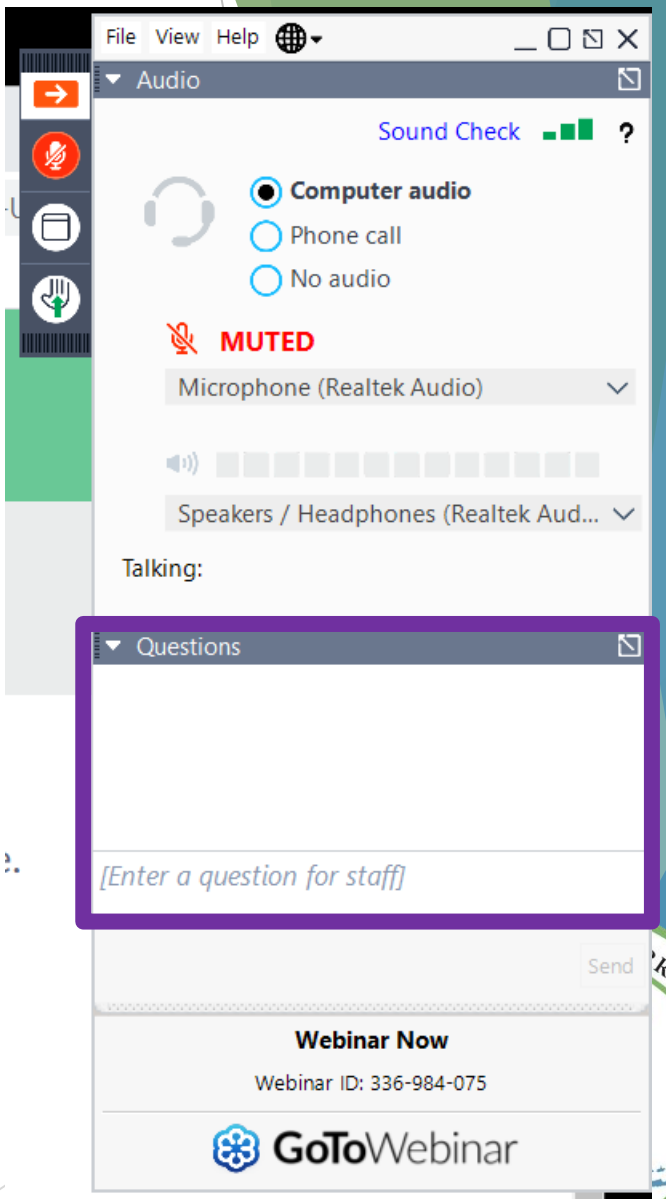
Public Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

ASTSWMO 2020 Annual Meeting

11/02/2020

Before we start

- All attendees will be muted throughout the webinar.
- **Questions:** Use the **Questions Panel** in the dashboard to send questions to the speakers during the webinar.
- **Note who the question is directed to in your submittal.**
- The webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the ASTSWMO website.



Alison Aungst

Kurt Kochen

USACE 2015

Former Nansemond Ordnance Depot (FNOD) Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Virtual Involvement

Prepared for:

ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND TERRITORIAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS

Prepared by:

EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc., PBC

Alison Aungst

Michael O'Neill

2 November 2020

History of FNOD

- Played an integral role during World War II in supporting operations at the Hampton Road Port of Embarkation
- Evidence of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) discovered in 1984
- Six source areas (SA) initially identified
- USEPA placed FNOD on the National Priorities List (NPL) on 22 July 1999
- USACE Identified 22 projects (included HTRW, MMRP, BD/DR and CON HTRW)
- Projects cover multiple SAs and AOCs
- Progressing towards completion of all projects

FNOD RAB Meetings

- Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) formed over 20 years ago
- Meetings conducted on a quarterly basis
- RAB members include public, USACE, USEPA, and VDEQ
- 15-20 RAB members on average per meeting
- Additional technical support personnel present (up to 10)
- Meetings are open to the public
- Typical meeting format includes:
  - Introductions,
  - RAB business and landowner updates,
  - Technical updates and presentations,
  - Open discussion and Q&A period

