

Minutes of the Air Quality Task Force Meeting

Mexicali/Imperial

January 9th, 2014
Mexicali

Co-chairs: **Martha Fonseca**; **Reyes Romero**

Attendance:

Reyes Romero, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Raul Tovar**, Air Quality Department in Baja California; **Belen Leon**, Air Pollution Control District; **Ray Askins**, environmentalist; **Claudia Cristerna**, citizen; **Michael Shore**, Engineering Institute at UABC; **José Guerrero**, independent; **Carlos Angulo**, Environmental Protection Agency in California; **Miguel Canales**, student at the Engineering Institute at UABC; **Luis Ortega**, Secretariat of Environmental Protection; **Margarito Quintero Nuñez**, Engineering Institute at UABC; **Rebeca Coreya**, Centro Integral del Medio Ambiente y la Salud; **Rene Acuña**, Economic Development Council in Mexicali; **Gustavo Magallanes Cortez**, SPA in Mexicali; **Luis Olmedo**, Valley Civic Committee, **Carmen Cristina Gordillo**, SPA in Mexicali

I. Welcome and Initial Comments

Reyes Romero welcomed everyone. He handed the microphone to **Raul Tovar**, who was there on behalf of **Martha Fonseca**, who is in charge of environmental legislation in the state of Baja California. **Raul Tovar** also thanked everyone for being there and explained that due to the Smog check program in the state, they had been very busy, and that Mrs. Fonseca was at a meeting regarding that program at the time. However, he said that she was going to try to make it later.

II. Revision of Minutes from Prior Meeting

Reyes Romero asked at that time for everyone to make any comments regarding the minutes from the prior meeting. **Ray Askins** mentioned that his name was not included the attendance list, note of that was taken to be corrected, and the minutes were approved.

III. Presentations; questions and answers

Comprehensive Model about Air Quality Management for he State of Baja California; **Carlos Angulo**

Reyes Romero said that in his opinion, the problem that they were facing every December was not only caused by fireworks, but also by burning in general. He added that they had been having the "Ambientalizate" campaign for about 4 or 5 years, and that even though they had seen some results, they had not been able to make people aware of the problem. He suggested for the group to propose actions that would reach government authorities in order to get better results.

Carlos Angulo mentioned that the key to the problem was education. He also mentioned that environment related activities were already included in the California school programs, and that this had been accomplished through courses given at the schools.

Ray Askins mentioned that the problem they had had there locally was that they had a new government, which after all the work and money they had spent on campaigns to discourage people to use fireworks in the past couple of years, justifies the use of fireworks by saying it is a tradition. He added that in his opinion, there were not enough safeguards out there to protect public health.

Gustavo Magallanes Cortés said that as a citizen he could notice that everything was already written. However, he said that in his opinion they were lacking will to accomplish their goals. He said that a lot of laws had to be enforced, and that every authority had to assume their role in order to comply with established regulations. In addition, he mentioned that even though fireworks were a problem, burning in general was a bigger problem. He said with regards to the fireworks, that the solution was simply for the Secretariat of National Defense to take away the permit to the company that has permission to sell them in 5 different states in the country, but that was not very likely to happen. He said they had to work on changing people's habits through regulations, and that they were already working on this. He mentioned that education should go hand in hand with law enforcement. He said that he would like for them to have a better control of air quality, and that in his opinion, they should have accurate updated information on this matter.

Ray Askins said to be tired from hearing excuses as to why the monitors aren't working. He also said to be tired of the ecological police not being around at the most critical times when people are burning wood.

Gustavo Magallanes said that ecological police was a good idea, but that it was neglected. He said they needed a no burning tolerance policy. He mentioned that the private sector, the state government, and this group, should start promoting penalizing bonfires.

Margarito Quintero said to agree with **Carlos Angulo** with regards to environmental education in schools, but he also mentioned that another important aspect was for the authorities to take actions founded with reports and real facts. He said that the link between INE, SEMARNAT, SPA, etc. was very important when it came to making decisions. He also said that in his opinion, it was very important that public officials went to people who had worked on this for many years to learn from them and based on this, start making decisions because otherwise, they would not be able to advance as they wished to. He finally asked why Chiapas was included on the program which **Carlos Angulo** had mentioned, even though this was not a border state.

Carlos Angulo mentioned that California had been authorized to buy carbon credits, and that Chiapas had been included in that program because forest carbon credits were found there

Miguel Shore asked what barrier existed to control the production of fireworks, since in his opinion it was a crime to continue to allow this production and fireworks distribution.

Gustavo Magallanes said he agreed with him and that there should be a bigger control over this.

