

Community Steering Committee Structure and Operation

Consultation Group Discussion

November 18, 2020

This document is CARB staff's attempt to capture a possible consensus for addressing some of the priority changes to the Blueprint regarding Community Steering Committee structure and operations that have been put forward by the AB617 Consultation Group Subcommittee. CARB is providing this language as a potential discussion starting point for focused revisions to strengthen and improve the Blueprint.

Community Leadership

AB617 requires that Air Districts as they implement AB617 consult "*...with the state board, individuals, community-based organizations, affected sources, and local governmental bodies ...* ." It is important for air districts to partner with communities to ensure a community-driven process. To ensure this collaborative partnership in developing the community emissions reduction programs, air districts must form local steering committees.

In convening community steering committees, air districts must use a collaborative leadership model. This could include an air district working with a community group or groups as co-leads for the entire process, working with community members to co-host community steering committee meetings, or other approaches that ensure a partnership with local community-based organizations to promote broad community engagement and participation. The preferred approach is that community groups and the air districts serve as CSC co-leads. The CSC should determine what approach they would like to use. Regardless of the approach taken, community members must have a prominent role in setting agendas, conducting meetings, establishing priorities, and reviewing monitoring and emissions data that have been made easily understandable for the public.

Governance

Community steering committee meetings must be open to the public and operate in an open and transparent way to ensuring broad accessibility and transparency and ultimately effective identification of community priorities. This is especially important when it comes to CSC decision-making.

Once the CSC is formed, the district and CSC should discuss open meeting processes and determine how the group will proceed and govern its operations. The most formal is strict application of the open meeting requirements of the Brown Act. This approach

would provide the most certainty and detail for CSC governance, but also would apply the most restrictions on committee member actions and interactions outside of noticed meetings. Therefore, the group could decide that strict application of the Brown Act is more formal than needed, but could decide to follow its basic tenets without formally identifying as a Brown Act committee. Even less rigid structures are possible. The decision of what governance structure to use must be made by the CSC and be reflected in the CSC charter. Regardless of the structure the CSC chooses, the charter must identify the mechanism for decision-making as part of its governance approach.

Disclosure/Conflict of Interest/Recusal

The CSCs are intended to be the primary tool for the public consultation that air districts must conduct with the various stakeholders identified in AB617. So that the consultation process is as open and transparent as possible, community steering committees will be diverse ideally representing all the stakeholders called for in AB167. Committee members will have different positions on how business and other interests should participate in committee decision-making based on concerns over potential conflicts of interest.

Community steering committees and air districts must therefore discuss the processes that the committee will use to address potential conflicts of interest and disclosure of these conflicts. The committees must include procedures to handle these issues in the charter. For example, the charter must identify the specific mechanisms that community steering committee members must use to share their affiliations and financial interests and any policies related to recusal based on affiliation, financial interests, or other issues.

Decision-making/Dispute Resolution

Community steering committees should have an inclusive and diverse makeup that brings people who live, work, and own business in the community together with environmental justice organizations, government agencies, academia, and other stakeholders to understand community issues and ultimately recommend the actions to undertake to improve community air quality.

The Community steering committees must determine the public processes they will use to make decisions and resolve disputes and the charter must spell out these processes. Examples of processes to discuss include voting/decision-making procedures. For example, if it is by majority vote, what constitutes a quorum or if it is by consensus, how is consensus determined. It is inevitable that disputes will arise among the CSC members and between the CSC and air districts. Early training in collaborative problem solving and a familiarity with its principles is recommended for all participants—air districts, CARB, CSC members—to minimize disputes and more quickly resolve them when they arise. Third party, neutral facilitation is also recommended for the running of

CSC meetings and dispute resolution. Finally, the CSC charter should spell out expectations for codes of conduct for all participants.

Membership and Selection and Removal

The air district is responsible for convening the committee using an open, transparent recruitment, and nomination process. Steering committee member selection should incorporate language access to ensure language differences do not pose an obstacle to inclusion. The community steering committee will include community members who live, work, or own businesses within the community (e.g., community residents, small businesses, facility managers/facility workers, school personnel). Business perspectives must also be reflected in the community steering committee membership. This can include the owners of small businesses within the community, which are important community voices, locally-based business associations, as well as larger industrial sources, but committee membership must draw from workers or managers from the facility itself to keep the focus on the community.

The application process and the charter must clearly describe eligibility, how members are selected, stepdown or are removed from the Community Steering Committee, as well as any subsequent replacement procedures. The work of the CSCs is time intensive especially for the volunteer community members with jobs and family obligations. Therefore, the member resignation and removal procedures need to respect these time demands and balance them with the need for the CSC to complete its work in a timely fashion. After recruitment and nomination, the air district should post on their public webpage a list of all parties that indicated interest in being a community steering committee member.