

## Minutes of the Air Quality Task Force Meeting

Mexicali/Imperial

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Mexicali

Co-Chairs: Reyes Romero; Saul Guzman

### Attendance:

Reyes Romero, Imperial Valley Air Pollution Control District;  
Raul Tovar, SPA;  
Jesus Jimenez Payan, PROFEPA, Baja California;  
Margarito Quintero Nunez, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Miguel Canales, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Rocio Bojorquez, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Gricel Xancal, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Gabriela Peñuelas, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Tania Rodriguez, SPA, Baja California;  
Belen León, Imperial Valley Air Pollution Control District;  
Lourdes Mesa Trejo, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Claudia Cisterna, Voz de la Frontera Newspaper;  
Miguel Schorr, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Fernando Amador, CARB;  
Ray Askins, environmentalist;  
Ivan Aviñeda, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Agustin Oropeza, UABC Engineering Institute;  
Meosotiz Torres, Environmental Protection Management;  
Ramon Preciado, UABC Engineering Institute  
Nancy Romero, UABC Engineering Institute

### I. Welcome and Initial Comments:

**Reyes Romero** welcomed everyone there and thanked them for having taken off time from their important agendas to be there. He then handed the microphone to **Raul Tovar** who also welcomed everyone, and on behalf of doctor Greysburg thanked everyone for being there.

### II. Revision of Minutes from Prior Meeting

**Reyes Romero** asked for any comment with regards to the minutes from the prior meeting to be made at this time. **Ray Askins** said that some comments made by Saul Guzman had been omitted. It was agreed that they were going to try to get those comments to be included on the next minutes. After these comments **Reyes Romero** approved the minutes.

### III. Presentations; questions and answers

**Heavy Metals in Urban Roads Sediments in the City of Mexicali; Engineer Lourdes Montserrat Meza Trejo**

**Ray Askins** asked **Engineer Lourdes Montserrat Meza Trejo** if in her opinion, stopping the use of red gasoline would significantly improve air quality in Mexicali.

**Engineer Lourdes Montserrat Meza Trejo** said that first of all, she would like to clarify that she was referring to suspended matter, while he was referring to particulate matter from combustion. She explained that she had focused more on the wear and tear due to the use of brakes, tires, and lack of road maintenance. However, she added that in her opinion they should work on coming up with a new gasoline formula.

**Ray Askins** then asked since gasoline contains lead, which is harmful to human health, especially that of young children, if sweeping the streets at night to get rid of the lead residues on them would help.

**Engineer Meza** said that something that they had been working on was placing regional plants along the urban roads so that they can absorb certain pollutants. She also suggested controlling other pollution sources such as illegal burning to help lower these kinds of pollutants.

**Ray Askins** mentioned that it was his understanding that fireworks were already approved to be sold in Mexicali during the holiday season.

**Reyes Romero** said that he had understood completely the opposite. He said that fireworks had apparently been banned in the city during the holidays.

**Miguel Schorr** mentioned that the research was very detailed. However, he mentioned that they had not taken into consideration gases from fuel combustion. He explained exhaust pipes are made of steel, and in some cases, galvanized steel covered with zinc, and that the zinc that they had found, very likely came from the exhaust pipes. He also mentioned that there was a university in Lima, Peru, which had proposed using vegetable compost which can be thrown on the roads at night when there is less vehicle traffic, for it to absorb ground pollutants, and then recollect it again to be used in land fields.

**Engineer Meza** thanked the observations and suggestions from **Doctor Miguel Schorr**. She added that her research, as she had mentioned earlier, was very basic, and that it was a work that could continue advancing.

**Jesus Jimenez Payán** mentioned that in his opinion, it would be more practical to take on actions in which, they should demand each of the government levels to act according to regulations, and that in the case of lack of them, they should stipulate some. He said they could not go on like this, and that they were about to present before the governor and different state representatives a document that shows the problems in the city, but not for them to be analyzed, but for the governor and representatives to take actions to solve them. He added that they were planning on inviting legislators as well, in order to give them the opportunity to serve the people who voted for them. He said he was convinced that many studies can be done, and that everyone knows that there is air quality monitoring. He mentioned that years back he had asked for those samples to be provided to PROFEPA so that in their lab they could have determined heavy metals. However, he said those had been sent to Utah for their analysis and that up to the present time, he was not aware of the results of such analysis. He also said that today we all know without the help or information from any analysis, that the concentration is high, that is harming public health, and that is increasing asthma in children. He mentioned that people were tired and were already reacting in a violent way. He mentioned they had taken the roads up to the geothermal plant in protest against the pollution it causes. He said they had time to waste, that it was time to take action. He ended saying that he wanted to invite everyone to make a commitment and participate on the making of an action plan.

