



DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Monday August 24, 2020

Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 3:03 pm. He informed all in attendance that the WebEx was being videoed and recorded, and Board members were reminded of the ethics statement. Ms. Renee Kramer, DEQ Staff Liaison, called roll.

Board Members Present:

William Barber, III
Veronica Carter
Jamie Cole
Ranee Haven-O'Donnell
Dr. Susan Jakes
Dr. James Johnson
Dr. Marian Johnson-Thompson
Carolina Fonseca Jimenez
Dr. Deepak Kumar
Dr. Danelle Lobdell
Marilynn Marsh-Robinson
Naeema Muhammad
Carlos Velazquez
Elke Weil

Board Members Absent:

Jeff Anstead
Reverend Dr. Rodney Sadler Jr.

Old Business

A motion was made by Dr. Susan Jakes to accept the agenda as printed, seconded by Elke Weil. A motion was made by Randee Haven-O'Donnell to approve as written the May 18th meeting minutes, seconded by Marilyn Marsh-Robinson. A motion was made by Veronica Carter to approve as written the special ACP meeting minutes, seconded by Jamie Cole. Dr. Deepak Kumar made a motion to approve the June 25th ACP Subcommittee meeting minutes, and seconded by William Barber III.

New Business

Health Disparities in COVID-19 in EJ Communities, Dr. Kumar:

Dr. Kumar is the Director of the Julius L. Chambers Biomedical Biotechnology Research Institute at NC Central University, which researches health issues that disproportionately affect minority and underserved populations. He praised the NCDEQ Community Mapping System and emphasized the opportunity it presents, especially in tandem with other health assessment tools.

Dr. Kumar's presentation highlighted the strong relationship between social stressors and health issues and how they disproportionately impact underserved communities. Throughout his presentation, he discussed examples such as the disproportionate rates of prostate cancer diagnoses and mortalities between African American men and White American men, African American men having a higher diagnosis rate and death rate by prostate cancer. Dr. Kumar also provided examples of how COVID-19 has impacted underserved communities and ways to help those communities. Dr. Kumar's full presentation can be found here:

https://files.nc.gov/ncdeq/EJ/Kumar_HD_research_DEQ_Aug24_2020.pdf

Questions:

Mr. William Barber III complimented the presentation and wondered if there was ever any consideration about applying a historical lens to understanding the current conditions in underserved communities and why current social stressors impact the health of those in underserved communities.

Dr. Kumar stated that there had not been any consideration about reviewing the history to better understand the current conditions, but the History Department at NCCU has begun a project comparing what is known about the Spanish Flu how it impacted people and what is currently happening with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Carlos Velazquez asked about misinformation and conspiracy theories, how to convey the right message especially in places such as northeastern NC. Dr. Kumar suggested that a flood of verifiable information must be sent to the media, especially social media. Furthermore, the problem is that people often rely on social media for their news and information. Lastly, he recommended that efforts be made to provide information in laymen's terms, and use public health education.

Mr. Velazquez then asked about the information children receive about COVID-19 and where they are getting the information (teachers, parents etc.). Dr. Kumar responded that much of the information that teachers pass on to students about COVID-19 comes from the CDC or NCDHHS guidelines.

Dr. Marian Johnson-Thompson thanked Dr. Kumar for his presentation and asked if he had community involvement in the research that he's conducted, adding that community involvement in the beginning of process would make it easier for the community to spread information at the end. Dr. Kumar

confirmed that there has been community involvement with much communication between community leaders and researchers.

Ms. Veronica Carter asked whether or not African American faith-based groups are involved, emphasizing the special importance of such organizations to older African Americans. Dr. Kumar responded that they are working with a number of African American faith-based leaders and presently producing a video message in order to spread information within the African American community. Ms. Carter then asked whether the information is being shared during church. Dr. Kumar assured Ms. Carter that it is and that is why video messages are being made.

