

**Air Quality Task Force Meeting  
Mexicali / Imperial  
Calexico, CA  
February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Co-chairs: Belen Leon; Margarito Quintero

**I. Attendance:**

**Belen Leon**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Margarito Quintero**, SPA, Baja California; **Doctor Daniel Jimenez Ontiveros**, Medio Ambiente Sano, Baja California; **Concepción Navarro**, Medio Ambiente Sano, Baja California; **Luis Flores**, Mexicali Environmental Protection Secretariat; **Eady Harmon**, Ocotillo; **Astrid Calderas**, CIMA; **Ray Askins**, environmentalist; **Daniel Yañez**, PROFEPA; **Aaron Ponce**, SPA, Mexicali; **Oscar Romo**, SPA, Mexicali; **Alejandra Alvarez**, OBSERBC; **Fernando Flores**, OBSERBC; **Rene Acuña**, Mexicali Economic Development Council; **Ernesto Guevara Villareal**, Respira; **Ivan Martinez**, Respira; **Miguel Coronel**, Air Pollution Control District; **Rene Felix**, Office of Assembly Member Eduardo García, California, District 56; **Elizabeth Melgoza**, ARB; **Fernando Amador**, ARB; **Reyes Romero**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Jorge Arredondo**, UABC Architecture; **Webster Tasat**, ARB.

**II. Welcome and Initial Remarks**

**Belen León** welcomed everyone in attendance. **Margarito Quintero** said this promised to be an interesting meeting because of the issues they were going to address.

**Revision of Minutes from Prior Meeting**

**Belen Leon** asked if anyone had any questions or comments with regards to the minutes from the previous meeting. Since no one had any comments or questions, the minutes were approved.

**III. Presentations / Questions and Answers**

**“Purple Air” Monitors in Mexicali; Oscar Romo, Department of Environmental Management and Planning in Mexicali**

**Astrid Calderas** said monitors from the *Medio Ambiente Sano* and their *Aire BC* network should be acknowledged.

**Oscar Romo** said they recognize the community effort in order to have this monitoring network in Mexicali.

**Ray Askins** said that it would be helpful if this monitoring system could identify the data from the different areas such as Independencia or Loma Linda as this would point out who the bad actors are in each area. He added that they also need to know what the website is so they could go on and see what the level of pollution is through their system and compare it to other systems as well. He asked if once they have this valuable information, they were going to be able to recommend the kind of pollution suppressors should be used by the industry to avoid the issue.

**Oscar Romo** said that through this system they were going to be able to identify which quadrant in the city is the most polluted and that with the resources they have, they would be able to take focused actions together with the legal area in order to inspect emissions sources that as a local authority they have control over. He added that all those small businesses that generate pollution and are not under regulation by the Environmental Management Department are going to be invited to get their license and comply with local regulations in order to keep operating. He also mentioned that they will carry out media educational campaigns to promote taking care of the environment and preventing health issues.

**An Attendee** mentioned there are previous studies on which they can rely that point out the most vulnerable areas as far as air pollution in the city of Mexicali. She said that deciding the locations for the monitors based solely on having public security in her opinion was not the best way to go for the kind of monitoring they are pursuing.

**Oscar Romo** explained there is a collaboration agreement with CARB, and that they are accountable for those monitors. Therefore, they cannot be installed in areas where there is a risk of losing them. He also mentioned that they plan to install some sensors in education institutions during the second phase of this project. He stated that the information from the studies she mentions would be very helpful for them, but that this is something to be discussed with the core committee, which is where these types of actions are decided. He offered information on dates and venues where they meet and extended an invitation for her to attend and share this information at those meetings.

**Belen Leon** mentioned this was the first phase of many projects to come through this program, and said they would be learning along the way, and that they would continue with this dialogue so they can reach their goals in the best way possible.

**An Attendee** asked if they have statistical data as far as patients and health conditions due to air pollution in order to substantiate this program.

**Oscar Romo** mentioned that they already have this information, and that the information generated by the sensors to be installed will also be shared with the health sector so they can compare it with their statistical data on conditions and cases per year related to air pollution.

**Fernando Flores** from OBSERBC said that he could gladly share that information with him, and that he would like to invite him to participate at the work tables that they hold.

**Belen Leon** asked if there was a final count of the sanctions in Mexicali and if this sanction were only going to be implemented during the holiday season.

**Oscar Romo** said that the sanctions would be implemented throughout the year. He also mentioned that Department of National Public Safety was trained to have the power of sanctioning for trash burning, lighting a bonfire, etc.

**Belen Leon** asked if they could get data of that.

**Oscar Romo** said Public Safety is issuing a bimonthly report of the fines generated at the municipality based on the new regulations.

