

**FAIRFAX COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

DATE: Wednesday, May 11, 2011
TIME: 7:15 P.M.
PLACE: Conference Room, Hidden Oaks Nature Center

MEMBERS PRESENT

Stella Koch (Chairman, At-Large)	Marie Flanigan (Providence)
George Lamb (Vice chairman, At-Large)	Kevin Sun (Student Member)
Linda Burchfiel (At-Large)	Richard Weisman (Sully)
Frank Crandall (Dranesville)	Glen White (Mason)
Frank Divita (Braddock)	Larry Zaragoza (Mount Vernon)
Patricia Greenberg (Hunter Mill)	

MEMBERS ABSENT

Johna Gagnon (Lee)	Robert McLaren (At-Large)
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STAFF

Kambiz Agazi	Noel Kaplan
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OTHERS PRESENT

Taylor Beach (Fairfax ReLeaf)	Kristin McLaren
Carlton Burkhammer (Fire and Rescue)	Ron Tuttle (DPWES-Stormwater)
Judy Cronauer (DPWES—Code Analysis)	Ellen Vogel (VDOT)
Amy Gould (Fairfax County Restoration Project)	

Presentation of Kristina McLaren’s high school science fair project: “The Effect of Fertilizer Runoff on the Growth of Microbial Communities in a Freshwater Environment”

Ms. McLaren collected water samples from Lake Accotink and evaluated the effect of adding nitrogen fertilizer to the water samples. She evaluated 5 samples, including a control with no additional fertilizer added. The results showed that even minimal amounts of fertilizer disturbed the natural balance of the growth of organisms within the sediment. Her conclusion was that certain microbacteria benefited from the surplus of nitrogen nutrients; however, it was not advantageous to all microbacteria.

Briefing from Ellen Vogel, Northern Region Landscape Architect, Virginia Department of Transportation, Northern Virginia District, regarding regulations governing planting efforts within highway rights-of-way.

Ms. Vogel is a landscape architect with the Northern Regional District. The planting of vegetation in public rights-of-way is regulated by the Land Use Permit Manual Section 24VAC30-151-620. Ms. Vogel reviews the permit applications to ensure that the proposed plantings will follow safety regulations. The application is available by contacting Ms. Vogel and is a fairly simple agreement.

The statute states that placement and maintenance of plant materials by individuals or organizations may be allowed under permit. The requirement is that the applicant must agree to indefinitely maintain any altered roadside area in perpetuity. VDOT reserves the right to reclaim and restore such permitted area to its original condition or otherwise establish turf in accordance with VDOT Road and Bridge Specifications. No invasive plants are allowed and the permit can be terminated by either party. Ms. Vogel referenced a "Permittee Agreement for Land Use Permit Issuance." Mr. Kaplan was asked to provide a copy of this agreement to all members.

Ms. Vogel also discussed the Virginia Comprehensive Roadside Management Program (CRMP) which is an important part of the I-495 Beltway hot-lanes project. Ms. Vogel is reviewing planting plans on VDOT right-of-ways as part of the HOT-lanes project. She indicated that the General Assembly has allocated \$5,000,000 for replanting. Most interchanges will be reforested. This project incorporates the landscape community beautification programs that allow localities to participate.

Larry Zaragoza asked how an individual or homeowner's association (HOA) would know if a planting in a Virginia right-of-way was approved with a land use permit. ANSWER: Most plantings in a community are usually installed by the builder, and then transferred to the HOA after completion of the build – so most are grandfathered in. Residents can call the "Permits Office" to ask if specific plantings on VDOT rights-of-way were permitted.

A council member asked how many permit applications are reviewed and approved in Fairfax County. ANSWER: The number of permit applications varies by season (most applications submitted in the spring), but a typical number is between 3-10 per month.

Frank Divita asked Ms. Vogel if she thought the \$5,000,000 allocated for HOT-lane replanting would be enough funding to restore the disturbed areas. ANSWER: This was the original cost estimate, and it may or may not still be adequate. A positive is that many of the reforestation projects will utilize small trees. These small trees are not very expensive.

There was a discussion regarding restrictions on planting near noise barriers.

Taylor Beach, Executive Director, Fairfax ReLeaf, provided her perspective on replanting in highway rights-of-way, noting that her group is available to assist.

There was additional discussion regarding planting strategies.

Presentation from Battalion Chief Carlton Burkhammer, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, regarding the required sizing of fire trucks

Battalion Chief Carlton Burkhammer from the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and Judy Cronauer from the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services presented information to support the staff recommendation to the Board of Supervisors that public streets in new neighborhoods be mandated to be a minimum of 36 feet wide. The reason this change is being requested is to improve accessibility of fire apparatus onto neighborhood streets. Larger fire trucks are needed because fires are bigger; fires are twice as hot as they were 50 years ago. The trend nationally over the past 25-years is to use larger fire trucks; the National Fire Prevention Association's standards require the use of these trucks, and these standards are applied nationwide. Larger trucks need wider streets. Reasons for this trend are:

- New residential construction is based on composite wood products and plastic that burn much faster and hotter than solid wood and brick of older residential construction.
- Fires in this type of structure require much more water to extinguish.
- Large townhome and apartment complexes do not consistently have fire barriers between units, allowing rapid spread of fire between homes.