Executive Order 143, Emily Roach:

Emily Roach is a policy analyst for the Department of Administration and works with the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Taskforce. Ms. Roach spoke about the goals and purpose of the Andrea Harris Taskforce and Executive Order 143, which addresses social, environmental, economic and health disparities in communities of color that have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Roach explained how COVID-19 has really highlighted the long existing systemic disparities in our environmental, healthcare, and economic institutions for communities of color. She added that if a board member wishes to collaborate, they may do so by connecting with either Chairman Johnson or Ms. Jimenez who are the points of contact to the subcommittee. She then stated that individuals may also submit their comments via DOAs' website for the Task Force. She mentioned that the Task Force understands and prioritizes the collaborative nature of this work and will proactively solicit feedback from other individuals and organizations across the state while developing action plans and while making plans to implement the goals. She added that in order to do so, they will engage resource groups, the business community, and will collaborate widely with statewide partners.

Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Roach for her presentation and invited board members to provide questions or comments.

Questions:

Dr. Johnson-Thompson thanked Ms. Roach and stated that she was very excited and looked forward to the programs that will eventually come out of the EJ and Inclusion Subcommittee of the Task Force. She further stated that she's excited to work with Chairman Johnson and providing information for him to present to the Andrea Harris Task Force. Ms. Roach agreed and commented that Secretary Sanders looked forward to the collaboration.

Ms. Carolina Fonseca Jimenez, Staff Liaison to the subcommittee, shared that the first Subcommittee meeting was held on August 19 and efforts are underway for the next Task Force meeting. Ms. Jimenez stated that the Subcommittee meeting is public and that she will share the link once available. Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Jimenez for her assistance and asked the Board whether members had any ideas for short-term and long-term goals.

Ms. Carter mentioned PFAS and PFOA along the Cape Fear River and that people are still being left behind due to that situation. She mentioned that people cannot afford to buy water, install filters in their homes, or drive to places to get clean water, so therefore this environmental issue is also an EJ issue. She emphasized that she is not sure that EJ communities are getting the attention they need and deserve. She closed her comment by stating that she thought of this issue when there was a recent giveaway of filters in the African American community in Wilmington, NC.

Dr. Johnson asked if Ms. Carter had an opportunity to turn to this into a recommendation, what would it be. Ms. Carter responded that every environmental concern in NC has an EJ community and that there needs to be a way to find a mechanism within DEQ that triggers an EJ evaluation. Elke Weil responded by stating that there needs to be culturally-relevant media and interpreters so that information can be disseminated to everyone.

Dr. Johnson-Thompson piggybacked off Veronica's comment and stated that she is particularly concerned about the PFAS issue and would like Ms. Carter to give a recommendation on the issue. Ms. Carter responded by stating that there needs to be more focus on EJ communities for PFAS/PFOA and she knows that nonprofits, DEQ, and faith-based groups are involved, but ultimately the issue is going to take money to solve. Dr. Johnson-Thompson stated that she was highly concerned by the fact that people can't get water and asked whether or not the people who are responsible for the dumping will be reprimanded. Ms. Carter responded by stating that she knew that DEQ had been working on consent orders against Chemours. She continued to say that Cumberland and Bladen counties are the areas that are heavily and directly impacted by the current environmental issue. She further goes on to state that poor people in the Wilmington area are still paying for water that they cannot drink. She closed her comment by stating that there are some people who could afford to have installed reverse osmosis filters. She reiterated that the vast number of people impacted by PFAS/PFOA are in communities with a plethora of health problems. Dr. Kumar asked how Ms. Carter would like to develop the program in order to disseminate the information properly. Ms. Carter responded by stating that she wasn't sure, but she feels that the Task Force is a good place to start, noting that the problem has been an ongoing issue for many years.

Ms. Cole spoke to the fact that she was encouraged by all the different parts of NC government coming together. She mentioned cumulative impacts and the various experiences and disciplines that can have a joint, collaborative effort for the goals of E.O. 143. She further stated that she thinks that cumulative impacts would be great to mention to the Task Force.

