



Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC)

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2023 5:30 – 7:30 PM ET

[Link to the recording](#)

This is a public meeting and will be recorded and posted on the [Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) website.

Disclaimer: Please note this is not a word for word translation

CEEJAC Members Present (full registrant list below)

- Dr. Mark Mitchell, MD, MPH, Associate Professor, Climate Change, Energy, and Environmental Health Equity
- Terry Adams, Stamford
- Yaw Darko, CT Land Conservation Council
- Adrienne Farrar Houël, Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises
- Sharon Lewis, Executive Director, CT Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ)
- Cierra Patrick, Economic Development Manager, City of Groton
- Theresa Hopkins-Staten, President Eversource Energy Foundation, VP Corporate Citizenship and Equity
- Lori Mathieu, Environmental Health and Drinking Water Branch Chief, in for Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Department of Public Health

1. Welcome

Dr. Mark Mitchell opens the meeting and introduces himself as the CEEJAC co-chair with DEEP Commissioner Katy Dykes. *Sarah Huang* introduces herself as the Director of DEEP's Office of Equity and Environmental Justice (OEEJ) and goes over the established ground rules for participation in Quarterly CEEJAC Meetings. *Dr. Mitchell* takes roll call and commences an overview of the meeting Agenda. *Lori Mathieu* introduces *Sarah Walters*, who recently joined the Department of Public Health as the Office of Health Equity Director.

2. Subcommittee Updates

a. Water Subcommittee – *Cierra Patrick, Graham Stevens*

Cierra Patrick communicates the intent to provide property owners with more information on best practices and resources with regards to both combined sewer and MS4 requirements with an emphasis on education and workshops. *Dr. Mitchell* mentions the challenges of water in urban communities with large amounts of impervious surface. *Graham Stevens* highlights storm intensity and increased precipitation as contributing factors to make new decisions and take a new approach to deal with infrastructure and development challenges.

Mr. Stevens updates CEEJAC on the [Project in the North End of Hartford](#) to address management of sewer backups and flooding, noting that the DEEP Commissioner and Governor have allocated \$170 million for twelve (12) projects proposed by MDC, the sewer utility for Hartford, as well as surrounding communities. *Mr. Stevens* notes that this initiative includes a novel approach to addressing private infrastructure, and a need to replace and separate dual stream pipes. DEEP Comptroller's office has also set up a \$5,000,000 (\$5M) flood reimbursement program for impacted Hartford residents in partnership with the Blue Hills Civic Association.

Mr. Stevens encourages community members to continue to voice their concerns and to apply for assistance, noting that Blue Hill Civic Association will assist in drafting the application.

Link: [Hartford Flood Compensation Program - Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller](#)

Sharon Lewis cites confusion among Hartford residents on where the money is intended to go, as in solely towards remediating the North End or the entirety of Hartford. *Ms. Lewis* also notes that Applicants can not have fines or owe the city (Hartford) any money (i.e. taxes). *Ms. Lewis* poses the question as traditionally (for insurance purposes) casualty losses are not taxed, why are people in this context being taxed on the same casualty losses.

Mr. Stevens acknowledges the amount of concern and interest over this program and how it is being launched by the Comptroller's office. *Mr. Stevens* understands that all Hartford residents may apply, however, this is a pilot project. *Mr. Stevens* also notes the opportunities for future legislation to address concerns of the community and stresses the importance of people continuing to share their personal experiences. *Dr. Mitchell* echoes *Ms. Lewis'* concerns over the communication on funding eligibility and adds the importance to outline how far back the flooding qualifies, as in his own condominium there have been 7 major floods in 10 year, *Dr. Mitchell* encourages further discussion on these matters in the water subcommittee.

b. Waste Subcommittee – *Adrienne Farrar Houël*

Adrienne Farrar Houël discusses ongoing initiatives of the Waste Subcommittee including to:

- Understand current waste system technologies being used
- Receive community concerns

- Identify emerging waste system technology and system upgrades
- Provide recommendations and priorities for future waste management solutions

Ms. Houël notes that following the closing of a Hartford plant, 860,000 tons of waste is now distributed to other states, contributing to transportation pollution and potential overburdening of landfills in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and other states.