**Ray Askins** said there was a contradiction on behalf of the government when they say to be working on improving public health, but then they celebrate inaugurations and other events with fireworks, and the military burns confiscated drugs. He asked if these actions helped the air shed. He also mentioned that there was not official agricultural or tire burning control. He also mentioned that they didn't have enough air quality monitoring because the government claims not to have money for that purpose, but yet they do have the money to spend on fireworks. He said that all of these situations were very frustrating for him.

**Engineer Meza** asked what the action plan would be to accomplish having more severe regulations to face these kinds of problems

**Jesus Jimenez Payán** mentioned that the first they needed was political will. He said the relationship and communication between the three government levels should be improved, and team work should be promoted more. He said that task forces such as this one could collaborate through action plans that would translate into proposals to be taken and presented to the corresponding authorities, exercising the right to demand the government to take action.

**Margarito Quintero** mentioned that the purpose of a task force such as this one came from the purpose of both countries to improve the border environment. He said their task was to be informed about what is going with our environment, to listen to the representatives from the three government levels, the community, and NGOs that could help out with these problems and take actions. He said that unfortunately, the group lacked presence of news reporters who could transmit what is discussed in the group through a press release or a newsletter so that the public would be aware of what goes on with regards to air quality. He also said that another reason why the work of this group was set back was the lack of continuity on the programs that could help improve the environment. He said that an example of this was the case of the Pro Aire Program. He said that in Mexicali, the follow up group for Pro Aire had been structured last governmental period, but that it had not been pushed up throughout the current governmental period. He added that he had been at a meeting on which it was mentioned that there were funds at SEMARNAT that had not been used by the state because they had not signed an agreement. These funds would help environmental monitoring in Mexicali. He added that in cases such as this one, it is shown that neither the state nor the local governments were working on improving air quality. He finished saying that he had taken the liberty of speaking to the local representative Alberto Martinez, who is also the director for the Baja California State Environmental Committee to propose him to exhort congress to obtain funds to at least guarantee salary payment to the technicians who give maintenance environmental monitoring stations. He also said that in his opinion, a lot could be accomplished through task forces such as this one, as long as they work together with the press and the three different levels of government.

**Reyes Romero** suggested elaborating proposals so that this group could work in a more effective way, and giving time from the agenda at the next meeting to go over them. He said they should be solid proposals with action plans so that they would be able to complete them. He mentioned that the environmental movement in Mexicali was very young, and that even though sometimes it might be frustrating to see that their efforts not always deliver the results they were expecting, they have accomplished changes that have helped air quality in the region. He said that it had been thank to this group that the thermoelectric plants currently work installing certain control measures.

**Raul Tovar** proposed **Jesus Jimenez Payán** to start working on the filter analysis next year. He said they could make an especial sampling schedule to be analyzed at the lab. He also said they already had an analysis on heavy metals in Tijuana from a coworker of theirs, and that as soon as it was published he would share it with the group.

**Reyes Romero** thanked engineer Meza for her presentation. He said it had been very interesting.

**Ray Askins** said that it takes someone who is a head of an organization to go and meet with the reporters who are responsible for what is published on these papers. He said it would take someone like **Reyes Romero** to go to the press so it would have a bigger effect on what goes on in groups such as this one being published on those papers.

#### IV. Border 2020 Project Update; Dave Fege

**Reyes Romero** apologized on behalf of **Dave Fege**, who could not be there because he was attending another meeting out of town. He explained that because of this, they would have updates on the Border 2020 Projects.