Dr. Johnson-Thompson asked to broach another subject, spoke about the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP), how the pipeline was canceled, but asked whether it still presented a problem in terms of clean up that needed to be done. Dr. Johnson responded by asking if Ms. Jennifer Mundt with DEQ had any comments.

Ms. Mundt responded by stating that Dominion and Duke Energy announced in July that they were cancelling the ACP project. DEQ's Division of Energy, Minerals, and Land Resources issued a letter to ACP to determine the land disturbance activities that have taken place to date. Ms. Mundt mentioned that DEQ understood that according to the letter that all areas will be returned to former contours, will be permanently stabilized, and on-site inspections will be conducted to ensure compliance.

Dr. Thompson-Johnson responded by stating that she remembered reading that there was going to be action taken regarding the clean-up. She was very glad that there was documentation, and elaborated that there needs to be monitoring in order to make sure that the cleanup is done. Chairman Johnson added that there needs to be a concentrated effort to ensure EJ communities get business and job creation for clean-up on-site and agreed that there needs to be monitoring.

Dr. Johnson-Thompson asked how job creation can be guaranteed in the community in which cleanup is happening. Ms. Mundt responded that there can be a solicitation for HUB businesses to take on some of the restoration activities. Dr. Johnson-Thompson asked if it was possible to suggest or require Duke

Energy and Dominion to hire the people in the community for the cleanup. Ms. Mundt responded that she would have check with people that work in the Department of Administration but as of then she was not sure if it was possible. Secretary Regan responded by stating that they could check in through the general counsel in order to see the limitation in the ability to influence businesses on the supply chain side of the issue at hand. Will circle back with the committee on the legality of business selection.

Ms. Muhammad responded by asking whether “our committee” was in reference to the advisory board. Dr. Johnson-Thompson clarified that they were referring to hiring people within the community in order to participate in the cleanup process.

Ms. Muhammad then brought up the landfill rules pending the EMC and asked if the board can provide input on the rules with consideration for Title VI and cumulative impacts and whether a subcommittee could offer comments to the EMC on this rulemaking. She went on to state that DEQ has some authority to impact the decision-making in consideration of Title VI. Dr. Johnson responded that they would refer to the restructured cumulative impact Subcommittee to focus on the EMC landfill rules. Ms. Muhammad then asked who are the members of the Subcommittee. Dr. Johnson explained that they are in the process of restructuring the Subcommittees and will announce new membership at a later time. Dr. Johnson asked if there were any other comments.

Dr. Danelle Lobdell responded by stating that she wanted to hear about environmental justice communities and how the environment is making those communities more vulnerable to COVID-19 and that health aspect wasn't exactly emphasized. Dr. Johnson thanked Dr. Lobdell and asked Ms. Fonseca Jimenez to make note of Dr. Lobdell's comments.

Dr. Johnson then thanked Emily Roach again for her presentation and presence. Noted that there was one outstanding question/update on Bertie county, and passed the floor to Ms. Joy Hicks. Ms. Hicks explained that Bertie county had recently been stricken with tornado damage on August 4th, and noted that DEQ had only been tangentially involved. The Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management and NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency, are more centrally involved in the recovery process. FEMA is opening a disaster recovery office, and Governor Cooper signed a disaster declaration that allows for small loans and grants to help communities that have been recently impacted by the tornado.

Veronica Carter asked Ms. Hicks if the people impacted by this recent tornado have access to FEMA trailers. Ms. Hicks responded that most of the people were being housed in hotels and some trailers were coming from Hyde county. She also noted that some residents were being housed in a shelter. Ms. Hicks noted that there is a Red Cross presence as well. Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Hicks and asked if there were any more questions.

Ms. Muhammad responded that she had a question for Secretary Regan and if he would be present for the public comment period. Secretary Regan responded he had an obligation at 5 pm. Ms. Muhammad asked whether the question should be directed to him via email. Secretary Regan responded that there is staff online that there are people that can answer the questions or that questions can be answered at a later time.

Dr. Johnson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Carter, Ms. Muhammad seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:47pm.

[See Public Comment document for comments received]