

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL (ESC) and
ENERGY TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS)**

Thursday, April 21, 2022, Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

MINUTES - approved

1. **Attendees: ESC Members:** Joseph Schiarizzi (Chair), Andy Young, Tatiana Eaves, Mike Trauberman, Jennifer Tabola, Jon Ward, Andy Crawford **Student Member:** n/a. **City Council Member Liaison:** Debbie Hiscott; **Planning Commission Liaison:** Tim Stevens **City Staff:** Kate Walker, ESC Staff Liaison. **ESC/HRTG:** Amy Crumpton; **Guests:** Christopher Behr, John Ferris, Sam Butler.
2. This meeting was held via electronic communications using ‘Microsoft Teams.’ This meeting was held pursuant to and in compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Section 2.2-3708.2 and state and local legislation adopted to allow for continued government operation during the COVID-19 declared emergency.
3. **Public Comments:** None
4. **Annual Report**

The committee discussed its draft annual report. Joseph Schiarizzi opened the discussion and noted the importance of setting ESC goals. The group reviewed the draft goals one by one. Mike Trauberman commented that the goals in the first set seemed a bit ambitious and asked who will spend the time taking the necessary actions. He added there might not be a lot of school-related developments to warrant it being a key goal. Jon Ward agreed that there is not a lot in the pipeline on school-related infrastructure projects. Joseph Schiarizzi said that he thought that assisting City staff should be a key priority. In response to a question, Joseph clarified that the goals are for the ESC and not for City staff. The group removed the school bullet point from the list of priorities.

Sam Butler suggested including the residential built environment as a focus area like neighborhood initiatives. Joseph said that we could include the residential environment as a future area of focus. Mike Trauberman noted that the City has limited authority in this area and is governed by the state’s uniform building code. ESC could still do some outreach.

Andy Young urged the group to think about how it would like to use its time over the next 7 months and what goals we will seek to achieve. The group discussed the benefits of focusing on the special exception process. Another area could be to potentially spur the City toward renewable energy.

Chris Behr asked if there has ever been a survey done of residents. Joseph Schiarizzi said that that could be a broader project. Kate Walker noted that the City has information from Dominion Energy on renewable energy usage in the City, but it might underestimate the total usage. Jon Ward commented that future public meetings held to develop the Climate Change Mitigation Energy Action Plan (CCMEAP) would provide additional opportunities for residents to express their priorities. The group decided to delete the action item related to municipal energy use.

Transportation

Joseph Schiarizzi introduced the transportation section, noting that we’ve had goals on electric vehicles for City and making the City safer for walking and biking. He noted that we learned a lot from last month’s ESC/CACT joint meeting. There is good momentum from last month’s meeting.

Jon Ward commented about EV adoption. Kate Walker noted that EV adoption will fall under the CCMEAP . The group further discussed the ESC role in outreach and supporting staff. Mike Trauberman commented about Chapter 5 (Environment for All) and said that the CCMEAP could be time-consuming. Kate Walker added that working with consultants is a different process than we followed in drafting Chapter 5 and she hoped that the consultant would touch base with the ESC several times during the plan’s development.

Green Space

Kate Walker commented that she added green space goals to the draft report as it aligned with one of the five sections of Chapter 5. The group indicated it would work with the Urban Forestry Commission on their goal of a green space standard. Joseph Schiarizzi noted that green space issues had not had a lot of specific planning in recent months.

Consumption and Waste

Joseph Schiarizzi indicated that he wanted to add urban agriculture for consideration. Kate Walker added that the City develops a solid waste master plan every 20 years. It’s currently due for renewal. She said there might be a separate task force for solid waste issues. It would be valuable to have an ESC member attending the waste task force if a member were interested. Joseph Schiarizzi said that the ESC should be involved this year and that this would be a good goal. Tatiana Eaves noted that she was glad to hear about the focus on green space, among other topics.

Other comments

The group discussed how the report could highlight that ETS goals have been rolled into the ESC goals.

Kate Walker thought the CCMEAP will probably focus on the community plan first, then the government plan, but the order to pursue the plan development is not finalized. The MOU for the community plan has taken a while, so it might not be practical to switch to the government plan. Debbie Hiscott confirmed that the funding is only available currently for the community plan.

The group reviewed the overview language at the beginning of the draft report.

Stormwater

Mike Trauberman raised stormwater issues and discussed the possibility of updating the City code on stormwater standards. He volunteered to stay on top of these issues. Joseph Schiarizzi suggested that stormwater should be an ESC goal.

