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City of Falls Church

Meeting Date: 03-26-18	Title: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL 2017 ANNUAL REPORT	Agenda No.: 8(b)
Proposed Motion: None.		
Originating Dept. Head: Wyatt Shields, City Manager 703-248-5004 Kate Walker, Environmental Programs Coordinator 703-248-5297		Disposition by Council:

2

3 This report summarizes activities of the City’s Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) in
4 2017. The ESC advises the City Council on a range of environmental issues affecting our City.
5 It meets monthly and has nine positions, all of which are currently filled. This year the ESC has
6 six high-school student participants.

7 I am the Chair of the ESC, and Thomas Cash is our Vice Chair. Three ESC sub-committees also
8 advance environmental progress in Falls Church: the Energy Transition Sub-Committee (ETS),
9 led by Tim Stevens, the Education Task Group (ETG), led by Sarah Bayldon, and the Habitat
10 Restoration Group (HRG), led by Melissa Teates. Membership in these sub-committees is open
11 to any city resident, and there are 12 non-ESC member participants. Kate Walker, the City’s
12 Environmental Programs Coordinator, serves as staff liaison for the ESC, ETS and ETG.
13 Charles Prince from the City’s Green Space crew is staff liaison for the HRG. See Appendix A
14 for an organizational chart.

15 In 2017, the ESC worked towards supporting the goals we adopted in 2016, which can be found
16 in Appendix B. Along with the ETS, we dedicated much of our efforts towards sustainable
17 development. Following are highlights from 2017.

18 George Mason High School RFP:

- 19 • The ESC hosted a panel discussion on green schools in October to encourage the
20 inclusion of environmental goals in the George Mason High School RFP. Thanks to the
21 active engagement of schools and City leadership in this panel discussion and subsequent
22 dialogue, the RFP ultimately incorporated several important environmental targets,
23 including: achieving LEED Gold or higher certification, designing the school to be Net
24 Zero Energy ready, and striving for sustainable landscaping and 15% tree canopy cover.
- 25 • The ETS was instrumental in influencing the GMHS RFP’s sustainable energy targets,
26 including the addition of a geothermal system to the GMHS RFP. The ETS helped
27 complete a geothermal system feasibility study for GMHS by securing technical and
28 financial support from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and
29 providing supporting data as needed.
- 30 • The ESC collaborated with the Tree Commission to encourage sustainable landscaping
31 goals in the GMHS RFP. Starting with a joint meeting in May, and continuing with joint

32 letters and ongoing dialogue, we have forged a very productive relationship with the Tree
33 Commission and look forward to continuing to work with them and other Boards and
34 Commissions in future.

35 Sustainable development more broadly:

- 36 • As the City continues to redevelop, the ESC would like to see a transparent and
37 predictable sustainable buildings policy, increasing the certainty that new buildings or
38 major redevelopment will be sustainable. In 2017, we explored different models for a
39 potential Falls Church sustainable buildings policy, including Arlington County's bonus
40 density incentive and modification of the special exceptions process. We are open to any
41 solution that increases the number of certified green buildings in the city and that works
42 for the development community. We look forward to further collaboration with
43 developers, other Boards and Commissions, city staff and City Council this year, in the
44 hopes that the City may adopt a policy by year-end 2018.
- 45 • The ESC engaged with the Broad and Washington development team, encouraging the
46 project to achieve LEED Gold or higher certification in alignment with several other
47 Board and Commissions and with what the developer has achieved elsewhere. We also
48 encouraged the developer to accept the Tree Commission's recommended \$20,000
49 contribution to the Stormwater Fund to offset the loss of ecosystem services from mature
50 trees that will be removed from the site.
- 51 • We dedicated a meeting to considering the environmental design elements of the Railroad
52 Avenue cottage development. We supported that development and look forward to
53 seeing it emerge, with EarthCraft Gold certified cottages, a number of sustainable energy
54 components, and improved stormwater capture on the site. In addition, we recommended
55 incorporation of environmental goals into the cottage housing ordinance.

