

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Lansing, Michigan
Friday, March 21, 2003 – 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
MEETING SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Skiles Boyd, Jerry Brown (for Andrew Hobbs), Barry Cargill, Sally Churchill, Wil Cwikel, Dr. Phillip Davis, Marty Fluharty, Charles Griffith, Chuck Hersey, Don Inman, Patrick Krause, Steve List, Frank Mortl, Corky Overmyer, Scott Piggott (for Wayne Wood), Lana Pollack, Delbert Rector, Andy Such, Maureen Kennedy Templeton, Dr. Janet Vail, Sam Washington, Paul Zuger.

DEQ Staff in attendance: Linda Albro Sparks, Dennis Armbruster, George Bruchmann, Amy Butler, Frank Baldwin, Steven Chester, Hal Fitch, Vince Hellwig, Andy Hogarth, JoAnn Merrick, Rich Powers, Frank Ruswick, Pat Spitzley, Jim Sygo, Deb Wieber.

WELCOME

The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) meeting began with welcome remarks from Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Director Steven Chester. He supports the philosophy of Governor Jennifer Granholm that all our citizens should have a voice in government and thus his primary reason for creating the EAC. The EAC membership represents a large geographic area of Michigan that includes small businesses, industry, environmental groups, universities, and others. He felt it was important that the EAC develop its own agenda, discuss the topics identified and create a work product. He has asked that the EAC first devote its energies to improving public involvement in DEQ activities. Director Chester also encouraged the EAC to focus on increasing public and private partnerships.

INTRODUCTIONS

EAC members introduced themselves and provided information on their backgrounds and interest in DEQ activities.

MEETING PROTOCOL

Mr. Ruswick gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting: to provide basic information on the DEQ and its programs, to help EAC members to get to know one another, to make some basic decisions on operations of the EAC, and begin to chart the EAC's future direction. Mr. Ruswick described the information in the binders that were distributed to each member. These binders included an overview of the DEQ, as well as program descriptions for each of the DEQ divisions. Mr. Ruswick explained that he intended to keep the meeting informal to facilitate discussion and the free exchange of information. He explained that the DEQ would develop meeting summaries of the discussions at EAC meetings and post them on the DEQ website.

DIVISION OVERVIEW AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS

The first presentation was made by Vince Hellwig, Air Quality Division Chief. A presentation summary is attached.

A discussion period following the presentation included information regarding permit fees, permit fee advertising costs, and the different advertising tools used. The public hearing process was also discussed. Director Chester clarified that he has eliminated the previous 'confessional' style public process from the DEQ Public Hearing Policy. There was a strong consensus that the DEQ public hearing policy should be discussed and how more citizens can benefit from the process. A member expressed that a public hearing is the least effective forum to resolve issues. Members questioned whether DEQ works in advance of the public hearing in conjunction with local government regarding zoning, traffic, and noise issues. Suggestion was made that more public participation should occur prior to the public hearing and that timing should become a critical issue. Public participation should be advocated very early in the process. Much frustration has resulted from citizens not understanding the hearing process. The challenge to the DEQ is how to best communicate technical issues to the public.

Some of the questions during the discussion included:

- Is there a sense that current public participation is out of balance?
- Does the current system work?
- Is the current system different from what it was 12 years ago and are there lessons to be learned from this?

A concern was raised that there were only a few environmental groups represented by membership on the EAC and that the smaller grassroots/environmental justice groups are not currently included on the EAC. Another member indicated that certain industry group representatives appear to be excluded. Director Chester addressed these concerns with a reminder that the EAC memberships have one or two year terms, providing for a revolving membership thus allowing others to have an opportunity to become members of the EAC.

The second presentation was made by Amy Butler, Environmental Science and Services Division Chief. A presentation summary is attached.

Discussion included a review of the various grant programs including where the grant programs exist under the current DEQ organization. Environmental Science and Services Division (ESSD) have absorbed many of the grants and loans programs. ESSD was complimented on the quality of their workshops, fact sheets, and manuals. Member stated that in West Michigan they rely heavily on information from the various workshops sponsored by ESSD. Clarification was requested on the number of kiosks currently available. Four are currently available in three different Michigan areas. Kiosks currently are geared toward one industry; however, they hope to expand this concept, as well as the number of total kiosks.

