

**Minutes of the Air Quality Task Force Meeting  
Imperial/Mexicali  
June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Calexico, California**

**Co-chairs: Belen Leon; Margarito Quintero**

**I. Attendance:**

**Reyes Romero**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Margarito Quintero**, SPA; **Oscar Romo**, Municipality of Mexicali; **Luis Flores**, Municipality of Mexicali, **Aaron Ponce**, Municipality of Mexicali; **Gil Rebolgar**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Viridiana Nuñez**, Baja California Health Services Institute; **Jennifer Wong Martinez**, Baja California Health Services Institute; **Raúl Tovar**, SPA; **Jeff Lingberg**, California Air Resources Board; **Emmanuel Sanchez**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Sandi Lien**, Tijuana US Consulate General; **Miguel Sanchez**, UABC; **Craig Deutsche**, citizen; **Edie Harmon**, environmentalist; **Illy Heartman**, concerned resident; **David Salgado**, Southern California Association of Governments; **Virginia Mendoza**, Imperial County Transportation Commission; **Astrid Calderas**, CIMA; **Ray Askins**, environmentalist; **Jorge Arredondo**, UABC School of Architecture and Design; **Ruben Saldivar**, UABC student; **Brenda Gin**, UABC; **Oswaldo Leiva**, UABC School of Architecture and Design; **Griselda Rodríguez**, UABC student; **Marlene Zamora Mechado**, UABC School of Engineering; **Lourdes Montserrat Meza Trejo**, UABC Renewable Energy Program; **Chase Choate**, Quechan Indian Tribe; **Denise Andrade**, Imperial County Public Health Department; **Araceli Carrillo-Torres**, Imperial County Public Health Department; **Fernando Flores**, OBSERBC; **Jennifer Wong**, **Alejandra Carrillo**, OBSERBC; **Laura Lawrence**, USEPA; **Webster Tasat**, California Air Resources Board; **Elizabeth Melgoza**, California Air Resources Board

**II. Welcome and Initial Comments**

**Reyes Romero** thanked everyone for taking time from their busy agendas in order to attend this meeting. He said representatives from SPA were there as well as representatives from the California Air Resources Board and the USEPA. He informed they would have 2 presentations throughout this meeting.

**Margarito Quintero** welcomed everyone in attendance, mentioned it had been already three months since their last meeting, and said he was sure they would discuss interesting topics and that this would be a successful meeting like all of their meetings.

**III. Review of Minutes from Prior Meeting**

**Reyes Romero** indicated now was the time to review and approve the minutes from the prior meeting and said they could make comments or suggestions before approving the minutes.

**Fernando Flores** asked for the correction of names on the comments he had made as well as on the comments from **Luis Flores**.

**Margarito Quintero** pointed out it was mentioned on the minutes release of a video as part of the ag burning prevention campaign, and asked what the status was on that matter.

**Reyes Romero** said it was ready to be presented during this meeting. Having taken note of the comments with regards to the minutes, they were approved.

**IV. Presentations / Questions and Answers**

**Imperial County / Mexicali Work Plan and Recent Air Quality Trends; Elizabeth Melgoza, CARB**

**Ray Askins** asked what the status was on the monitor they had plans to install at Carlos Slim's mining company as well as in the port of San Felipe.

**Elizabeth Melgoza** said **Oscar Romo** could probably give some information on that matter during his presentation later during the meeting.

**An Attendee** asked regarding the study of dust emissions in the western dessert if they are planning to put up monitors in the area to determine what actually went into the air.

**Elizabeth Melgoza** said they were working on a funding proposal together with the Air Pollution Control District. She added that the plan is to line the western side with BAM monitors as well as other particulate monitor to see how they correlate; 5 or 6 of them being placed on the western edge of Imperial County.

**An Attendee** said that based on the 2 monitoring stations that Elizabeth had made her air quality analysis on for Mexicali; she did not want people to believe that Mexicali is now not as polluted as before since those 2 monitoring stations do not represent the entire environmental scenario and that they only monitor PM2.5 if she is not mistaken.