Stella Koch asked if there was a cluster design standard that would be better to adopt.

ANSWER: Yes, if the building permits would discourage the use of vinyl siding and not allow houses to be so close together that would be a better design. Also, Prince Georges County, Maryland requires the installation of residential sprinklers, while Fairfax County requires sprinklers only for residential buildings that have heights of at least 50 feet. If a sprinkler requirement was to be implemented in Fairfax County, safety conditions would improve considerably. The cost of sprinkler systems is typically on the order of \$1.50 per square foot.

A council member asked "Why not address other issues, i.e., require sprinklers, different building materials, or single street side parking, rather than widen roads?" ANSWER: That might be an acceptable solution, but we have tried those solutions in the past and they have to been adopted because they are not popular with the home building lobby. We are concerned that our fire apparatus do not fit down the streets. VDOT has recently changed the standards and are allowing more narrow streets than ever.

Chairman Koch noted design goals for Tysons Corner and indicated that narrower streets would need to be part of the design in order to support viable neighborhoods. Mr. Burkhammer noted that, in Tysons Corner, there would be limits on parallel parking, which would reduce the needed road widths. He also noted that residential buildings in Tysons Corner would typically exceed heights of 50 feet and would therefore be subject to the sprinkler requirement.

Chairman Koch suggested that the problem may be one of parking rather than road width. Marie Flanigan added her concern about adverse safety issues associated with wider streets, noting faster traffic speeds and increased pedestrian conflicts. She also noted the adverse environmental impacts of increased impervious cover. She suggested that, instead of asking for wider streets, we should be asking for stronger standards requiring sprinkler systems.

Chairman Koch thanked Mr. Burkhammer for his thorough presentation and indicated that she had a better appreciation for the need for clear paths for fire-fighting equipment. She indicated, however, that there was more than one way to address this concern and stressed a need for improved fire-sensitive design as opposed to wider streets.

Mr. Burkhammer and Ms. Cronauer concluded their remarks and left the meeting. The Council then discussed the idea of sending a follow-up letter to its May 4th letter to the Board of Supervisors to clarify, in light of the information discussed at this meeting, its concern with the negative impact to the environment of adopting 36 foot wide streets in new neighborhoods. During this discussion, it was noted that most of the county has been developed and that, if a wider subdivision street requirement was to be established, it would only affect a small portion of the county (perhaps around 10%) where these new streets would be constructed; it would not have any effect on the rest of the county.

A motion was made by Linda Burchfiel and seconded by Larry Zaragoza to follow up the previous letter with clarifying statements to reaffirm the Council's May 4th letter but to also clarify that EQAC feels the solution to this problem is not to widen streets, but to address parking and/or building standards, including the provision of sprinklers. The Motion passed 10-0-0.

Glen White, Linda Burchfiel, Marie Flanigan, and Larry Zaragoza agreed to draft a letter that would be circulated to all members present for the vote in order to confirm consistency with the vote. Chairman Koch stressed the need for EQAC members to review the draft without delay and to provide their response to it in a timely manner; she indicated that a deadline for review would be set, after which it would be assumed that any nonresponsive EQAC member supported the draft without change. It was stressed that the letter would need to be finalized no later than May 24 in order to ensure that the Planning Commission would receive it prior to May 26, when a decision from the Planning Commission is expected.

Appointment of an EQAC representative to the Tree Commission

Patricia Greenberg volunteered to serve as EQAC's representative to the Tree Commission.

2011 Annual Report on the Environment

Noel Kaplan noted that volunteers were still needed for the authorship of the Visual Pollution section and co-authorship of the Land Use and Transportation chapter. Frank Divita volunteered to assist George Lamb with the Land Use and Transportation Chapter.

Noel distributed the detailed timeline for the preparation of the Annual Report (and a list of chapter authors) to the Council. All chapter reviews will need to be complete by the September 14 EQAC meeting in order for the report to be ready for the requested November 1 presentation date. He stressed the importance of having some chapters reviewed at the August meeting and

noted that the deadline for transmittal to Noel of chapter drafts and recommendations for consideration at the August meeting is August 3.

Chairman's items

Stella Koch noted that she has information that she can share regarding a document from the Washington Sustainable Growth Alliance entitled, "The Washington Region's Conservation Priorities, A Call to Action."

Stella referenced a report from the National Academy of Science on the Chesapeake Bay program that provides an assessment of what's working and what's not. She indicated that she'd provide a link to this document to Noel Kaplan and asked Noel to circulate the link.

