

Action Summary Minutes  
San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP (EJAG)**

Thursday, January 22, 2026

*The Environmental Justice Advisory Group meeting was held via video teleconference (VTC): Central Region Office, Governing Board Room, 1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno, the Southern Region Office, VTC Room, 34946 Flyover Court, Bakersfield and teleconference in the Northern Region Office, VTC Room, 4800 Enterprise Way, Modesto. Members of the public were allowed to participate in-person at any of the referenced locations or remotely via Zoom webinar. The CAC Meeting was also webcast.*

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair, Laura Gutile, called the meeting to order at 5:42 pm

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present:

Laura Gutile, **Chair**  
Randeep Grewal  
Keith Freitas <sup>1</sup>  
Thomas Helme  
Reyna Rodriguez<sup>2</sup>  
Manuel Cunha  
John Sanders

Madera County At Large Representative  
Kern County At Large Representative  
Kings County At Large Representative  
Stanislaus County At Large Representative  
Ethnic, Small Business Owner  
CAC Industry Agriculture Group Representative  
CAC Environmental Interest Group Representative  
(Alternate)

A quorum was present.

4. APPROVE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 23, 2025

Hearing no comments or changes from the members, the chair deemed the minutes approved.

Public Comment – No individuals provided comments during the time allotted for public comments on this item.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No individuals provided comments during the time allotted for public comments on this item.

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<sup>1</sup> Left at 5:56 p.m.

<sup>2</sup> Arrived 5:52 p.m.

6. CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Gutile welcomed the members and wished everyone a Happy New Year. Ms. Gutile emphasized the need for respectful, focused dialogue, collaboration, and ensuring all members could participate.

7. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR A TWO-YEAR TERM

Ryan Hayashi, Deputy APCO, explained that the current chair, Ms. Gutile, has reached the end of her two-year term and provided a brief overview of the process.

Ms. Gutile asks if there are any nominations.

Mr. Cunha nominated Laura Gutile, the current Chair, to serve another two-year term.

Mr. Freitas nominated Derek Williams for Chair. He suggested delaying it for fuller board and member participation. Mr. Hayashi confirmed the election could proceed, noting the agenda provided proper notice and the bylaws allow action if a quorum is present.

Mr. Grewal nominated John Sanders for Chair. Mr. Hayashi explained that Mr. Sanders is ineligible to serve as Chair since he is an alternate, not a primary member.

Mr. Helme asked if Mr. Williams would need to formally accept the nomination before moving forward. It was confirmed that a nominee must accept the nomination.

Public Comment – The following individual provided public comment on this item:

- Bianca Lopez

Ayes: Grewal, Gutile, Cunha, Helme, Rodriguez

Nays: None

Abstain: Sanders

***Motion carried to appoint Ms. Gutile as Chair of EJAG for a 2-year term.***

8. APPOINT AD HOC EJAG GRANTS COMMITTEE

Mr. Hayashi explained the importance of the ad hoc EJAG Grants Committee and the opportunity to make recommendations to the District's Grants spending plan.

Ms. Gutile appointed the following members to the committee:

- Laura Gutile
- Thomas Helme
- Manuel Cunha
- Reyna Rodriguez

*This item was taken out of order.*

11. UPDATE ON ATTAINMENT PLANS AND RULES

Tim Franquist, Director of the District's Air Quality Planning Department, provided an update on the District's attainment plan and rule making efforts.

Mr. Helme questioned if the 2008 and 2015 eight-hour ozone standards were affected at all by EPA's issuance of "failure to obtain" for the 1997 eight-hour ozone standard. Mr. Franquist explained that the standards are all standalone, and the District is waiting for EPA approval on the contingency package to update five coating rules to meet those contingency measures.

Mr. Helme then asked if industry standard comes first or if the District creates the rules and then works with industry. Mr. Hayashi explained that there are different types of rules, and that this rule was considered a technology advancement rule. It was adopted with the understanding of the District working alongside manufacturers to determine where technology was headed, and creating compliant units.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2026 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Mr. Hayashi outlined the annual review process for the group's goals and objectives, noting that feedback on the previous year's action plan is welcomed. He emphasized that while suggestions can be proposed anytime, the group aims to collect recommendations now to finalize the goals. He also highlighted efforts to better align agenda items with the Environmental Justice Advisory Group's objectives and shared that some proposed clarifications would be presented for consideration after initial feedback. Mr. Hayashi reviewed the current document.