The next Waste Subcommittee Meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2023. Topics of discussion will include:

- A presentation on CT’s current waste system & how much waste is being generated
- Where does the waste go and how much is recycled
- Alternatives to the closed Hartford Facility
- Applicable technology, available resources for investment and a timeline

c. Air and Transportation Subcommittee – *Paul Farrell, Acting Bureau Chief, Air Management*

Paul Farrell informs CEEJAC that the Air & Transportation Subcommittee (ATS) has had two (2) meetings to “level set” and disseminated between the four divisions;

- Permitting Division
- Enforcement Division
- Planning Division
- Radiation Division

Mr. Farrell notes that the identified area of priority is air monitoring and that the group will plan to tour an air monitoring facility on October 30th. The ATS has been in discussion about recruiting additional members. The site visit will occur in person only, however interested parties may sign up to receive Air Monitor regular publications and updates: [Outreach and Education \(ct.gov\)](#)

Parties interested in joining CEEJAC subcommittees may contact Sarah Huang at sarah.huang@ct.gov.

d. Land Subcommittee – *Yaw Darko*

Yaw Darko communicates that the Land Subcommittee is CEEJAC’s newest subcommittee with a focus on identifying strategies to engage community stakeholders in the development of grant funded programs.

The first meeting is scheduled for October 13th 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. which will encompass:

- Urban forestry initiatives
- New grant program per the Inflation Reduction Act
- Brownfields

- Open space
- Heat islands

e. Energy Subcommittee – Sharon Lewis

Sharon Lewis informs that the Energy Subcommittee has developed a main charge to identify and address barriers to energy justice inclusive of recommendations to the Commissioner. *Ms. Lewis* emphasized the importance of going to and meeting with the communities where they are comfortable to hear their concerns, to prevent perceptions of marginalization. *Ms. Lewis* promotes social media as a method of outreach and communication and altering the format of meetings to be more accessible to community attendees in pace and content. *Ms. Lewis* suggests an assessment of how other CRT, Energy Utility Companies and State Agencies are federating funds towards these initiatives and evaluate the current efficacy of CT DEEP allocated resources to aid in Energy access concerns.

Topics for future meetings include:

- Overview of CT’s current energy programs
- Heat pump operational and technical review
- Energy efficient infrastructure for homes
- Utility bills
 - transmission vs. generation
 - rate changes

Dr. Mitchell elaborates on the term “energy justice” with the following:

“Similar to environmental justice (energy justice is) where no one group bears an excessive burden. We want to make sure that people's energy burdens are not higher than the national average and not higher than anyone else's, and that people have access to the facilities and the energy infrastructure improvements that everyone has.

Energy justice means, you know, that it's not just an income thing, it's actually a dwelling thing. It means that you're no longer living in a substandard dwelling where all of your energy costs are higher than the other costs that you have. It's disproportionate. We want to eliminate the word disproportionate when it comes to energy justice. People need to have access.

To all the clean energy that's out there. But unfortunately some people don't, Yeah. And I think the guideline is around 6% of your income should no more than 6% of your income should be spent on electricity or gas or oil for heating or for air conditioning, Yeah, but some communities, some people pay a whole lot more.”

Theresa Hopkins-Staten shares that Eversource is more than willing to come before the group and discuss heat pumps, energy assistance programs, electrification and de-carbonization of the state to assist with CT clean energy goals. *Ms. Hopkins-Staten* shares that the CT Public

Regulatory Authority (PURA) has approved a low-income discount rate effective December 2023.

Dr. Mitchell introduces Jayson Velazquez, who has recently been named the representative to the CT Energy Efficiency Board. Mr. Velazquez currently serves as an Energy and Policy Associate at the Acadia Center.

3. Additional Discussion

a. Broadband Briefing – Kevin Pisacich and Lauren Thompson

Kevin Pisacich introduces himself as the Director of the Office of Telecommunications and Broadband within Deeps Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy. *Lauren Thompson* introduces herself as a former Librarian and current Digital Equity Program Manager for the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology.

