

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HAZARDOUS MATERIALS COMMISSION



November 23, 2019

MEMO

To: Sustainability Committee

From: Michael Kent, Executive Assistant to the Hazardous Materials Commission *MK*

Re: Consideration of Adding an Environmental Justice Seat to the Hazardous Materials Commission

The Contra Costa County Hazardous Materials Commission was established in 1986 to advise the Board, County Staff and the mayor's council members, and staffs of the cities within the County, on issues related to the management of hazardous materials. The Commission's current composition consists of thirteen members and alternates appointed by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors – two representatives of cities, three representatives of business, three representatives of environmental organizations, one representative of the League of Woman Voters, two labor representative, one representative of environmental engineering firms located in Contra Costa County, and one representative of the general public.

The Hazardous Materials Commission has a long-standing interest in environmental justice. The Commission wrote a report to the Board of Supervisors on environmental justice in October, 2000 recommending that the Board of Supervisors declare the County's commitment to environmental justice. This led to the Board of Supervisors endorsing the application of environmental justice as defined in California Government Code Section 65040.12, and directing the County Administrator to assemble the appropriate County departments to work with the Hazardous Materials Commission to develop and implement policies related to environmental justice in a Board Order dated October 11, 2000. The Commission subsequently worked with the County Administrator and the appropriate County departments to develop a report on environmental justice and participate in a pilot program on illegal dumping. This led to the Board of Supervisors adopting a policy on environmental justice in a Board Order dated September 23, 2003.

Members: George Smith, Chair, Rick Alcaraz, Jonathan Bash, Don Bristol, Fred Glueck, Frank Gordon, Mark Hughes, Steven Linsley, Jim Payne, Gabe Quinto, Mark Ross, Ralph Sattler, Leslie Stewart,

Since the adoption of the County's environmental justice policy in 2003 the Commission has conducted two formal reviews in 2008 and 2015 of the implementation of the County's environmental justice policy, and has written letters to the Board of Supervisors containing the results of their reviews and recommendations for further implementation of the County's environmental justice policy. The Commission has consistently addressed environmental justice issues in their workplan, and has committed to considering environmental justice concerns for all issues they address.

Members of the Commission meet annually with each County Supervisor to brief them on the work the Commission has been doing that year and to learn from each Supervisor issues of concern they have related to the mission of the Commission. When members of the Commission met with Supervisor Gioia on June 27, 2017 he recommended that the Commission create an environmental justice seat. The Commission had a lengthy discussion about Supervisor Gioia's recommendation at a subsequent Commission meeting and the Chairperson provided a written response to Supervisor Gioia on January 18, 2018. In that letter, the Chairperson explained that during the Commission's discussion, many members expressed the sentiment that even though they didn't specifically represent environmental justice organizations, they felt they understand environmental justice concerns, and take them into account in their deliberations and decision-making. Many members also felt that while an environmental justice champion such as Henry Clark no longer sits on the Commission, the interest and knowledge level, and culture of commitment to the principles of environmental justice on the Commission ensures that environmental justice concerns are being fairly addressed by the Commission. The Commission also acknowledged that this level of commitment needs to continue by ensuring their Environmental representatives understand, and are committed to, the principles of Environmental Justice. Therefore, in response to his concerns, the Commission decided to add a requirement for applicants to the three Environmental Seats that they have an understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of Environmental Justice as defined in County policy. The Commission has since applied this requirement when applicants have been considered for Environmental Seats.

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