FNOD RAB Virtual Meeting

- September 2020 RAB meeting was conducted virtually
- Meeting used the *Webex* platform
- EA solicited input, concerns, and questions from RAB members in advance of the meeting
- Provided the necessary meeting information in advance
  - link to *Webex* meeting
  - meeting number/password
  - call in information (for phone)
- Provided meeting reminders
- Conducted a successful "Trial Run" with USACE and EA in advance of the RAB meeting
- Meeting was conducted on 3 September 2020 from 1830-2030 EST

Virtual FNOD RAB Procedures

✓ Be professional, organized, and provide uninterrupted meeting presentation format

- Instructed RAB members to log on at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting start time
  - Avoided major delays waiting for people to log in
- EA Facilitated meeting from the EA office:
  - Professional background
  - Reliable internet service/no interruption of meeting presentation from participants working from home
  - Had multiple presenters knowledgeable in slides in case a USACE presenter had an interruption in internet service
  - “Cameras on”

Virtual FNOD RAB Procedures

- Discussed agenda and feedback process with members to ensure adequate time for responses
  - Used role call method instead of “going around the room”
  - Hand raising feature was used for questions/comments on issues
- Member and position voting was scheduled to be conducted
  - Used hand raising feature to vote on RAB members/positions
- Nearly all confirmed RAB members were in attendance
- Outside public participation from several non-RAB members

Challenges and Improvements

- Initial reluctance and concern expressed by some RAB members due to little or no experience with virtual meetings
  - EA worked with RAB members prior to the meeting to answer questions and ensure they were comfortable with the login process, equipment, and meeting format/interaction process

- Instances where attendees unmuted their microphone accidentally and external noises (i.e., pets, family, television, etc.) were heard
  - Informed attendees to mute microphone unless they are speaking (may need to do this early and often, as necessary);
  - If the virtual platform allows, have ability to mute attendees during presentations or send a private message to attendee(s)

Challenges and Improvements

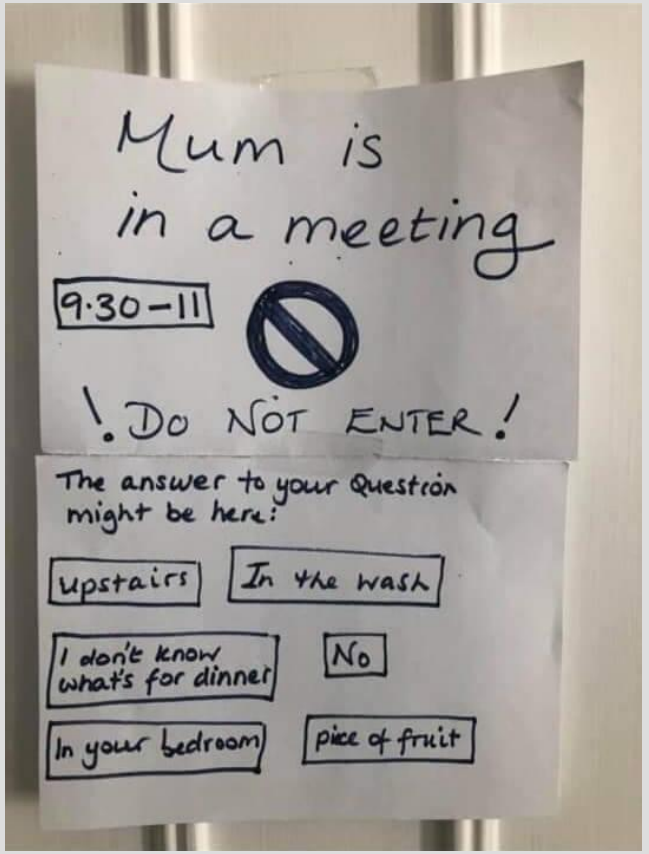
- Instances where attendees muted their microphones but tried to respond
  - Informed attendees to unmute microphone;
  - If the virtual platform allows, have ability to unmute individual attendees
- Issue with *Webex* computer audio causing some to join by phone for audio
  - Have participants test setup to confirm computer audio connectivity; help diagnose problem, and provide call in # as backup
  - Use other platforms (Zoom, Teams, etc.) if stakeholders have a preference

Closing/Summary

- ✓ Great relationship between RAB members/public and stakeholders prompted the successful turn out
- ✓ Straightforward communication, reminders, and accessibility/ease for attendees are integral for involvement
- ✓ Willingness to work with attendees in advance of the meeting to answer questions and support participation.