Public Utilities Commission

Debbie Hiscott noted that she would serve as the City Council liaison to the PUC and said that she would be able to convey some of these goals to the City Council. Kate Walker said that ESC could help to advocate for green infrastructure rather than gray infrastructure. Amy Crumpton said that the second goal for the UFC is green infrastructure and advocated for building a close relationship with the PUC.

Joseph Schiarizzi thanked the group for their work on it and said he looked forward to sending a revised final version of the report to the City Council soon.

5. Budget Issues

Jon Ward opened the discussion on the budget. The group discussed sustainability initiatives for the City. Andy Young said that the City spends \$935,000 per year on electricity and gas, most of

which was for electricity. An energy manager would help the City seek greater efficiency in its energy use.

The group considered several funding needs:

1. Energy manager
2. Government energy action plan (\$50,000)
3. Chief Climate Officer/Chief Environmental Officer
4. Higher quality renewable energy certificates

It was also suggested that ESC should ask that future budgets be evaluated using an environmental lens.

Debbie Hiscott discussed the budget process. She noted there's uncertainty in Richmond on whether the City will receive the grocery tax or not, resulting in a potential \$1.8 million swing. She emphasized that the City needs to put money behind to its environmental goals. The \$50,000 for a government energy plan would be a strong ask and would be a leading contender. She said we might have an opportunity to fund some of these goals mid-year. She also emphasized the importance of individual ESC members writing to the City Council in favor of certain environmental goals.

Joseph Schiarizzi requested a rollcall in which ESC members noted their individual priorities. The group generally supported the energy manager as a top priority and endorsed all of the five requests. Debbie Hiscott noted there might be a few more opportunities with one-time funding that are not staff-centered. Sam Butler advocated for greater efficiency in the use of plastics and recycling.

Action: Jon Ward offered to send around a letter to ESC with the group's priorities.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The group discussed potential recommendations for the CIP. Jon Ward added that we want to move away from natural gas in the upcoming HVAC projects at the middle school and at the community center (both identified in the CIP). The group discussed ideas for HVAC systems at both facilities and stormwater infrastructure. The final list that the group created included:

1. Community Center HVAC system – use heat pumps, not gas
2. MEH Middle School new HVAC – avoid gas pre-heat
3. Stormwater project designs need to use new IDF curves
4. Oak Street Elementary vestibule
5. Falls Church contribution to Capital Area Food Bank facility – encourage energy efficient design and renewable energy
6. Use locally sourced materials for gray infrastructure
7. Future CIPs: support Planning Commission comments regarding bike infrastructure, green infrastructure, removing sidewalk impediments
8. Equipment for local plastic recycling

Action: Jon Ward offered to draft and circulate a second document regard CIP recommendations.

5. Bicycling Event Follow-up

Joseph Schiarizzi indicated he would send notes from last month's ESC-CACT bicycle event to the City Council. The group decided to send the version that Kate Walker had drafted.

Action: Joseph Schiarizzi would solicit comments and send to the City Council by Monday 25 April.

7. Subcommittee Reports

Planning Commission – Tim Stevens thanked the ESC for providing ideas to include for next year’s CIP. He noted that staff has recommended that “odd year” CIPs do not add new projects but the ideas would roll over to the following year.

ETS – Jon Ward updated the group on the Virginia Village energy efficiency effort. Solarize and the Capital Area Solar Co-op are up and running in the City.

ETG – No update.

HRTG – 1) Amy Crumpton noted that there are two more habitat restoration projects scheduled for the spring. 2) Parks and Recreation Department will have the master plan for the Fellows Property soon. 3) She also mentioned that there would be an upcoming Arbor Day celebration.

8. Other updates

Staff Liaison Report

1) Kate Walker mentioned that VA Tech had decided to move forward with work that will support the West End redevelopment project. 2) She suggested that the ESC maintain awareness of the East End Small Area Plan that is now being developed. 3) Public Works sent a letter to Rep. Don Beyer for electric vehicle stations and EVs and were seeking ESC feedback. Jon Ward commented that it would’ve been more helpful to have been approached earlier in the process. Joseph Schiarizzi questioned this initiative and its sustainability benefits. The group opted to not offer a formal comment on this proposal and recommended the City engage with ESC earlier in the process for future projects.

9. Review and Approval of March 2022 ESC Minutes: Minutes were approved unanimously.

10. Adjourned about 9:50 p.m.