

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

Thursday, June 17, 2021, Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

MINUTES

- Attendees: ESC Members:** Andy Young (Chair), Mike Trauberman, Jon Ward, Andy Sakallaris, Andy Crawford, Joseph Schiarizzi, Stacey Evers; **Student Member:** Terah Nguyen; **City Council Member Liaison:** Debbie Hiscott; **Planning Commission & CBC:** Tim Stevens; **City Staff:** Kate Walker, ESC Staff Liaison; **ESC/ETS:** Stacy Noblet **UFC & HRTG:** Amy Crumpton; **Guests:** Dave Gustafson (CACT), Matt Adams (public)
- 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

City Council Member Hiscott informed the group about discussions currently underway in multiple jurisdictions in favor of allowing more electronic meetings because of their improved accessibility. Boards and Commission members are asked for their support, through the list and contact circulated by email. She noted the passing of Stuart Freudberg, a City resident who worked for four decades on air and water quality issues through MWCOG. She has also forwarded information about the winner of the most recent Smart Cities competition as news of interest to ESC members. Council Member Hiscott is exploring having each Board or Commission meet with City Council to discuss their goals, objectives and any barriers that they may be facing. The ESC is tentatively scheduled for this joint meeting in September.

The Meridian High School is planning a new "Sustainability Academy". The school will offer a course this fall entitled "Power and Energy" and 15 students have enrolled. The solar panels at the new school will be installed by this fall and a tour of the facilities is tentatively being scheduled for September.

Kate noted that ESC does have an electronic participation policy adopted under current enabling legislation. Currently there are no provisions for hybrid meetings. In person meetings are set to resume with a six-month transition period. The City Clerk will notify all parties when the city will resume in-person meetings.

Matt Adams, a member of the public, had submitted a comment asking how to increase public awareness and discussion of environmental awareness and climate change throughout the city. The group discussed a number of specific actions to increase citywide awareness. These included:

- adding a specific environmental paragraph or section to the Focus on Falls Church Newsletter
- increasing environmental articles in the Falls Church News Press
- linking specific environmental articles from the City web site.

- Conducting an interactive environmental scavenger hunt and/or creating a physical timeline feature.

4. Planning for proposed meeting with City Council - identifying priority topics

ESC members discussed possible topics for discussion with City Council. Items identified include:

- Environment for Everyone Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Plan categories and action items
- Land use
- How City Council addresses climate change in their actions, and what their priorities are
- Green building policy
- Budget for environmental actions e.g. sustainable procurement, outreach and education rooftop solar; recycling for Falls Church businesses and pushing past recycling to policies that reduce consumption
- Climate policy e.g., is City Council willing to advocate for a societal cost of carbon?
- Electric vehicles
- Increasing multimodal transportation
- Stormwater and green infrastructure issues - what is our role c.f. the Stormwater Task Force
- Virginia legislative initiatives

Council Member Hiscott suggested ESC might want to present their priorities first specifically in light of what might be actionable using American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding, and secondly in terms of longer-term policy and legislative priorities.

5. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Mitigation in the Special Exception process - possible cooperation with Village Provision and Improvement Society (VPIS)

VPIS has written a letter on climate change to City Council, which was recently supported by the Citizens for a Better City group. VPIS has asked if ESC would be in favor of writing a joint letter with VPIS and other organizations advocating that LEED Gold certification, 20% improved energy efficiency in buildings and solar photovoltaic installations on buildings should be regarded as essential in Special Exception projects. The first two proposed requirements were recently added to the approved secondary criteria for Special Exceptions. The ESC already supports many of the concepts in the existing VPIS letter and could use the VPIS letter in advocacy. ESC will continue to support and engage with VPIS and other groups on environmental priorities.

6. Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT) safe route to schools

Dave Gustafson, Stormwater Task Force Member and CACT Chair, briefed the ESC on the latest Stormwater Task Force and CACT actions. CACT has sent recommendations to City Council on Guiding Principles for a Neighborhood Sidewalk and Mobility Program, current and future safe routes to the Middle and High School and possible future protected bike lanes. CACT hope to have a joint meeting with City Council soon, and will keep ESC informed. Dave and Andy have been considering a weekend demonstration event, possibly tied to the Farmers Market, on Park Avenue this fall, in coordination with local businesses. Council Member Hiscott suggested that the event

could be coordinated with the Falls Church Public Schools (FCPS) Run for the School event to be held on September 12.

7. Subcommittee Reports

Energy Transition Subcommittee (ETS): Jon Ward noted that energy modeling predicts that the energy efficient design elements advocated for by ESC will result in a projected energy savings of \$100,000 per year. ETS is now focusing on ensuring that adequate vehicle charging infrastructure will be provided, and that data and lessons learned from Meridian School regarding energy issues will be recorded to support decision making about future projects in the schools and City buildings.

ETG Sarah Bayldon - see staff update.

Habitat Restoration Task Group (HRTG)/Urban Forestry Commission (UFC): Amy Crumpton noted that Recreation & Parks Director Danny Schlitt is pushing staff to draft a Master Plan for Fellows Park by September/October. Additionally, she reported that during the period from May 2020 thru May 2021, 517 volunteers worked 1026 hours on habitation restoration. City staff landscaping crew worked an additional 129 hours in the parks. Amy also noted that Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has asked people to take down bird feeders and empty or regularly disinfect birdbaths to try to combat the bird disease currently circulating.

8. Other updates

Staff Liaison Report: Kate Walker stated that Operation EarthWatch ended the year with a recognition ceremony and Naomi Goodwin will take over next year. Kate also informed the group that the Police Department will be asking City Council to encumber end-of-year funds for the purchase of four electric police cars. These cars will be used for Public Safety Aides and command vehicles. Alexandria has put together an EV Ready plan for the City, which we might want to consider as a basis for a similar plan of our own.

Kate is also working on an EV outreach program for the Fall Festival with possible demonstration of electric vehicles and electric bikes. She also noted that Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments has launched a web site for climate planning (climatepartners.org) that could be useful in our outreach efforts.

Stormwater Taskforce: Andy S reported that in their most recent meeting the Storm Water Task force was looking at how to increase revenue, how to fund the six major projects already identified, and how and whether to create a Utilities Commission. They are scheduled to report to City Council by the end of June 2021.

9. Review and Approval of May 20th 2021 Minutes: Minutes were approved.

10. Adjourned 9:30 p.m.