Mr. Pisacich communicates the importance and intersectionality between access to broadband and general operation in today's world. CT OPM currently maintains a [Connecticut Broadband Mapping Hub](#) where one can access real-time data on the State's broadband connectivity.

Goals of Broadband State initiatives include:

- Access to Broadband
- Affordability of Broadband
- Closing the gap to adoption of Broadband

Mr. Pisacich notes that there is a trend in gaps of adoption in CT's largest cities as well as lower income communities. The state is currently accessing both access and adoption. *Mr. Pisacich* highlights the importance of CEEJAC involvement to reach out to various communities, organizations and community anchor institutions (CAI) to facilitate greater use of broadband to vulnerable populations. CAI's (schools, libraries, hospitals, public housing etc.) may be eligible for funding to connect to 1 Gigabit service plans and other financial support for digital equity initiatives.

Ms. Thompson shares the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) definition of digital equity as "the condition in which individuals and communities have the information and technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and the economy of the United States."

Ms. Thompson communicates that the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology (CCET), under the Department of Administrative Services, is engaging in a bold year-long planning process to identify and address the barriers to technology in CT. Inclusive to these efforts are:

- Significant research
- Agency Engagement
- Index existing programs, partners and outreach efforts
- Partner survey

- CAI survey
 - Map where the organizations are that do this work
- Residence survey
 - Encourage communication about the barriers to access devices and support
- Focus groups to understand barriers and capture suggestions for a five-year plan

CCET Five-Year Plan - *Ms. Thompson* shares that the CCET five-year plan to address internet devices, skills and support is planning for \$17 million to deliver services on a state, regional and local level.

Action Items - *Mr. Pisacich* informs CEEJAC and attendees of Quarterly Virtual Roundtable Discussions (QVRD) & Regional Community Forums. The last QVRD was held in April 2023, with the next to occur in October 2023.

- Community Organization Survey:
<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/faba479958dc4a5aad9f6dc1f8d72cc0>
- Further Information contact: DEEP.Broadband@ct.gov

Dr. Mitchell shares that this topic is close to home as his download and upload speeds are incredibly low albeit the price of \$80/month and requests to understand how this program will assist. *Mr. Pisacich* informs *Dr. Mitchell* that his reported download and upload rates would by definition place him in an “unserved” area as far as the FCC is concerned. *Mr. Pisacich* refers to a vehicle via which one may report an outage or service issue and reiterates closely working with OPM [on mapping efforts](#) and utility management. *Mr. Pisacich* states that the project will work to capture the reality of service versus what the provider is advertising as delivery speeds. *Mr. Pisacich* goes on to discuss that the identification of “unserved” or “underserved” areas can be utilized to allocate priority funding to ensure reliable access and speed of service. *Mr. Pisacich* cites the intent of [Public Act 21-159](#) and the necessity of identifying poor service areas to inform the FCC and hold providers accountable to appropriately serve these locations.

All locations will be mapped as either:

- Unserved
- Underserved
- Served

All Un or Under-served locations will be addressed with funding to provide adequate service to these areas with the option to engage alternate providers in an attempt to prevent monopolization of the market.

CEEJAC Commentary

Ms. Hopkins inquires as to whether the mapping utility will overlay analysis based on distressed populations and EJ communities for prioritization and if there has been an outreach and educational effort to involve marginalized unserved and underserved communities in the adjudication process associated with Public Act 21-159.

Mr. Pisacich responds that the two programs derived from the General Assembly are with an intentional focus on low income communities first. The effort will be with a prioritization of distressed communities, municipalities. There will be a public comment period, during with the maps will be made public and the adjudication process will open to the public.

Ms. Lewis notes that she observed contractors excavating a span of paved area to “improve broadband” and expresses concerns that broadband improvements trend towards less diversely populated areas rather than those inhabited by minorities.

