues that crossover with indigenous nations and populations. Mr. Lopez mentioned the concerns with farmworkers and livable wages, and that many farmworkers, and Yakima residents overall, feel ignored by state government. Some funds make it to Yakima Valley, and just a small portion of those funds make it to the Lower Valley where the most prominent health disparities are. It seems the places that are doing the most groundwork such as community centers and organizations, are the places that have the least amount of money.

## **11. COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**

Dr. Peplow, White Swan resident and University of Washington Faculty, provided an academic point of view. He has worked for about 13 years in South America with communities displaced by mining. As he looks at the timeline for Task Force work, the end result is talking to the Governor, and the ultimate end is legislation. He sees more than one conversation happening with so many intertwined variables: law, politics, economics, power dynamics, clinical health & personal issues, causation, pollution, pesticides, structural issues, safety and health issues, morality, spirituality, and human rights. He'd like to suggest some things to the Task Force. A small group of people make all the decisions and they expect everybody to follow the decision, and if you don't it will cost you, and you might lose your job. He shared that his had happened to him. Dr. Peplow explained a four step process for engaging with the government: express the problem, ask for feedback, lobby, or seek elected office yourself. After you've exhausted your efforts, your work turns into activism. He mentioned Gene Sharp with over 100 actions people can use and mentioned that mapping is another tool to use for equity purposes. Dr. Peplow's final point, was that we need to work on two levels: the individual level such as culturally appropriate relief for victims, and a structural level to address structural issues.

Following the conversation with Dr. Peplow, the Task Force and community members spent the remaining portion of the meeting in group discussions about what environmental injustices community members have experienced, and what changes they would like to see in their communities. Task Force staff are compiling notes from

community conversations for all Task Force meetings to inform Task Force recommendations (on file). Task Force members asked pointed questions around how the state can adequately conduct meaningful community engagement and address the environmental justice issues in Yakima.

## **12. TASK FORCE MEMBER COMMENTS & REFLECTIONS**

Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair thanked Task Force members for their contribution and time and stated what to expect in the coming months.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Victor Rodriguez, Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

## **GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name Last Name, Co-Chair

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First Name Last Name, Co-Chair

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