56 The ESC provided input to the Comprehensive Plan vision chapter and encouraged the Mayor to
57 sign the We Are Still In letter on the Paris Climate Agreement. We also provided
58 recommendations and support for the City's outreach in Richmond on legislative agenda.
59 Throughout the year, the ESC was pleased to hear positive updates from city staff and citizens on
60 a range of other issues, including bikeshare, composting, commercial recycling and stormwater
61 management.

62 The Energy Transition Sub-committee continued its work on energy efficiency and renewable
63 energy issues affecting the City, in service of its goals, listed in Appendix C. The committee
64 met on the first Thursday of the month, except August, and its members are listed in Appendix
65 A.

66 In addition, to its work laying the groundwork for a geothermal system at GMHS, in 2017 the
67 ETS achieved the following:

- 68 • Adoption of City-wide greenhouse gas reduction goals via Resolution
- 69 • Update and more accurate City-wide greenhouse gas inventory (via Metropolitan
70 Washington Council of Governments, or MWCOG)
- 71

- 72 • Successful introduction of thermal imaging cameras at Mary Riley Styles Public Library
73 • Conducted Solarize campaign, and led small jurisdictions in sign-ups.

74

75 In addition, the ETS conducted research on the following:

76

- 77 • Renewable energy opportunities for the City (potential for participation in large-scale
78 offsite renewable energy project via Northern Virginia Regional Commission, use of
79 Property Assessed Clean Energy financing, use of Power Purchase Agreement financing
80 for rooftop solar systems in City schools, application of solar canopy designs for City
81 Hall and Railroad Avenue cottage housing project)

- 82 • Greenhouse gas emissions estimations for city operations (in process) and a comparison
83 of proposed Railroad Avenue cottage development against four hypothetical single
84 family homes.

- 85 • Energy-related policies and plans (possible energy legislation at the General Assembly,
86 MWCOG 2017-2020 Regional Climate and Energy Action Plan, update of statewide
87 residential building code, positions related to energy use in proposed new Falls Church
88 City developments)

- 89 • Other clean energy solutions for Falls Church, such as examination of LED streetlight
90 conversion from older technologies and possible use of Volkswagen settlement funds.

91 The Habitat Restoration Group held eleven planting and invasive plant removal events in 2017,
92 in Cherry Hill Park, Crossman Park and Howard E. Herman Stream Valley Park (HEHSVP).
93 This was increase over the nine events held in 2016. We continue to focus efforts in HEHSVP in
94 restoring the native ecology in cooperation with Earth Sangha, a non-profit organization
95 specializing in native plantings. Funding for plant purchases came in part from a grant from the
96 local Village Preservation and Improvement Society. We also continued the tradition of holding
97 an annual native plant sale in May and were successful in recertifying the City as a National
98 Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat.

99 The Education Task Group meets on an *ad hoc* basis for to run the Operation EarthWatch
100 program in the elementary schools. Operation EarthWatch is our environmental education and
101 action program for elementary school students. In 2017, over 100 students participated at the
102 city schools, Thomas Jefferson and Mount Daniel, with additional participants from Saint James
103 Catholic School. This spring we are celebrating the completion of our 25th year.