Margarito Quintero mentioned with regards to the Pro Aire program in Mexicali that it would be interesting for **Gustavo Magallanes** to promote the reintegration of the follow up nucleus to find out what is going on with each of the strategies and actions recommended there so that the program is really effective.

Raúl Tobar mentioned that three complete, and one manual station are operating on the air quality monitoring network. He also mentioned that their processes were audited by federal authorities in Mexico and EPA in the U.S. and they were not as bad as they seemed to be. He also mentioned with regards to operation costs that the annual operation cost for the network state wide was 4 million that he would ask for 3, and would be given one and a half. He said that they definitely had to share all the information and meet again to follow up on the Pro Aire program. He also said with regards to the environmental education book, that it was important to implement it again

Luis Ortega said that the monitoring station at COBACH, which measures PM 10 and PM 2.5 is the only one that he can see, and that even though there are 4, it is the only one that shows up on the Internet. He mentioned that concrete actions needed to be taken. He also asked that through this group, severe sanctions were promoted for bonfires.

Carlos Angulo said they had an opportunity since the secretary of environmental protection in Baja California was personally invited by the Mexico – California Relations Board to Sacramento on the 14th. He mentioned it was a good chance to put together all the necessary information about the issues that worry them for him to take them and address them at this meeting.

Carlos Magallanes mentioned that if it was possible, he would like to be invited as well. He mentioned that the municipal government in Mexicali was interested in taking over the monitoring system.

Luis Olmedo said he could sense a lot of passion in this group and he also said there should be an interest in making economic distribution equal for everyone. He also mentioned that they needed a strong will for the goals in this group to be accomplished, and he wished everyone luck on their projects.

Ray Askins asked **Dave Fege** about a study that was supposed to have been made six months ago. He wanted to know about the grant process for this study.

Dave Fege said the grant process still existed. He explained that the EPA border program has some grant funding for border environmental issues and that they work through BECC to administer that program. He said that in July they issued a solicitation for grant proposals that focused directly on the goals and objectives of Border 2020. He said they received a number of proposals not only for air quality, but also for water quality, management of hazardous waste, and environmental health. He explained that one of the areas in air quality that is directly mentioned in their goals for 2020 relates to idling vehicles at the ports of entry. He said they evaluated and selected those proposals, and he said that on the following Tuesday in San Diego, there was going to be a public announcement of who would be awarded proposals. He mentioned that Imperial County submitted two proposals, one for each of the ports of entry to look at the emissions at those ports, especially as they relate to the wait times. He said they had awarded those proposals and congratulated **Belen Leon** and **Reyes Romero** as well as the staff of APCD on their work on writing the proposals. He also mentioned that it would be an 18 month to two year study and that as part of the work plan, there would be some bi-national meetings with the public and environmental agencies such as SPA, EPA, and SEMARNAT to get input into the type of data that will be needed, and also for the District to explain the methodology that's going to be used. He explained that this study would be estimating the emissions from the vehicles to make an assumption well founded that if I can reduce emissions, I can improve air quality and public health.

Reyes Romero mentioned that they were trying to have a presentation by the contractor for this project at the meeting to be held in May in Calexico. He also thanked Carlos Angulo for his presentation.

IV. Border 2020 Projects and Updates

Reyes Romero asked **Dave** if he had anything to add related to Border 2020 updates.

Dave Fege said he had no updates to add.

V. Updates from Federal, State, and Local Governments

Reyes Romero said that from March 15 to March 28, they were going to have workshops to present their SIP Pm 2.5 Program. He said everyone was invited and that they would be receiving their invitation through e-mail shortly. He said they had planned to submit the document to their supervisor's board on May 21st. After this, the document should be sent to the state around July, and that it would finally be sent to EPA for its final approval.

Dave Fege mentioned that this Implementation Plan will put in place for the first time rules and regulations at the local level that are aimed to reduce the PM 2.5 emissions so Imperial County can be in attainment with the state and federal regulations.

Raúl Tovar said that this year was going to be very important for the monitoring network since it would become now their responsibility. He said he hoped to continue in this project and to continue meeting with this group.

Margarito Quintero asked what was going to happen with the instruments for the monitoring station that had been dismantled.

Raúl Tovar explained that it had not been their intention to dismantle the station in the first place. He said to have the resources to install it at the roof and that in a couple of months it would be relocated.

VI. Wrap Up/Date of Next Meeting

Belen Leon suggested May first, but because it is a Holiday in Mexico, she then suggested May 8th.

Carlos Magallanes suggested a closer date, and they agreed on April 3rd.

Reyes Romero thanked everyone for being there and said he was looking forward to seeing them again at the next meeting on the first week of April in Calexico.

Meeting Adjourned.