Stella noted that the Citizens Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay had held a watershed stewardship program, and at this program, Anne Arundel County discussed a program it has to certify citizens through a 64-hour training program. She asked that Randy Bartlett be made aware of this effort and indicated that she would be interested in getting a presentation on the Anne Arundel County program.

Council member items

Rich Weisman mentioned that the Fairfax County energy education and outreach request for proposals would be soon released. He wanted to know what time commitment would be needed if he agreed to serve on the proposal review committee since some review would take place during normal work hours. Kambiz Agazi mentioned that he would get back to Rich with specifics, but that the review committee would attempt to work with his schedule so he could be a participant.

Larry Zaragoza referenced Stella Koch's previous item regarding watershed stewardship certifications and indicated that he would also like to learn more about certifications associated with wetland restoration.

Glen White noted that he has seen rain barrels for sale at Home Depot. Frank Crandall noted the benefits of rain barrels to providing a water source for building sprinkler systems. Stella Koch noted that there was a need for 200 gallons of water to support such sprinkler systems.

Marie Flanigan noted that, between Wednesday, May 25, 2011 and Tuesday, May 31, 2011, purchases of certain supplies and equipment needed for hurricane preparedness will be exempt from the Virginia sales tax.

George Lamb noted the next Green Breakfast program on May 14. The speaker will be a nuclear industry expert.

Patricia Greenberg noted that there was a meeting of the Hunter Mill District Sustainability Committee earlier in the day. She noted interest among committee members in reviewing the energy education and outreach RFP. Kambiz Agazi noted that he had spoken with Supervisor Hudgins about this and noted that other Supervisors, and many other communities, have expressed interest as well. He indicated that he expected that there would be at least six qualified bidders. He noted that the RFP has been crafted to leave the door open for consultants to be creative in designing an education and outreach program. He noted the "WE-CAN" program at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and expressed hope that the county's program would build from, but be more comprehensive than, that effort. Patricia noted that she is in a climate change communication course and that she will forward notes to Rich Weisman, who is serving on the selection advisory committee for the review of proposals.

Staff items

Noel Kaplan described a briefing that was held earlier in the day by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. He noted that a new shoreline situation report had been prepared for Fairfax County and Alexandria; this report is a detailed digital shoreline inventory, and a related GIS-based information system is under development. This system will include information regarding shoreline erosion conditions, shoreline stabilization measures, shoreline use conditions and shoreline access facilities, complete with field notes from each segment of shoreline that is classified. He also noted that a Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Plan will be developed for the county, although the timing of this effort is uncertain due to funding constraints. He noted that this plan would include a shoreline system management plan identifying recommended living shoreline practices based on the inventory and riparian conditions. It would also include a plan for long-term coastal resource management, considering change factors such as sea level rise. He indicated that the county would be required to incorporate this guidance into the Comprehensive Plan. He also noted that a "nontidal wetlands viewer" is under development that would identify stressors to existing National Wetlands Inventory-mapped wetlands and a modeling tool that can identify stresses that would be added as a result of land use changes. He indicated that this application may be on-line by the end of 2012.

Noel Kaplan indicated that a proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and Erosion and Sediment Control ordinance was being proposed to increase the square footage threshold that would trigger grading plan submission requirements for certain projects. He noted that the intent was to reduce the burden associated with grading plan submissions for minor additions and accessory structures to single family dwellings and that the changes would not reduce water quality control or erosion and sediment control requirements. He asked if EQAC would like a briefing on the proposed changes. Stella Koch expressed concerns about this proposal and indicated that such a briefing should be provided at the June 8 EQAC meeting, in advance of the anticipated July 7 Planning Commission public hearing date.

Noel Kaplan noted that the next meeting of the Planning Commission's Environment Committee would be held on May 26 at 7:00 P.M. in the Board of Supervisors' Conference Room. At that meeting, it is anticipated that the committee will complete its review of the green building

strawman draft Plan amendment and will set the course for stakeholder review of this draft. Stella Koch asked Noel to brief EQAC on this effort at the June 8 EQAC meeting.

Stella asked Kambiz for an update on the status of the greenhouse gas emissions inventory. He provided a brief overview of preliminary findings and noted that this would be presented at the May 26 meeting of the Private Sector Energy Task Force, along with presentations on district energy and combined heating and power (including the state regulatory context). Stella asked that Kambiz forward to Rich the notes from the Chairman's Private Sector Energy Task Force meetings. After discussion, it was agreed that these notes would be provided to all EQAC members. It was also requested that the county's presentations to the task force at the May task force meeting also be provided to EQAC, at EQAC's joint meeting with the Environmental Coordinating Committee in July. Stella Koch asked that district energy be discussed at this meeting, with a particular focus on how to overcome impediments.

Adjournment - Motion (Frank/Larry 10-0-0) 10:25 pm

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 P.M.