**Elizabeth Melgoza** thanked her for pointing that out and mentioned that the air quality data used for trend purposes for Mexicali is obtained from only one regulatory monitor located at COBACH.

**An Attendee** mentioned with regards to agricultural burning, that even they do it on weekends because it has documented that burn emissions can stay at a lower surface level for 2 or 3 days. Therefore, she said she would like that fact to be considered when making agricultural burning policy.

**An Attendee** asked if she had included in her presentation any data from *Purple Air* monitors

**Elizabeth Melgoza** said they can only calculate the Air Quality Index through data sent through the Imperial Valley Air website. However, she said she could look into possibly incorporating *Purple Air* data.

**The Attendee** said that would be good idea because it would allow them to make a comparison between regulatory and community monitors data.

**An Attendee** mentioned that she is working with data from all of the *Purple Air* monitors deployed in Mexicali and the Imperial County and she added she hoped **Elizabeth Melgoza** from CARB could collaborate with them. She said she was very grateful for the analysis she had done and the work she had been able to accomplish on both sides of the border in such a short time.

**Elizabeth Melgoza** thanked her for her words. She also mentioned there is a group of citizens on Facebook called Aire Baja California where they publish daily what the air quality looks like according to the *Purple Air* monitors.

**Ray Askins** said he was somewhat concerned about her illustration for May 2019. He said that from his personal experience, he had seen that the monitor at COBACH has been in red on several days and he attributes that to the pollution caused by Zahori and that illustration does not reflect quite accurately those days. He also mentioned it was his understanding that the Secretary of the Environment for Baja California had ordered an inspection on their facilities and shortly thereafter she was fired. He said it is interesting how politics plays over the environment in Baja California, where the governor does not want air monitors placed in Mexicali and he wants to protect industries as much as he can. He added that one of the owners of Zahori is one of his ministers.

**Purple Air Monitors in Mexicali; Oscar Romo, Director of Planning and Environmental Management in Mexicali**

**An Attendee** asked with regards to the installation of smokestacks, if they had some numbers, which could point out the difference between emissions before and after installation of these smokestacks. He said it seemed important to have this information and make it available to the public in order to raise awareness and to promote reporting failure to comply with these regulations.

**Oscar Romo** said they have this information, but they do not have the necessary network in order to measure all of the pollutants in all of Mexicali. However, he said that with the data they have so far, they could start making that comparison.

**Oscar Romo** said the Municipality had conducted 23 inspections since the previous meeting and 18 of those were related to air pollution.

**Oscar Romo** showed the two new "Ambientalize" media campaigns that were added for trash and agricultural burning.

**The same attendee** mentioned they have the data from the *Purple Air sensors* and that even though these are not regulatory monitors, their data can be utilized for comparison purposes.

**Oscar Romo** said that as a municipality they did not have with the staff or infrastructure to make that analysis. However, he mentioned they would do such analysis with the support from the California Air Resources Board.

**Ray Askins** asked what the status was on monitoring the area where Carlos Slim's mining company is located in San Felipe.

**Oscar Romo** said they would install two sensors in that area; one at the town, and another one at the company as long as they have the optimum conditions to do so.

**Ray Askins** also asked him where he would be after the change in government administration.

**Oscar Romo** responded that from whatever trench he might be he will continue supporting and pushing forward for these kinds of projects.

**An Attendee** asked if they had had the chance to review the previous studies done, which were the base for the installation of the first *Purple Air* network because they were waiting on additional monitors to be installed at critical spots.

**Oscar Romo** said that if they had additional sensors to spare, these could be installed at the spots she had mentioned. He asked her to send him those studies in order to consider that possibility.

**An Attendee** asked if they had a statistical annual report and if they follow up on agricultural burning reports from the community because she had been told about cases on which reports on trash burning had been submitted under the proper process without having had an answer from the corresponding authorities.

**Oscar Romo** said these reports are responded. However, he explained that before the year of 2018 they did not have the power to sanction these kinds of activities, thus sometimes people would ignore their recommendations. He insisted on pointing out that reports are followed up and that since 2018 the municipality was given the power to sanction these activities through fines given to those doing them.

**An Attendee** said she was very interested on knowing where the sensors are being located and what they based on in order to decide their location. She added that sensors should not be placed where the problem is found, but rather where the problem originated.

**Oscar Romo** said their target was locating the most monitors possible per quadrant in order to cover as much of the Mexicali Valley as possible on sites where they found optimum conditions for their installation.

**An Attendee** mentioned that unfortunately all efforts made were bound to fail if they did not have rules and regulations. He suggested approaching the local universities and academia in order to promote an intelligent government with the appropriate rules and regulations to accomplish their objectives.

**An attendee** from UABC said they can collaborate with the Municipality to share their knowledge on sources in Mexicali.

**Luis Flores** said the municipality would have a network with regulatory equipment as well as 50 reference *Purple Air* sensors, which will allow them to be a part of an international air monitoring network owned by this company, it will allow them to have their own network and most importantly, it will allow them to be a part of a community network that has nothing to do with the municipality and gives moral soundness to the data collected with this equipment. He added the first step has already been taken, and that there is still work to be done, but with the support from task forces such as this one, great things can be accomplished.

#### **Update on Baja California Vehicle Smog Check Program; Fernando Flores, OBSERBC**

**Fernando Flores** gave a presentation on the Vehicle Verification Program and the efforts to add fines for noncompliance to the program. Fernando Flores said the authorities in Mexicali do not have the capacity and resources to address this issue.

**An Attendee** said with regards to the efforts on revising all the regulations, he would like to know if they had been or have the intention of checking the type of vehicles that are being verified. He said he asks this because in his experience, he has seen many public transportation and cargo vehicles emitting a lot of smog, and asked if they had any kind of monitoring and follow up plan in mind for these types of vehicles.

**Fernando Flores** thanked him for his question and mentioned that any study available about these types of emissions would be helpful and he would really be grateful if he could share this information.

#### **V. Border 2020 Projects and Updates**

**Laura Lawrence** said the Border 2020 Program has been extended to 2021. She also mentioned they were currently under the process of evaluating the projects that had been funded through Border 2020 so that they can look at how successful those programs were. She added they were also under the process of developing the request for proposal for next year funding and that should be coming out within the next 2 months.

**Elizabeth Melgoza** asked if UABC professors could submit proposals for funding to EPA. She mentioned she understood this is normally done through California agencies to USEPA and was wondering if she knew anything about that.

**Laura Lawrence** said she knew there are two distinct funding streams one of them being for the Border 2020 grants, but she was not sure how that work and would have to look into it.

#### **VI. Updates from Federal, State, and Local Governments**

**Margarito Quintero** said he had had the opportunity to talk to **Ramón Gonzalez Magos** from the NGO called *Todos Somos Mexicali* and that he had mentioned they were about to implement a flag program at an elementary school in Mexicali with the collaboration from the Public Education Secretariat, which in his opinion was a good news, and that

he hoped to be able to invite him to one of their following meetings to make a presentation to this group about this program.

**Gil Rebollar** from the Imperial County Air Pollution control District informed about and extended an invitation to 2 following public workshops on Assembly Bill 617, which is improving air quality in the El Centro, Heber and Calexico region. He said the workshops would be held at the El Centro Regional Medical Center, which is located inside the Imperial Valley Mall from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM, and from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM.

**An attendee** mentioned that there should be a mobile application developed where people can enter environmental complaints that can be sent directly to SPA.

## **VII. Wrap Up / Date for the Next Meeting**

**Reyes Romero** said the suggested date for their meeting was September 12<sup>th</sup> at UABC in Mexicali, and asked if they were in agreement. Everyone said they were in agreement so he thanked everyone for attending this meeting and said he hoped to see everyone in Mexicali at the next meeting.

**Margarito Quintero** also thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and said he hoped to see everyone again in Mexicali for their next meeting.