Mr. Helme recommended translating as many documents as possible into Spanish, given the large Spanish-speaking population, and suggested a process for identifying other relevant languages. He also noted gaps in localized air quality monitoring and proposed including information on non-regulatory monitors

for community awareness. Finally, he recommended providing basic Environmental Justice Advisory Committee training at least every two years.

Mr. Sanders suggested working with businesses—including agriculture, oil and gas, and general industry—to recognize and support those complying with current rules. He noted that larger operations face more inspections and compliance challenges and proposed that elevating these efforts through the EJAG to the Citizens Advisory Committee and CARB could help relieve unnecessary pressure while highlighting successes. Mr. Hayashi agreed that Mr. Sanders' point fits well with agenda discussions and emphasized the importance of bringing CARB to the EJAG to present on programs, successes, and challenges, noting such presentations are valuable and should continue.

Mr. Cunha suggested listing all air monitors for clarity, supported CARB presentations for feedback, highlighted industry and District successes in improving air quality, emphasized regular member training on rules, and recommended compiling recommendations into a living document for ongoing review.

Ms. Rodriguez emphasized the need to provide materials in relevant languages for community access and suggested creating small, portable packets—like flyers or postcards—that committee members can easily use to engage and inform the community. She stressed that members' role is to serve the community, not themselves, and recommended equipping them effectively for outreach.

The Chair continued this item to the next meeting.

Public Comment – The following individual provided public comment on this item:

- Bianca Lopez

10. UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISTRICT'S DRIVE CLEAN IN THE SAN JOAQUIN PROGRAM

Brian Dodds, Program Manager, provided an update on the Drive Clean in the San Joaquin program, noting the replacement of 11,000 high-polluting vehicles with \$120M in state funding. He shared that the Governing Board approved an additional \$12.5M to support queued applications, with Valley CAN continuing outreach, applicant assistance, and program management.

Mr. Helme praised the program's outreach to underserved communities and asked for clarification on whether the reported 98% participation refers to individual SB 535-designated census tracts having at least one applicant. Mr. Dodds confirmed that the 98% participation means nearly all SB 535-designated

census tracts had at least one applicant, noting the few exceptions include a prison and a very small population area.

Mr. Cunha praised District staff and emphasized the need for continued funding.

Public Comment – The following individual provided public comment on this item:

- Bianca Lopez

11. AB 617 AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Stephanie Ng, Director of Community Strategies and Resources presented the AB 617 program and the District's broader community engagement efforts. Ms. Ng started with looking at the District's progress on the Annual Reports. She also highlighted the District's community efforts by way of community events held in partnership with Valley CAN. She then took a broader look at the benefits of the Community Air Protection Program and how it affects low-income community's valley-wide, with over 1,200 tons of emissions reduced. Ms. Ng then shared more on the interactive capabilities of the Annual Report through utilization of the District's ESRI Geographic Information System. She then recapped the progress of CERPs throughout the AB 617 communities.

12. DISTRICT COMMENTS

Mr. Hayashi stated that Objective Nine is to ensure consistent and improved attendance at meetings, emphasizing the importance of having members present. He informed the group that a system will be implemented to accept applications for non-CAC member positions. This process is intended to ensure that if a member leaves, there are potential candidates ready to fill the vacancy quickly, reducing delays in maintaining full membership. He referenced Thomas's earlier comments and expressed hope that Thomas continues in his role, but noted the process will help identify replacements if needed.

13. POTENTIAL FUTURE EJAG MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Cunha suggested reviewing the group's goals and engaging CARB through the EJAG and CAC to share updates on programs like Clean Cars. He proposed inviting CARB to provide guidance or a presentation that balances economic and public health considerations.

Ms. Rodriguez suggested a future presentation on the Drive Clean program, noting that while it meets its goals, the 2006 vehicle eligibility cutoff is too restrictive. She recommended exploring expanded eligibility to better serve Central Valley families, citing unmet need at a recent Tulare County clinic.

14. PUBLIC COMMENTS (2<sup>nd</sup> Opportunity)

No individuals provided comments during the time allotted for public comments on this item.

15. EJAG MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Grewal shared that this would likely be his last meeting as his term expires next month and he will be unable to renew due to travel constraints. He thanked the members, staff, and the District for the opportunity to serve Kern County, noting his 100% attendance and commitment over the past two years.

Mr. Helme recommended allowing county EJAG members to have alternates, similar to the CAC, to ensure continuity when members cannot attend. He also suggested improving virtual participation options.

Ms. Rodriguez expressed support for allowing virtual meetings, adding that virtual access could expand participation in Tulare County and make involvement easier for small business representatives with limited time and resources.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.