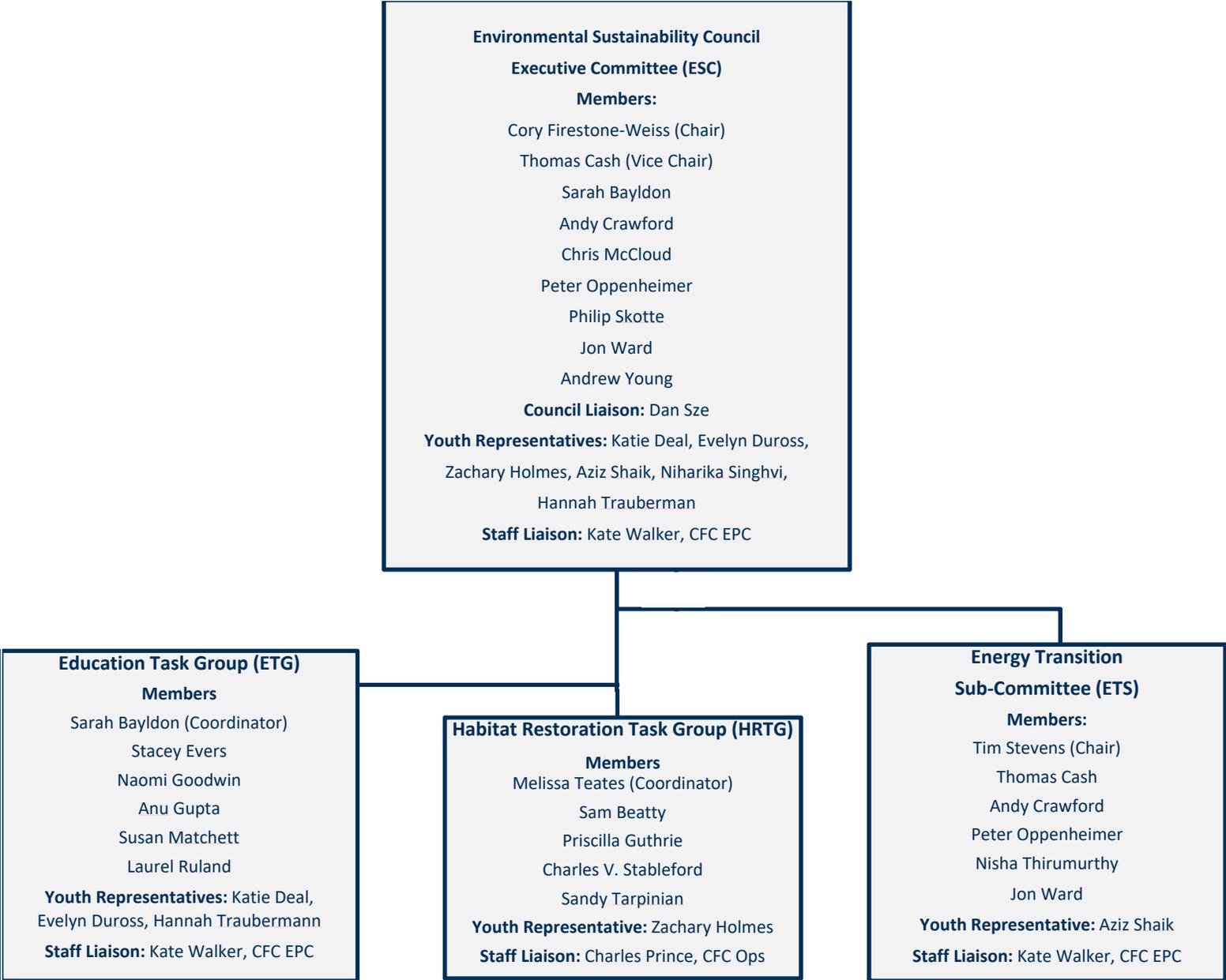
104 In 2018, the ESC and its sub-committees look forward to continuing to work towards a
105 sustainable future for Falls Church City.

106 Cory Firestone Weiss

107 Chair, Environmental Sustainability Council

108 Cc: Members of the ESC

Appendix A – ESC Organizational Chart



**Environmental Sustainability Council
Executive Committee (ESC)**

Members:

Cory Firestone-Weiss (Chair)
Thomas Cash (Vice Chair)
Sarah Bayldon
Andy Crawford
Chris McCloud
Peter Oppenheimer
Philip Skotte
Jon Ward
Andrew Young

Council Liaison: Dan Sze

Youth Representatives: Katie Deal, Evelyn Duross,
Zachary Holmes, Aziz Shaik, Niharika Singhvi,
Hannah Trauberman

Staff Liaison: Kate Walker, CFC EPC

Education Task Group (ETG)

Members

Sarah Bayldon (Coordinator)
Stacey Evers
Naomi Goodwin
Anu Gupta
Susan Matchett
Laurel Ruland

Youth Representatives: Katie Deal,
Evelyn Duross, Hannah Traubermann

Staff Liaison: Kate Walker, CFC EPC

Habitat Restoration Task Group (HRTG)

Members

Melissa Teates (Coordinator)
Sam Beatty
Priscilla Guthrie
Charles V. Stableford
Sandy Tarpinian

