

# COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 18, 2014 (10 am – 12 noon)

- I. **Welcome**  
Kimberly Wasserman – Chairman
  
- II. **Introductions**
  - A. **Springfield Videoconference**
    - Alec Messina, IERG
    - Ken Page, IEPA
    - Debbie Daugherty, IEPA
    - Heather Nifong, IEPA
    - Joe Mitchell, IDPH
    - Chris Pressnall, IEPA
    - Elmo Dowd, IEPA
  - B. **Chicago Videoconference**
    - Kim Wasserman, LVEJO
    - Kate Tomford– DCEO
    - Keith Harley, Chicago Legal Clinic
    - Elizabeth Butler (Law Student with Keith Harley)
    - Veronica Kyle, Faith-N-Place
    - Mary McDonald, IEPA
  - C. **Teleconference**
    - Doris Turner, IDPH
    - State Representative Chris Welch
  
- III. **Approval of Agenda (electronic copy)**  
Motion- Alec Messina  
Second- Joe Mitchell  
Motion Carried
  
- IV. **Approval of the Minutes (electronic copy)**
  1. **March 20, 2014**  
Motion- Joe Mitchell  
Second- Alec Messina  
Motion Carried

**V. Presentations/Discussions:**

**1. Agency Involvement/Oversight Sub-Committee**

- All state agencies fill out the EJ Questionnaires.
- Sharonda Williams is no longer working for the IEPA
- Chairman Wasserman and other are working on a letter that summarizes the results of each state agency EJ Questionnaire. The questionnaire will be forwarded to all of the sub-committee members for review before it is sent to the representatives of each state agency.

**2. Brownfields Redevelopment Sub-Committee**

- Heather Nifong discussed Brownfields and the web portal.

Discussion

Chairwoman Wasserman:

Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to speak with the EJ Commission today about brownfields issues.

From my prior conversation with the Brownfields Sub-Committee (March 2014) and from talking further with Ken Page, it appears that many of the concerns raised by your members are ones voiced previously by local government officials struggling with the challenges posed by abandoned commercial and industrial sites.

Because of how the state and federal brownfields programs are structured, the majority of our support goes directly to units of local government. As a result, tools that work well for governing bodies may not suit community-based organizations or non-profits, particularly in instances where the community group does not or cannot take ownership of the brownfields site for purposes of cleanup and redevelopment. Nonetheless, I want to share with you materials that I think will be of great benefit to the Commission.

Ten years ago Illinois EPA partnered with economic researchers at the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs (IIRA) to study the problem of brownfields from a local government perspective. IIRA surveyed mayors statewide, investigated the reasons for brownfields cleanup and reuse success, and prepared case studies detailing projects in five cities: Alton, Calumet, Monticello, Sterling and Chicago. The full report, **Brownfields Cleanup and Reuse in Illinois Municipalities**, is available here:

[http://www.iira.org/pubs/publications/IIRA\\_Reports\\_628.pdf](http://www.iira.org/pubs/publications/IIRA_Reports_628.pdf)

IIRA's primary conclusion is that returning brownfield sites to productive use depends on a collaborative effort initiated and sustained by local leaders.

IIRA also created shorter, summary documents for widespread use by people new to brownfields. Attached are two of those documents that I think EJ Commission members would find extremely helpful in guiding their future efforts. I'd be glad to work with the Commission in re-purposing these documents for use on the web portal.

Illinois EPA's Bureau of Land will also work with you to identify ways to improve access and understanding of our cleanup site databases. As I cautioned on the call, these databases have limited utility because they do not identify all brownfield sites. We know that brownfield sites exist in every community; however, not every site poses an actual health threat and not every site is viable for reuse.

To reiterate, Illinois EPA does not maintain a statewide inventory of brownfield sites for three reasons:

1. No objective criteria exist for labeling a brownfield site. The definition of brownfields as "a parcel of real property, or a portion of the parcel, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment" [Section 58.2 of the Act] leaves plenty of room for interpretation.
2. There's a stigma attached to the brownfields label – a presumption of contamination – so property owners don't want their real estate to be identified that way.
3. Maintaining a list would be extraordinarily difficult given the volume of sites (every closed gas station, drycleaner, manufacturing facility, etc.).

Even if a full inventory were available, it wouldn't bring anyone closer to taking action on one particular site. That's the trick to successful brownfields projects – they all start with someone at the local level who is already aware of a site, considering ways to re-use it, and persistent enough to follow through on funding and partnership opportunities.

Finally, I would like to share with you links to other resources that you may find valuable:

How Can You Help Environmental Justice Communities Create an Oasis in a Food Desert?

<http://blog.epa.gov/blog/2012/04/how-can-you-help-environmental-justice-communities-create-an-oasis-in-a-food-desert/>

One Prescription for Healthier Brownfield Communities – A Community Clinic Please!

<http://blog.epa.gov/ej/2012/10/community-clinic-please/>

USEPA's Land Revitalization Team (Jim Van der Kloot)

<http://www.epa.gov/landrevitalization/download/lrstrategybrochure0711.pdf>

Delta Institute in Chicago

<http://delta-institute.org/capabilities/#capabilities-section-5>

USEPA's Technical Assistance to Brownfields Communities Program

[http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/tools/EPA\\_TAB\\_Bifold\\_Final-508\\_05-21-13.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/tools/EPA_TAB_Bifold_Final-508_05-21-13.pdf)

- Veronica Kyle – discussed having connections to people with resources that can help communities. She recently met with Brian Nafu (sp.?), consultant with Weaver Boos and he works with communities.
- Heather Nifong discussed repurposing Brownfields for community needs. Example: 1) grocery stores where there are food deserts, 2) health clinics where there is a lack of medical facilities.
- Keith Harley – How can community based organizations identify Brownfields by location?
- Keith Harley – How can community groups participate in Brownfields? Need to encourage community involvement.
- Keith Harley – Facilitate community based organizations to lead Brownfields redevelopment.
- Keith Harley – State of Michigan utilizes a Land Bank.
- Elmo Dowd – Cook County took tax delinquent properties and gave them to community groups. This did not work out because most community groups could not sustain the properties.
- Veronica Kyle – Neighbors Space is a good organization to work with.
- Kate Tomford and Elmo Dowd – discussed the CDAP program at DCEO. The CDAP program is for non-entitlement communities.

## **VI. Old Business**

### **1. Off-site meeting locations (what should be required to host?)**

- Transit accessible
- Parking availability
- Meeting room capacity of 25-30 people
- Has to be ADA compliant
- Need to have the meeting location confirmed (and everything worked out) 30 days before the next scheduled meeting.

Motion - Kim Wasserman

Second - Veronica Kyle

Motion carried

### **2. Ethics Training**

Everyone has submitted their ethics training

### **3. Representation on the Commission**

- Just because your term have expired does not mean that you are off the Commission. There is usually a lapse in time before you are removed from the Commission.
- If you were appointed to the Commission as an individual...you cannot have someone else to represent you on the Commission in your absence.

**4. Commissioner's Responsibilities**

- Both the EJ Commission factsheet and the Open Meetings Act factsheet were discussed.

**VII. Open Discussion/Questions**

- Chairman Wasserman congratulated Commissioner Dr. Washington on the opening of the Sustainability Center in Aurora.

**VIII. Next meeting date and location**

- **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2014**  
Wednesday, September 17, 2014 @ 10 am.

**IX. Adjournment**

11:16 a.m.