A member voiced that the current DEQ Calendar distribution appeared to be quite low at approximately 2,700 plus. What are your plans to continue to expand your outreach efforts? Amy Butler agreed to investigate this. She would also be available to speak at future EAC meetings regarding outreach efforts.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Mr. Ruswick began the discussion of EAC organizational issues by raising the issue of public involvement in EAC activities. He suggested that, as a start, one way the public could be involved in EAC operations would be to make the following information available on the DEQ website: membership listing, agendas, and meeting summaries. This evolved into a discussion regarding

regular public involvement in EAC meetings. Mr. Ruswick clarified that, as an advisory body, the EAC is not subject to the Open Meetings Act.

Much discussion occurred regarding public involvement in the EAC, including advantages and disadvantages. Some suggestions to facilitate public involvement in EAC activities included:

- Schedule an EAC meeting date that would be open to the public.
- Have a representative group from the EAC hear public comments.
- Dedicate 5-10 minutes at the beginning of the meeting for public comments.
- Allow the public to observe the EAC.

A member stated that the larger question is how the DEQ will open itself to the public, not just in this meeting, but in all areas. This department should have no less public access than the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which would mean establishment of an overall commission or various boards. Public participation should be an integral part of the DEQ daily operations.

A member addressed the need for a focus on what this group is expected to accomplish, and then create reasonable goals and deadlines. Another member asked Director Chester what he expects from the EAC and whether the EAC would be disbanded once the mission was accomplished.

Director Chester described his vision of the EAC as a long term advisory council. He is very interested in the EAC creating ideas for promoting public involvement in significant decisions made at the DEQ. Director Chester indicated that he could foresee an opportunity to invite a group or individuals to make presentations as an avenue to get input.

Member asked whether they can freely discuss and share EAC information in their respective communities. This was encouraged by Director Chester; however, they should not consider themselves ombudsmen for the Department. They should feel free to refer citizens to DEQ staff.

Some members continued to express strong feelings that the DEQ should create something similar to the DNR and Agriculture Commissions. Members have heard that citizens believe if they attend a commission meeting that they have a strong voice in government. There should be some means for citizens to have a direct effect and result in the decision making process. A poll of 100 environmental groups indicated that they would be in favor of a citizen oversight commission.

Suggestion was made that members be provided with an opportunity to interact with one another through a list serve instrument. Mr. Ruswick will investigate this possibility.

After this discussion, the EAC agreed that it is not and should not be the sole vehicle for public involvement in DEQ activities. The EAC recognized that it does not fully represent all interests affected by DEQ activities, but agreed that it has been given a specific role that may be inhibited by direct public participation in EAC meetings. The EAC agreed to adopt specific mechanisms to facilitate a public voice in its activities. These mechanisms include providing information on the DEQ web site and providing an e-mail link there for the public to communicate with the EAC. The EAC recognized that direct public participation may be appropriate in EAC activities in given future circumstances. Further, members recognized that their current perspective on public participation in EAC activities may change over time as the EAC evolves.

Suggestion was made that, in preparation for the next meeting, publications from the Civil Environmental Discourse Project prepared by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council should be distributed to the members. The DEQ will mail this publication to the members. EAC members also requested that the DEQ develop a matrix of tools used to involve the public.

Council membership terms were assigned based on a random selection process. Those terms are:

Terms Ending: **March 2004**

Skiles Boyd
Sally Churchill
Dr. Philip Davis
Charles Griffith
Andrew Hobbs
Pat Krause
Steve List
Corky Overmyer
Del Rector
Maureen Kennedy Templeton
Sam Washington
Paul Zuger

Terms Ending: **March 2005**

Chris Bates
Barry Cargill
Wil Cwikiel
Marty Fluharty
Chuck Hersey
Don Inman
Sara Lile
Frank Mortl
Lana Pollack
Andy Such
Janet Vail
Wayne Wood

At this time EAC will plan to meet monthly. In the summer or fall there may be an interest in meeting quarterly. EAC members expressed a preference for meeting on Thursday afternoons. The DEQ will provide a revised meeting schedule based on this preference. Mr. Ruswick will be responsible for agenda development. In the future he will share a draft agenda with members and ask for comments. If you have agenda suggestions, please e-mail those to Mr. Ruswick.

Members questioned if they were unable to attend, could they send a representative? The Director responded that he would prefer that the members themselves attend the meetings. If it is an isolated circumstance, a representative could be sent.

The next EAC meeting will be Thursday, April 17, 2003 from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Capital Commons Building, Room A & B, 400 S. Pine, Lansing, Michigan.

Meeting summary prepared by Linda Albro Sparks