Youth Representative: Zachary Holmes

Staff Liaison: Charles Prince, CFC Ops

**Energy Transition
Sub-Committee (ETS)**

Members:

Tim Stevens (Chair)
Thomas Cash
Andy Crawford
Peter Oppenheimer
Nisha Thirumurthy
Jon Ward

Youth Representative: Aziz Shaik

Staff Liaison: Kate Walker, CFC EPC

Appendix B – ESC Vision and Goals

City of Falls Church Environmental Sustainability Council Vision October 2016

The Falls Church City's Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) seeks to help the City achieve the environmental vision set forth by City Council:

Falls Church City Council Environmental Vision

The people of Falls Church believe protecting and nurturing a healthy natural environment is one of their highest callings. The city's public and private development reflect this belief in tangible ways. Parks, open spaces, and clean waterways are valued as recreational, ecological, and economic resources. Environmentally friendly residential and commercial buildings throughout the city incorporate nationally accepted benchmarks for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. The city integrates sustainability into all of its operations, including a strong emphasis on reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

The ESC believes that achieving this environmental vision is a necessary component of the long-term economic growth of our city and well-being of our citizens. The committee aims for the City to build on its record as a local and state-wide leader on environmental issues.

To continue bringing the City's Environmental Vision to life, the ESC believes the City should make a concerted effort to meet or exceed the five environmental goals set forth by the Village Preservation and Improvement Society in its *Five Environmental Goals for Falls Church: A Progress Report for 2015*. The ESC will help the City target the following goals:

1. Maintain existing levels of tree canopy by 2025¹. As of 2016, tree canopy is 46%.
2. Increase residential solid waste recycling to 75% by 2020, from a baseline of 68% in 2016.
3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below the 2008 baseline of 138,000 tons CO₂e by 2020².
4. Increase effective pervious surface to 65% by 2020 from a 2012 baseline of 59% to reduce stormwater runoff.
5. Achieve LEED Silver ratings for all new and 15% of existing large commercial and multi-family residential buildings by 2020, and achieve LEED or equivalent third party certification for all new development or major redevelopment of single family homes. As of September 2016, the City of Falls Church has five LEED certified commercial or multi-family residential buildings. As of 2016, 20 single family homes have participated in the City's Green Homes Award Program, which recognizes third party energy certifications.

¹ VPIS sets a goal of 40% tree canopy by 2025. ESC prefers to maintain current canopy levels, which are higher.

² Based on data gathered by City of Falls Church staff and volunteers on the Energy Efficiency Climate Change Task Group.

Appendix B – ESC Vision and Goals

The ESC will help the City to make progress towards the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee Action Plan. The City should leverage any resources that MWCOG or others may provide to help meet our environmental goals.

In addition, the ESC will help the City monitor progress and seek to achieve best regional practice with respect to other environmental concerns, such as invasive plants, light pollution or the loss of pollinators.

Finally, the City should report progress against these goals on an annual basis along with plans for making progress in the future.

The ESC will develop periodic work plans to guide its work advising the City on how it may achieve these goals, with a specific focus on:

- Ensuring that public facilities, including the schools, are designed, built, and operated in a manner consistent with the City's goals, including those outlined in this vision statement.
- Achieving high environmental standards in all new development within the City, both large and small scale.
- Encouraging the attainment of high environmental standards among existing facilities within the City, including commercial and residential.
- Educating Falls Church residents and businesses on the value of achieving these goals and how they may do so.

ESC will collaborate with Falls Church City residents, the City Council and City government staff, businesses and organizations such as the Village Preservation and Improvement Society and others to help the City achieve its vision. Its members will approach their work with mutual respect and a commitment to serving the public interest.

Appendix C – ETS Goals

The goals of the Energy Transition Sub-committee are:

- Reduction in community-wide energy use
- Expansion of renewable energy
- Recommendation of positions to City Council on energy issues
- Dissemination of information on energy issues
- Interaction and cooperation with other groups in the City (e.g. boards and commissions, civic groups such as VPIS, etc.), with neighboring jurisdictions, and regional organizations (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and Northern Virginia Regional Commission)