Mr. Pisacich communicates that this may be due to reporting and number of customers in an area as justification to the provider who deems the infrastructure investment worth of extension/improvement of service. He also notes that per the allocated funding, alternative providers will be enlisted to bridge the gaps to under and un-served communities that may other wise or have historically been overlooked. *Mr. Pisacich* notes that the Community Organization Survey has so far captures 436 organizations that are focused on access and reliability of Broadband in EJ and under-served communities. *Mr. Pisacich* proposes a follow up meeting to discuss these matters further and address ongoing/emergent concerns of CEEJAC and community members.

b. Update on Environmental Justice Screening Tool – Lisette Stone

Lisette Stone introduces herself as an Environmental Analyst working within the DEEP Office of Equity and Environmental Justice (OEEJ) and discusses the current iteration of the Environmental Justice Screening Tool 2.0 (EJT 2.0) which was conceived through a contracted agreement between OEEJ and CIRCA through UConn Extension. *Ms. Stone* communicates that the public comment period for EJT 1.0 commenced on July 31, 2023, and those comments have been incorporated into the current, 2.0, iteration of the tool.

Dr. Mitchell requests that *Ms. Stone* elaborate on the intent and purpose of the tool to which she summarizes that the mapping application would serve as a screening tool to identify the indices that inform what an environmental justice community is, where they are in CT, and how to prioritize resources and disseminate the same to those communities. *Ms. Stone* clarifies that the tool will operate at a level of accessibility for constituents and community members to interface with and inform the functionality and ease of use, with the intent of continued improvements and to reform current legislation and policy.

Dr. Mitchell reiterates that the tool is intended to guide investment towards underinvested communities in CT. *Ms. Stone* shares that version 3.0 will move forward following the transfer of EJ 2.0 from CIRCA to DEEP under the stewardship of OEEJ. *Dr. Mitchell* inquires as to how the public may provide further feedback and comment to inform iteration 3.0, to which *Annie Decker* shares her email as a direct avenue to provide feedback, comments or questions to the same.

- Access Circa Version 2.0 - [EJ Screening Tool 2.0](#)
- Questions, comments, recommendations – Annie.Decker@ct.gov

CEEJAC Commentary

Ms. Hopkins inquires as to when the EJ Tool will be available for utilization with the understanding that it will be undergoing further revisions and updates. *Ms. Decker* responds that the current iteration 2.0 has a significant amount of information that may be utilized currently, however for more official purposes, the 3.0 iteration will more accurately reflect the final intent of the tool as a complete product.

4. Announcements

a. Webinar on Climate Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program

Dr. Mitchell shares that there will be a webinar providing guidance to EJ Communities with information on eligibility criteria and application Climate Reduction Grant Program which will be implemented in coordination with CT State Agencies. Plans will be due by March or April of 2024. *Ms. Decker* shares that there are three stages to the grant and that it is currently in the first iteration of planning, with the Webinar planned for October 2024.

Ms. Mathieu inquires as to whether there is a set date for the October 2024 CPRG Webinar. *Dr. Mitchell* responds that there is not a date set, though it will be in late October. Once the date is set a notification will go out along with public posting.

b. Updates on SB1147 Rulemaking Process

Annie Decker introduces herself as the Chief of Legal, Planning and Regulatory Affairs within the DEEP Commissioner Office. *Ms. Decker* shares that SB 1147 is referred to as the “cumulative impacts” bill and “SB” is short for Senate Bill as the Senate raised the Bill and through the advocacy and support of the Governor it was passed in the State of CT.

Ms. Decker communicates that the bill allows DEEP to consider the burdens communities are already facing from environmental pollution and various health concerns that could be further effected by permits the Agency is granting. This bill would allow DEEP to look at the community itself, rather than solely the permitting eligibility standards historically utilized, when assessing a grant application.

This Bill was modeled after a New Jersey Bill, which took more than two (2) years to develop its regulations. *Ms. Decker* anticipates that SB 1147 will take that long if not longer in consideration of CT's Legislative Regulatory Review Committee. *Ms. Decker* shares that the EJ Tool 3.0 will encompass many of the factors pivotal to the analysis of the communities and locations of proposed permitted activities to consider when making the decision to deny or place conditions on an approval.

Dr. Mitchell inquires to when public comments will come into consideration of the SB1147 implementation process. *Ms. Decker* responds that there is a general process for rule making internal to DEEP, however this can be lengthened or shortened depending on the nature and scope of intention. *Ms. Decker* shares that community outreach will occur in advance of a final form for feedback along with scoping and stakeholder engagement of some form.

Mr. Decker proposes a topic-specific meeting to address the roll-out process for SB1147 and stresses the importance of a timeline or work plan to ensure that progress is tracked and logged within a framework.

c. Scheduling time for future quarterly meetings in 2024

Ms. Huang raised a proposal to change the timing of Quarterly CEEJAC Meetings (QCM) to either daytime or to push the meetings later into the evening. *Ms. Huang* and *Dr. Mitchell* took an informal tally of CEEJAC attendees to gauge preference in timing.

The next QCM is scheduled to occur on December 11th, 2023 from 6pm to 8pm. There will be follow up at this meeting to set a schedule for QCM in 2024.

d. Open Office Hours – [Registration Link](#)

Ms. Huang makes an announcement that CT DEEP's OEEJ will be holding open office hours every third (3rd) Wednesday from 12 noon to 1 pm. The purpose of office hours is to create a forum for those interested in sharing concerns or needs that they have about their communities. *Ms. Huang* also introduces new OEEJ Staff Members Lisette Stone, Michael Davis and Jacquelyn Torres. *Mr. Davis* reports that he is working on a timeline for CEEJAC conception and progress as well as OEEJ Newsletters and website updates. *Ms. Torres* reports that she is working on an English proficiency plan.

Ms. Decker announces the posting of a Tribal Affair Liaison position with the DEEP OEEJ.

e. Other Announcements from CEEJAC Members

Dr. Mitchell requests comments from CEEJAC Members. No comments from CEEJAC Members provided at this time.

5. Public Comments

Dr. Mitchell requests comments from the Public. *Mr. Pisacich* follows up on a Broadband question by clarifying that underserved and unserved communities will have priority for funding allocation in advance of Community Organizations. *Mr. Pisacich* also responds to a previous question concerning the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which is an FCC subsidy program which is separate from the grant opportunity introduced earlier.

Mr. Stevens notes that the majority of the questions related to water submitted to the meeting chat appear to have been resolved, however provided his email to field further inquiries not addressed at this time

- Grant.Stevens@ct.gov

6. Closing

Dr. Mitchell reminds attendees of the multiple meetings and webinars upcoming, inclusive of the next QCM scheduled to occur on Monday, December 11th from 6pm to 8pm.

Full List of Registrants

Rosalyn Grzywinski	Brenda Geer	Ashley Stewart
Cecelia Drayton	Kathy Fay	Maisa Tisdale
Aaron Goode	Denise Savageau	Yaw Darko
Sharon Lewis	Danica Doroski	Halle Lisette Pierce
Adrienne Houel	Rebecca Nerbonne	Latha Swamy
Sarah Huang	Jayson Valazquez	Jay Stange
Andrew Hoskins	Terry Adams	Lindsay Suhr
David Michel	Annie Decker	Jacquelyn Torres
Michael Davis	Camille Fontanella	Mark Mitchell
Danielle Petretta	Andrew Droney	Analys Torres
Kristin Barengregt-Lugwig	Jaimeson Sinclair	Pete Babich
Donna Hamzy Carroccia	Allison Pilcher	Joy Yakie
Ashley Benitez	Lauren Thompson	Hank Webster
Doris Johnson	Lidia Ruppert	Lori Mathieu
Eric Hammerling	Sarah Walters	Robert Hotaling
Kevin Pisacich	Sena Wazer	Maggie Favretti
Theresa Hopkins-Staton	Graham Stevens	Paul Farrell
John Traynor	Edith Pestana	Lisette Stone
Lynne Bonnett	Zbigniew Graborski	Abby Blocker
Cierra Patrick	Mary Hogue	Jillian Kara