**An Attendee** asked what they were going to do with the money collected from these fines applied to the new regulations. He said it would be a good idea to use them for purchase and maintenance of the stations so he program would be self- financing.

**An Attendee** mentioned that he thought involving the industry in a volunteer manner would be important. He said their facilities would be perfect and safe for installing the 25 monitors left to be installed.

#### **Imperial /Mexicali Work Plan Status; Elizabeth Melgoza, California Air Resources Board**

**Ray Askins** mentioned that they were able to see improvements in the air quality last December and said this was due simply to rain and wind. He added that otherwise, the air quality would have been just as high if not more so than during previous years. He said that more enforcement is required to avoid the bad actors.

**An Attendee** asked if the data she was giving is from the 6 EPA stations in Imperial County and the one in Mexicali.

**Emily Melgoza** said she only considered the regulatory stations along with the one in COBACH, but that she did not include any other Imperial County stations.

**An Attendee** said she has observed that the worst air quality during winter holidays is due to off road vehicle activities, and that if there is no attempt made to deal with these kinds of activities on public land; they are not going to be able to solve the problem. Therefore, she said she hoped CARB could have some influence on recreational activities such as these.

**Emily Melgoza** mentioned that this is something that CARB is currently working with the District on, and that they have started having meetings with parks and BLM in order to solve that issue.

**Astrid Calderas** read an e-mail from Mr. Medina, a concerned citizen from Calexico explaining how agricultural burning is affecting their community. She added that this was not the first e-mail sent from this person and that the problem has not been solved, yet. She also mentioned that having more than one platform to obtain data regarding air quality can be confusing and discouraging as they have found various errors and discrepancies between the different platforms.

**Belen Leon** mentioned that the Air Pollution Control District has been responding to Mr. Medina's e-mails. She added that she believes **Emanuel Sanchez**; their Division Manager for Enforcement has invited him to have a private conversation with him.

**An Attendee** mentioned that the distributed purple air monitors have to be accurate otherwise; community will lose faith in the reporting.

**A representative from the Respira Network** said they were working on obtaining more accurate and useful information to the community in order to avoid this.

**Luis Olmedo** said they had had air notification or flag programs intermittently and that different schools throughout the Valley had entered the program. However, he mentioned that lack of support and funding for this program has been an issue. He also mentioned there are efforts happening to try to solve this issue as well as the issue of having accurate information on all air quality data platforms. He added that all the information from their monitors is available at CARB and that they can request it. He said they are joining efforts in order to provide the best, more accurate and most useful air quality data.

**Astrid Calderas** said that in her opinion, the best option would be real time data because the air conditions can change rapidly and this way, people would be able to make better decisions as far as their health.

#### **IV. Border 2020 Updates; Jeremy Bauers, USEPA**

**Belen Leon** explained that **Jeremy Bauers** from USEPA was not able to be there because he obtained new leadership on something else, but that they would have a representative from the USEPA at the next meeting.

#### **V. Updates on Federal State, and Local Governments**

**Belen Leon** explained that Imperial County Air Pollution Control District has a program called AB 617 Community Air Protection Program. She said that the Imperial County was fortunate to be one of the 10 communities selected for funding within the corridor of El Centro, Heber and Calexico. She also said they had been selected for emission reduction projects as well as for air monitoring projects, and that these projects would be developed through the AB 617. She added that one of the requirements from this program is to have a steering committee, which has been

formed with 25 community members and 15 alternates. She added that District has partnered with Comité Civico del Valle with Matt Dessert and Luis Olmedo co-chairing this meeting. The steering Committee has met 5 times since November and she said their next meeting would be held on February 13<sup>th</sup>. She said it was a public meeting so she extended an invitation for those who would like to attend. She also stated that through this program leads to the development of a work plan on which the community is assisting in developing it through the Steering Committee and their concerns will be integrated into the work plan. She said that as the program advances they would keep them informed on its development and implementation.

**Margarito Quintero** mentioned they had gotten funding of 14 million pesos through the Science and Innovation Technology State Council Mixed Funds from CONACYT in order to fix and update the air quality monitoring stations in all the state as well as creating new stations. He said he hoped to have done this by August.

**An Attendee** mentioned with regards to agricultural burning, that they were already working on the first publicity spot with the additional funds they obtained, and that this would be the first year of having television and radio spots to create awareness on the impacts of agricultural burning.

#### **VI. Closing Remarks / Date for Next Meeting**

**Belen Leon** said the next meeting was scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup> in Mexicali. She thanked everybody for being there.

**Meeting Adjourned.**