Closing/Summary

- ✓ Discuss the rules of engagement and features available to support participation (visual feature raising your hand/raising your virtual hand) to ensure understanding and prevent breakdown (interruptions)
- ✓ Practice set up /prepare for interruptions
- ✓ Professional setting/reliable internet connection
- ✓ Stress importance of muting microphone when not speaking.



Closing/Summary

- **With COVID, virtual communications is now a quintessential part of both our professional and personal lives**
  - **Provides for face-to-face communications, promotes information sharing, drives collaboration, and enables the sharing of project files and data**
- **At EA, we use Microsoft TEAMS – familiar with all platforms**
  - **Dedicated In-House Support Staff**
    - **Provide a high-level of expertise**
    - **Train employees on new features and capabilities**
    - **Issue clear instructions /guidance to ensure its effective use**
  - **Boosts our ability to be organized, transparent, and efficient**
  - **EA Routinely hosts Virtual Events**
    - **USACE-Baltimore District Industry Day**
      - Over 250 participants, 4 speakers, included a practice run
    - **MEGA Maryland Conference**
      - A series of 17 webinars over 5 weeks, 8 practice sessions, over 200 registrants, more than 40 speakers

Thank You!

Ms. Alison Aungst

Email: aaungst@eaest.com

Shereen Kandil

Community Engagement in a COVID World

Shereen Kandil
U.S. EPA Community Affairs Team Leader
Kandil.Shereen@epa.gov
212-637-4333

Pre-COVID Engagement

- Regular meetings with communities, Community Advisory Groups
- Community Interviews
- Fact Sheets
- Door-to-Door
- Information Repository (libraries, town halls)
- Public Availabilities/Poster Sessions
- Public Meetings
- Residential/Commercial Relocations

The COVID Challenge

- **Face-to-face engagements**
- **Internal/external meetings**
- **Access to print/mail service**
- **Access to checks (for small purchases, like newspaper ads)**
- **Varying community challenges (internet accessibility, languages, 508-compliance)**
- **Relying on other organizations (newspapers with limited access)**

EPA's Community Engagement in a COVID World

Telephonic Communications

- Telephone interviews
  - —coordination (I.e. CIP)
- Phone discussions – no public face-time

Written Communications

- More written communications
  - —Fact Sheets (COVID updates; community updates)
    - Improving quality

EPA's Community Engagement in a COVID World, continued…

Written Communications, continued

- Email updates vs In-person updates
- Email correspondence with elected officials
- Site Profile Pages (website) Updates

Public Meetings

- Pre-recorded Meetings
- Live Virtual Meetings (public, CAG, etc)
  - —Training and Guidance (Guide, PowerBi)
  - —Three dry run Rule

Example: *Fact Sheets*

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

TIPS FOR TRANSLATING TECHNICAL TERMS DOCUMENT

CORRESPONDENCE GUIDE

"DID YOU KNOW" EMAILS

GRAMMAR TIPS

BROWNBAG TRAININGS

Example: *Public Meetings*

- Eventbrite
- Virtual Public Meeting Guide
- Dry Run #1 Presentation – Three Dry Run Rule
- Email Templates (before/after meeting)
- Site Profile Page updates
- Internal Information Repository
- PowerBi

Thank you!

Shereen Kandil, ***Community Affairs Team Leader***

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Public Affairs Office

Kandil.Shereen@epa.gov

212-637-4333

Amy Brittain

- https://cushing-refinery-deq.hub.arcgis.com

Questions?

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SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS