

**Air Quality Task Force Meeting
Mexicali / Imperial
Mexicali, Baja California
September 12th, 2019**

Co-chairs: Belen León; Margarito Quintero

I. Attendance:

Professor Montoya, Citizen; **Israel Borquez**, Aire Baja California; **Ernesto Reynoso**, Environmental Services of Baja California; **Fernando Amador**, CARB; **Raúl Tovar**, SPA; **Ryan Michael Atencio**, CARB, **Fernando Flores Pradis**; OBSERBC, **Ray Askins**, environmentalist; **Luis Flores**, Director of Environmental Protection for the City of Mexicali; **Belen León**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Margarito Quintero**, SPA; **Elizabeth Melgoza**, CARB; **Astrid Calderas**, Cima y Aire Baja California; **Lorena López Powers**, EPA; **Laura Lawrence**, EPA; **Rebeca Coreya**, CIMA; **Alberto Mexia**, Respira; **José Carmelo Zavala**, Transitional Government of Baja California; **Jessica Castaneda**, Citizen; **José Luis Zamora**, Respira; **Jan Martínez** Respira; **Carmen Muñoz**, Hélice Foundation; **Reyes Romero**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District, **Víctor Méndez**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Jennifer Wong**, ISSE Salud; **Daniel Jiménez Ontiveros**, Healthy Environment in Baja California Foundation; **José Miguel Salcido**, Respira; **Salvador Ríos**, Ray Manufacturing; **Enrique Sánchez** Ray Manufacturing; **Meozotis Torres**, SPA; **Arturo Medina**, teacher; **Salvador Vázquez**, CETYS University; **Sergio Castellanos**, California University in Berkeley; **Oscar Romo**, SPA; **Alejandra Álvarez**, OBSERBC; **Professor Jorge Arredondo**, Architecture Faculty UABC; **Professor Osvaldo Leyva**, Architecture and Design Faculty UABC; **Karina Ramírez**, SEMARNAT; **Norberto Ochoa**, Angeles y Guerrero; **Sandy Lien**, US Consulate in Tijuana; **Cristina Quiroga**, Chemical Engineer; **Miguel Sánchez**, Aire Baja California, **Claudia Cristerna**, La Voz la Frontera Tribune; **Danilo Rivera**, concerned citizen; **Mimom Quiroga**, **Miguel Hernandez**, CCV; **Cesar Angulo**, bionero.org; **Rodrigo Aviles**, Salvelaslagunas; **Dr. Ximenez**, Fundacion Medio Ambiente Sano

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The attendance is welcomed, everyone is reminded that they need to sign in to confirm their attendance and are reminded that they have a translation team.

III. Revision of Minutes from Prior Meeting

The previous minute is reviewed and there are no observations.

IV. Presentations / Questions and Answers

Flag Implementation Program in Mexicali; Alberto Mexia, Comité Cívico Ambiental para el Involucramiento de la Sociedad

Ray Askins pointed out that in other systems they would be showing orange or red, **Alberto's** system would be showing all green and wanted further clarification.

Alberto Mexia clarified that it is not always green, he showed sensors of that same day and some came out red and yellow. He took the opportunity to reiterate that the sensors are not manipulated since manipulating sensors of three different brands would be impossible. He showed a new view of the data which shows the monthly averages. He explained that their sensors take the average of one hour instead those of Purple Air that take measurements instantly and that this is probably the difference of colors between platforms.

Astrid Calderas commented that the air quality on that morning was in poor condition but that at the time of the presentation it had already improved according to Purple Air.

Alberto Mexia said that generally in the afternoon the air quality is good, but from 6 in the afternoon to 8 in the morning it is in worse condition.

Arturo Medina asked why all school flags are green if the visible air quality is bad.

Alberto Mexia said that this is due to the type of sensor and the spectrum of contamination that they can detect since they are only PM 2.5.

Astrid Calderas added to the question that **Alberto** asked and said that in Northern California they express the same opinion about the difference between what the sensors mark and what can be seen visibly.

Ernesto Reynoso commented that it would be a good addition to add isoline patterns since these can explain the sources of pollution (agricultural burns, road constructions, etc.) and offered his expertise to help with this.

Alberto Mexia mentioned that the addition of isolines would be very valuable for the program, but in order to implement them, they would need help from experts in that area. He added that it would be very important to be able to establish a link with the correct professionals.

