

RAQPC Action Item Summary

RAQPC Bylaws: Article 2: Section 5

5. Receive public comment and assist in disseminating public information on air quality issues, plans, and programs.

Discussion:

RAQPC should continue to track and report on the progress towards accomplishing the necessary emissions reduction and other policy objectives needed to meet national air quality objectives. This can be accomplished with the cooperation of all regulatory agencies stakeholders participating in air quality improvement programs.

Summary:

The Air Quality Reference Guide (AQRG) is a RAQPC document that summarizes several air quality issues. It introduces the general public to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) emissions, the health risks associated with NAAQS emissions, the trends of the NAAQS emissions in the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria area, and programs used to reduce the NAAQS emissions. The AQRG also provides resources such as studies and organizations that are focused on NAAQS emissions and other air quality issues. Additionally, the AQRG contains a proactive section where the reader is encouraged to adopt behaviors that will help reduce NAAQS emissions.

The last AQRG update was in 2007, and several issues have changed in the past three years. A RAQPC subcommittee, chaired by Laura Blackburn, League of Women Voters of the Houston Area, was comprised of representatives of the three categories of RAQPC Membership: Citizens and Environmental Organizations, Business and Industry, and Local Government. The subcommittee spent several months making decisions upon what issues needed to remain, and what new issues needed to be added to the AQRG. The subcommittee then compiled the information, and made several compromises as how to best present the material in an unbiased and factual manner. Finally, the subcommittee restructured the AQRG to make the document more “reader friendly”.

The AQRG was brought to a vote during the August 26, 2010 RAQPC meeting. It was determined that the AQRG would return to the subcommittee for one final round of revisions. The compromise was that the AQRG would return for a vote at the September 30, 2010 RAQPC meeting where a vote for approval will be taken without motions for amendment.

RAQPC Bylaws: Article 2: Section 2

2. Review and make recommendations to H-GAC Board of Directors on proposed air quality rules, regulations, and guidances.

Discussion:

Advisory Committees are formed by H-GAC's Board of Directors to secure information, expertise and recommendations in the diverse areas of H-GAC's work. RAQPC is tasked with remaining current with environmental issues and plans in order to provide the Board of Directors accurate information to make sound decisions on environmental issues.

Summary:

The HGB area has made significant strides towards improving air quality in recent years through a concerted effort and considerable financial and resource investment by area governments and local industry. The expected strengthening of the ozone standard in the near future by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will make achieving that standard a more daunting exercise. A RAQPC subcommittee, chaired by Dana Blume, Port of Houston Authority, was formed to study this issue and compose a suggested comment letter.

The subcommittee is concerned that ozone precursor emissions that are authorized by TCEQ permitting actions in counties adjacent to the HGB nonattainment area could potentially hinder the HGB area's future ability to reach attainment. The situation may be aided if the TCEQ would examine the potential significance of impact from increased NO_x and VOC emissions on the HGB ozone nonattainment area during the review of any Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permit application for a source in a county adjacent to the HGB ozone nonattainment area. The review should include any required modeling associated with the permit application.

During a phone conversation with the subcommittee, TCEQ acknowledged that there is a lack of EPA guidance regarding screening tools and in determining which modeling techniques are appropriate for certain situations. TCEQ mentioned that they have submitted comments to EPA regarding the lack of guidance.

If RAQPC approves to recommend that the H-GAC Board of Directors submit the comments, the comments will be presented to the Board via a background paper. H-GAC Staff suggests that RAQPC also views the background paper to assure that RAQPC comments are portrayed as accurately as possible.

Should the H-GAC Board of Directors agree to submit the comments, the H-GAC Executive Director has authority to alter the letter's format and tone.