

**DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

**Monday February 22, 2021**

**Virtual Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Johnson-Thompson at 3:00 pm. All Board members were reminded of the ethics statement. Ms. Renee Kramer, DEQ Staff Liaison, called roll.

**Board Members Present:**

Dr. Danelle Lobdell  
Marilynn Marsh-Robinson  
Jeff Anstead  
Sherri White-Williamson  
Carlos Velazquez  
Dr. Marian Johnson-Thompson  
Naeema Muhammad  
Veronica Carter  
Randee Haven-O’Donnell  
Dr. Susan Jakes  
Rev. Rodney Sadler Jr.   
Dr. Deepak Kumar  
Carolina Fonseca Jimenez

**Board Members Absent:**Dr. James Johnson, Jr.   
Jamie Cole  
William Barber III  
Elke Weil

***Old Business***

Veronica Carter made a motion to approve the November 23, 2020, meeting minutes and today’s Meeting Agenda. The motion was seconded by Randee Haven-O'Donnell.

***New Business***

**MHD ZEV Projects in North Carolina, Mike Abraczinskas:**

Mike Abraczinskas is the Air Quality Division Director for DEQ. His presentation covers the usage of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) and their importance in regards to pollution.

When looking at the initiatives towards NC’s adoption of ZEVs, Abraczinskas covers EO 80, and the Volkswagen Settlement. Director Abraczinskas presented an overview of the Medium- and Heavy-Duty ZEVs (MHDZEV) Projects and the Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA). He talked about the different classifications for trucks. Although much has been done, there is a lot more that needs to be done in regards to using MHD ZEVs in North Carolina. In 2020, North Carolina joined 15 states and the District of Columbia; by signing on to a memorandum of understanding on MHDZEV committing to achieve 100% of all new medium- and heavy-duty vehicle sales be ZEVs by 2050, with an interim target of 30% ZEV sales by 2030.

The participating states comprise a Task Force directed to develop a multi-state action plan to identify barriers and propose solutions to support widespread electrification of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. The key element of the action plan is to focus on disadvantaged communities. Director Abraczinskas indicated that North Carolina is very early in this process and expects Executive Branch agency coordination. When planning, there are identified barriers that will slow down the adoption of the action plan. In order to help advance this work to focus on disadvantaged communities, Director Abraczinskas posed the following questions to the Board:

* What are the most important transportation needs, improvements, and priorities for EJ communities in NC?
* Do you see specific benefits or concerns regarding this project?
* Is there additional information you would like to have about health, safety or other impacts related to this project while considering these questions?
* What are the best ways in which to share this information and engage with communities?
* Please let us know if you would be interested and available to be a Point of Contact for NC. Or if you have anyone else you would recommend, we bring into this effort, please let us know.

***Board Q&A with Director Abraczinskas***

***Naeema Muhammad: Not sure how EJ community fits into this initiative***Director Abraczinskas responds saying that is why he is here presenting, so they can explore and discuss this topic. Open to thoughts and ideas about how to incorporate EJ communities and confirms that this is the beginning of MHD vehicle initiative.

***Veronica Carter: What is the state’s plan to subsidize this initiative? Funding beside VW Settlement money?***Director Abraczinskas responds that the potential barrier is funding that needs to be put in place. There is not a concrete plan, but this discussion will help develop this.

***Sherri White-Williamson: Are there specific requirements for the participating communities? Voluntary? Mandatory? What are you doing to get more involved?***Director Abraczinskas responds that they are very early in the process and would like more feedback on how to reach out to these communities and that what it will encompass is still being defined.

***Jeff Anstead commented about the costs of the vehicles, the availability of charging, additional cost to the tribes in the state, and how this shift will this affect rural communities?***Vice-Chair Johnson-Thompson responded that these questions and concerns are exactly what will be addressed in the document the Board provides in response to DEQ.

***Carlos Velazquez: Many jobs are going to be lost with the fuel companies and gas stations, is the NC going to be rewarded to compensate the people that are going to electricity will do?***Director Abraczinskas responded that this needs further discussion. There are uniqueopportunities in North Carolina and that there are companies already actively engaging in this initiative.

**Panel on Public Participation and Engagement, Moderated by Board Member Veronica Carter**

***Moderator Questions:***

*How do the panelists engage with their community?* Louise Mack stated that before COVID-19, they were going out into the community and reaching out to the groups. However, since COVID, they are doing their engagement through Zoom. They reach out to their lenders and realtors because they reach people that they don’t reach out to, and this helps because they’re doing work with housing. As they work with the community, they are also working with the official.