Israel Borquez said that it would be helpful to add air currents in the app since this could explain more the behavior of pollution in the Mexicali valley.

Alberto Mexia said that because they are software engineers, they are able to link their sensors with other programs, one of which is connected to the *WINDEE* platform. He commented that it is also possible to connect it with The Weather Channel to be able to implement air currents.

Belen León commented on **Arturo Medina's** question that in the USA the commitment of schools is very important since sometimes schools do not change the color of their flags due to lack of commitment and this is also a cause of the discrepancy between visual pollution and the color of the flags.

Alberto Mexia replied that they created 3 guides, one for parents, one for the school principal and a guide for the person in charge of the program. He added that in Mexicali they will be giving awards to the schools and these schools will be audited. Schools that do not want to use the flags properly won't be able to use their program, all this in order to encourage schools to be more proactive with flags.

Daniel Jiménez Ontiveros added that he would like to see more statistics on medical conditions in the city since these are proportional to the amount of contamination.

Jennifer Wong mentioned that **Dr. Efren Zazueta**, head of the Department of Epidemiology of ISE Health has detailed information on the statistics requested by Daniel Jiménez Ontiveros.

Daniel Jiménez Ontiveros added that he would like someone to donate a sensor to the school next to the San Francisco paper factory since in that school there are children with learning deficits which are caused by excess lead exposure, he mentions that patients that work in the factory also come in with lead in their blood.

Fernando Flores of *OBSERBC* emphasizes that citizen participation is very important so that they can spread information on pollution in the state.

Imperial County – Mexicali Work Plan Status; Elizabeth Melgoza, CARB

Ray Askins added that it would be nice if a footnote could be added in the areas that are known to have agricultural burning, dirt roads and other contributing factors in the southern part of Mexicali.

Sandy Lien from the US Consulate in Tijuana asked if they've been in contact with GSA about installing the ALPRs (automated license plate readers) and PEAQS sensors because it seems that it's best to install them now while the ports are being modernized.

Elizabeth Melgoza said that they've been in contact with GSA and that they need to present a detailed proposal before anything else.

Margarito Quintero asked if the dispersion model in Mexicali is still being used since it does not appear in the presentation.

Elizabeth Melgoza answered that the model wasn't included in this presentation because it is usually used in state implementation plans.

Miguel Hernandez from Comite Civico de Valle said that a large part of Imperial County is low income and if this is being taken into consideration in regard to the smog check inspections that are being switched to every other year.

Elizabeth Melgoza mentioned that incentivizing low-income communities could be a part of the proposal, she comments that the first step they're taking is quantifying the emissions benefit statewide and that a change to the smog program requirements would require a change in the legislature.

Ernesto Reynoso of the *Environmental Services of Baja California* added that the burning in the Amazon Forest will affect us at some point in the future and it is very important to take into account, he also mentioned that China is being massively reforested and we must do something similar. He ended saying that it is time to stop betting on vehicles with internal combustion engines and begin to see the options with electric vehicles.

Monitors in Mexicali; Oscar Romo, head of the Department of Environmental Planning and Management in Mexicali.

Lourdes Mesa asked if in the presentation they talked about the COV regulations.

Oscar Romo commented that as a municipality they do not have the tools necessary for COV regulations and they only talked about the points that were seen as the most important within the working group.

Lourdes Mesa suggested that resurfacing the streets would seem to help air quality, but in reality, the process makes it worse and mentioned that workers should use the necessary protection.

Israel Borquez wanted more clarification of sanctions on companies and not only on citizens.

Oscar Romo responded at the municipality is not the one that regulates the sanctions to companies, the state is in charge of that, the municipality only takes care of sanctions to commerce and services.

Israel Borges added that it is their obligation to coordinate with the state the issue of sanctioning companies.

Luis Flores Solís of *Environmental Protection in Mexicali* commented that the audits that the municipality does are done together with the SPA and this is where they share information.

Israel Borges concluded that he would like to see in future presentations what actions the municipality is taking along with the state on the issue of sanctions companies.

Oscar Romo mentioned that there is the core committee of PROAIRE Mexicali where the state handles of companies with the different criteria pollutants.

A participant asked if there were any pending issues that have to be retaken with the next administration.