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

**Reyes Romero** informed with regards to the Imperial Valley, that they have had their supervisors meeting, on which their SIP for PM 2.5 had been approved. He said that through a state study that it was a part of this same plan, they had determined that the violations on the PM 2.5 standards in the Imperial Valley were due to thermal inversions in the region, especially throughout the holiday season. He also mentioned that if violations were caused by international pollutant transport, these should not be taken into consideration for planning purposes. He said that because of this, they were currently going over some of their rules to reduce certain pollutants that are PM 2.5 precursors, such as ammonia to avoid implementing extremely strict rules that would be very expensive and would help improve the problem. He said that their plan would be presented before the state on December 18<sup>th</sup> at Sacramento, and that if it were approved, it would be presented to EPA for a last review, and for them to approve it.

**Margarito Quintero** said that what was going on with their plan was in his opinion, very important. He mentioned that in the case of Mexico, part of the functions of the Pro Aire Program was precisely to have a group whose task would be to supervise and follow up on the actions described on the program. However, he mentioned that up until that time in Mexico, nothing was known with regards to that.

**Jesus Jimenez Payán** mentioned that as far as he knew, ammonia combined with nitrous oxide formed air nitrogen molecules and water. He said that if Reyes could give him more information on this matter, it would be greatly appreciated.

**Engineer Meza** asked where they had determined the ammonia came from.

**Reyes Romero** responded that ammonia came mainly from feed lots and compost material.

**Raul Tovar** mentioned that a project by the EPA was going to be launched soon. He said that they were going to install monitors at two stations in Mexicali. He said that the SEMARNAT funds were of about 6 million pesos, and that they were waiting for those funds to be released to ask to use them next year.

**Fernando Amador** explained that ARB had applied for a federal grant of about 300,000 dollars to do a PM 2.5 study in the city of Mexicali at two monitoring stations. He said they were going to rebuild UABC's shelter and install PM monitors in UABC as well as in the COBACH site. He mentioned the study was a two year study on PM 2.5 and that they were going to try to determine the sources. He said the contract was going through reviews at that time. However he also said they expected it to be approved before March, and awarded by March.

**Ray Askins** said to be a member of the Community Committee and that they had 4 million dollars to place throughout Imperial County. He said these monitors would enable them to identify the hot spots.

**Meosotiz Torres** apologized for being late and said that SPA was also waiting on a monitoring station linked to the state network to be installed. She mentioned to also be working on a program to promote environmental culture in one of the most problematic zones as far as emissions from tire burning. She said to have been working together with local schools on an environmental violation prevention program.

**Margarito Quintero** asked if they had already decided where the monitoring station would be located.

**Meosotiz Torres** said they were planning on placing it in a strategic location, which was not already covered by the stations already installed by the state.

**Margarito Quintero** asked what her posture was as far as fireworks burning.

**Meosotiz Torres** said that her director's posture had already been published on different media, and that the state did not have the legal authority to prohibit fireworks sale.

**Ray Askins** said that they had honored a memorandum of understanding signed by the governor of California with the state of Baja California, and that they also had NAFTA; he said there is an environmental section on it that is law. He also mentioned there was a treaty between Mexico and the United States protecting 69 miles of air shed in Mexicali both coming and going, and that there was the Border 2020 Program, which is currently going on. He added that he thought that if they studied all of these carefully, they'd see that they do have the authority.

**Belen Leon** mentioned that they were continuing with the media campaign to prevent burning. She said this campaign had started since 2011, and that they had re-done the commercials for this fiscal year. She showed one of the commercials at the meeting. She said they were already being showed on channels 54 and 7, and that they were going to start showing them on channels 3, 14, and 66. She also mentioned they were being broadcasted on popular local radio stations on both sides of the border. She said they were planning on giving copies of these commercials to be shown at public and private local schools, hospitals and clinics.

**Ray Askins** said he was willing to go to the different schools to present those CDs because he thought this was a great idea.

**Raul Tovar** said they had an environmental culture program through which they would distribute copies of these commercials to the different schools.

**Jesus Jimenez Payán** suggested that they could try to create a partnership among the government agencies to find a way so that through this campaign the phone numbers to call in case of violation, could be given out.

**Reyes Romero** said that these commercials were the final product for this year's campaign. However, he said that his idea was very good, and that they could probably include the phone numbers on the next campaign.

## **VI. Wrap Up / Date of the Next Meeting**

**Reyes Romero** proposed February 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> for the next meeting. Everyone agreed on February 5<sup>th</sup>. **Reyes Romero** thanked everyone for having attended this meeting, and said to be looking forward to seeing everyone again at the next meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned.**