Sharon Goodson answered by saying that since they have agencies in local communities, they engage a lot through the relationships they have already established. COVID has really changed the ways of engagement. The importance of moving people out of poverty is a main part of them staying engaged and active with their communities. They believe low-income people have the strongest voice at the table.

*Ms. Carter followed by asking about engaging with people for the first time, while dealing with COVID.*   
Ms. Goodson responded by saying it is a mixture of being on the phone, but for members it is more of doing work on the ground because there are things that can't be done on Zoom.

Talley Wells stated that his organization was going to travel all over the state until COVID, so their 5-year planning activity had to be done virtually. They had to ensure communications through telephone and virtual communications. He stated that having enough time for people to ask for accommodations is important.

*Ms. Carter asked Ricardo Nazario-Colon what techniques do you use within the Hispanic / Latinx community?*  
He said that people respond to what they are familiar with. They kept their ways of communicating to make sure they didn’t lose their relationship with the community. We’re learning that not everyone has access to internet or computers, and we’ve learned this more during the pandemic. Their main goal is to maintain those connections.

*Ms. Carter asked if there was connection platform that is easier for the community to use than others, especially with the marginalized communities.*   
Mr. Nazario-Colon said that Facebook is best for his community, they use on the everyday basis and they do not have to be formal. He stated when people talk about Zoom and WebEx, they think they have to be dressed up or professional, even though they can be relaxed. He wants to find a way to talk to the community in a natural and comfortable way that is not intimidating like video conferences can be sometimes.

Ms. Goodson agreed with Mr. Nazario-Colon that Facebook is best but added that for marginalized communities, there must be more than one digital tool. You have to look at different tools based on the audience, because there are some places that don’t have internet access so they aren’t able to access the resources. She mentioned that you can still use landlines when having conference calls. We should be asking “who are we leaving out of the conversation.”

Ms. Mack stated that they have been using Zoom, but she still has people talking to people when the community is calling in. This way, if they are struggling, they have someone that can help them and walk them through the process. She tends to try to relax them before the presentation, so they aren’t overwhelmed, and they are being engaged in the beginning.

Mr. Wells said they’ve been having a bigger turnout from people who have a hard time getting out of their home and people who are out of state, have been able to be part of the meetings more during the pandemic. However, although they are reaching more people, they are also missing people because they don’t have access to computers, internet, etc. They make sure they are finding more ways for everyone to be included. They are using Zoom and are able to have closed captions for people who are hard of hearing.

*Ms. Carter asked what is the best advice you can give on to reach out to underrepresented or marginalized groups.*   
Mr. Nazario-Colon stated whenever they are reaching out to people and meeting them where they are at, they run the risk of not being able to engage with them because sometimes when you invade a space that is fun, it is hard to include serious topics. They must find different ways engage with certain groups because it is better for people to embrace topics, rather than just be aware of them.

Ms. Goodson said it is about using local resources because those are the people that the community trusts.

Mr. Wells stated the intersectionality between the environment and disabilities, communities of color, and poverty. It’s important to know the impact of the community that you are affecting. Have to be able to talk about these issues that really engage these communities.

Ms. Mack stated that we need to make materials in the language people will understand and let them know how it will affect their life. Have someone that is a talker in that “tribe” help the others in that “tribe” understand the things that we are trying to share with the community.

*Ms. Carter asked what needs to be done in the communities to overcome the digital divide.*Mr. Nazario-Colon said we need to make it part of the legislative agenda. In Western North Carolina, there is more than just a digital divide but there is also a geographical divide; this affects the infrastructure, the power, and the places to build homes. There are counties that do not have hospitals. “The digital divide is a utility.”

Ms. Goodson agreed with Mr. Nazario-Colon and said that it impacts everything. She does not see how we can’t push everyone for access across our state.

Mr. Wells said that he agrees because they have people on their video calls and phone calls who live in the mountains and they constantly lose their connection. He also stated this is going on way too long for people to not participate.

Ms. Mack said, “If we can have communication from Mars to here, I just don’t understand why we cannot communicate from one side of the state to the other.”

Ms. Carter opened the floor for comments or questions. Dr. Kumar stated that digital divide is real. He stated that we have to do a bit of pushback to really make sure the agencies use the means, that are appropriate, to collect the data.

Vice-Chair Marian Johnson-Thompson called for a break until public comment period at 5pm.