Luis Flores Solís confirmed that there were several pending issues but that they have already been in communication with the people who are going to replace them so that everything is in order.

Daniel Jiménez Ontiveros asked what the part of the government in charge is of identifying the pollutants generated by companies

Margarito Quintero informs that each level of the government monitors the emanation of pollutants from companies, at the federal level PROFEPA is in charge and at the state level the State Government is in charge, this asks them the COA (annual operating card) where Companies describe their discharges to air, water, and solid waste.

Norberto Ochoa from *Angeles y Guerreros* asked what is the use that is given to the information that is extracted from the vehicle smog checks and if it is possible to access this information

Margarito Quintero commented that the information can be requested from the environmental management department headed by **Saul Guzmán**.

Professor Arredondo of the *master's and Ph.D. Program of Planning and Sustainable Development of UABC* asked that if the inspection of garbage burning is visual only or is there a system that can measure it. He added that the response time of the police force is another issue specifically in the peripheral areas. He mentioned that the wood-burning fines would be tricky in some cases, specifically constructors that prepare their food on-site don't normally have other alternatives. He suggested that the money from all these fines should be used to mitigate the effects of the contamination and not on something unrelated. Finally, he commented that mitigation programs are needed.

Oscar Romo responded to the issue of the inspection of garbage burning and said people need to be caught in-flagrante so that the law can be enforced, and that for this reason, a system that measures pollution would not be useful. On the issue of public security response time, he said that there is a lack of manpower and there is also the issue of how police force elements prioritize other events. Speaking on mitigation, he commented that awareness is being created within the schools with programs that specifically attack this. Addressing the control issue, he mentioned that as of January 1, 2018, all environmental licenses for all food businesses that use fuel for food preparation will be required to have emission control (filters, chimney shots, etc.). He also mentioned that inspections will be done to body shops, carpentry, etc.

Elizabeth Melgoza asked what the changes are in the new environmental regulation that were went to city hall in August of this year.

Oscar Romo said that in broad strokes the changes in the regulation are consistent with state and federal regulations, he added that there were some changes in management nomenclatures. He added that the important change in this regulation is the ban on plastic bags and straws the next year.

Belen León thanked the current administration for the commitment they showed in the last 3 years.

Margarito Quintero added to the comment made by **Augusto** about mitigation and said that there is a state plan about climate change that includes all the necessary information about mitigation and adaptation. He commented that this plan also includes the economical part of climate change and invites the attendance to read this document.

Mexicali Environmental Initiatives; Astrid Calderas, Cima y Aire Baja California.

Daniel Jiménez Ontiveros congratulated the presentation of **Astrid Calderas**.

Astrid Calderas commented that she is available to present this in schools. She added that she is always per request.

V. Border 2020 Projects Update

Lorena Lopez Powers from the EPA mentions that the 4 projects that were selected in 2017, 1 for air quality, 1 for water and two for solid waste are about to close. She points out that there's more information about their current RFP that closes on September 17th on the sheet. She adds that there's also a contact sheet that contains a summary of who is working on what mediums for the California/Baja region. Border 21 has been extended to 2021, representatives of Mexico (SEMARNAT) and the US (EPA) will meet on November 5th to talk about the next steps of the future Border Program. She comments that if anybody wants more information, they have her contact info on display.

Belen Leon said that **Elizabeth Melgoza** already extensively covered some of the projects that are going to be implemented under the border 2020 program. She comments that they will continue with the AQI campaigns. They'll continue to work with the City about ad burning campaigns and open burn campaigns that will now be year-round. They will do a survey to find out how Ambientalizate is working out and how to make it better.

Margarito Quintero commented that on September 19th there will be a reunion of the Tijuana / San Diego AOTF in Casa Comunitaria in San Ysidro and invited the attendance to assist.

VI. Updates on Projects from Federal, State, and Local Governments

There were no comments on this topic.

VII. Closing / Date for the Next Meeting

Margarito Quintero indicated that the next meeting would be held on December 5 at San Diego State University.

Luis Flores Solís took the opportunity to thank everyone for their assistance.

Elizabeth Melgoza reminded everyone to sign in on the sign-in sheet.

Arturo Medina commented that these meetings should be held at different times so that more people could attend.

Meeting Adjourned