

**FAIRFAX COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

DATE: Wednesday, November 13, 2013
TIME: 7:15 P.M.
PLACE: Hidden Oaks Nature Center

MEMBERS PRESENT

Stella Koch (Chairman, At-Large)	Johna Gagnon (Lee)
Larry Zaragoza (Vice Chairman, Mt. Vernon)	George Lamb (At-Large)
Jeff Allcroft (Springfield)	Robert McLaren (At-Large)
Hana Burkly (Student Member)	Michael Sanio (Hunter Mill)
Frank Crandall (Dranesville)	Glen White (Mason)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Linda Burchfiel (At-Large)	Frank Divita (Braddock)
Rich Weisman (Sully)	

STAFF

Kambiz Agazi	Noel Kaplan
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GUESTS

Randy Bartlett	Bruce McGranahan
Helman Castro	Charlie Strunk
Susan Datta	Jill Witkowski
Ray Johnson	

Briefing on the FY 2015 Fairfax County budget process

Chair Koch called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm and welcomed Susan Datta, Chief Financial Officer and Director of the Department of Management and Budget.

Ms. Datta noted that the FY 2015 budget process was just getting under way. She stated that economic circumstances affecting county revenues are uncertain—there were some negative economic trends resulting from events at the federal government level, in particular the July 2013 furloughs and sequestration. She noted a federal mandate to “freeze the space,” resulting in increased commercial vacancy rates. She indicated that the only growth in the real estate market appeared to be in the residential market. Ms. Datta indicated that an overall rate of revenue growth of three percent could be anticipated this year, which is half of the rate we typically saw

in the early 2000s. She concluded that she was optimistic yet realistic about future revenue growth.

With respect to environmental efforts, Ms. Datta indicated that she didn't foresee any reductions but did not anticipate increases either. She noted a significant budget shortfall for Fairfax County Public Schools and expressed uncertainty regarding what the Board of Supervisors may choose to do in regard to school funding and how that might affect other county needs. She noted that there are concerns among members of the Board of Supervisors about increasing the real estate tax rate.

In regard to the Stormwater Service District, Ms. Datta referenced a recent presentation from Randy Bartlett to the Board of Supervisors during which a one-quarter percent increase in the Service District tax rate was suggested. She indicated that there was positive feedback from Board members about the idea of a long-term increase in the service district rate through small, steady increases. She recommended that EQAC review Randy Bartlett's presentation; Mr. Bartlett agreed to provide the presentation to EQAC.

Chair Koch asked about the budget timeline. Ms. Datta indicated that the County Executive would pull the budget together in December and present it to the Board in late February. The budget will be adopted by May 1.

Ms. Gagnon asked about the future impacts of county staff retirements. Ms. Datta replied that the county's retirement system has anticipated/forecasted/accounted for retirement costs. She indicated that the system would be fine from a financial perspective but that a greater concern is a loss of institutional knowledge. She noted increased succession planning efforts to address this. She added that there has been a significant investment in technology improvements in order to improve efficiency.

Dr. White asked if the three percent growth projection would be reevaluated if improvements at the federal level would be evident in the January/February time frame. Ms. Data noted that 62 percent of the county's revenue comes from the real estate tax and that real estate values are set on January 1, so subsequent federal actions would not affect this revenue for FY 2015. She added that sales taxes are more flexible and subject to change over time, noting that lots of categories are trending negatively at this time.

Briefing on the Countywide Dialogue on Transportation—Fairfax County Department of Transportation

As an introduction to this discussion, Mr. Lamb provided background regarding recently-approved state legislation that would provide a significant increase in funding for transportation projects.

Ray Johnson, a Transportation Planner with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, introduced Charlie Strunk (the county's Bicycle Coordinator). He gave a presentation describing the process through which unfunded projects were being evaluated for consideration

of funding and how projects would be prioritized in recommendations that would be presented to the Board of Supervisors, which would select its transportation priorities through FY 2020. He noted that total estimated funding for projects in the county through FY 2020 was \$1.2 billion. Included in his presentation was an overview of how community input would be used to influence decisions on the allocation of these funds to different areas (e.g., multimodal and bicycle transportation). He also provided to EQAC tables identifying funded and unfunded transportation projects.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Board of Supervisors would not have the ability to directly allocate all of the \$1.2 billion in funding but that it would be able to identify its priorities to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the Commonwealth Transportation Board, which will play a major role in determining how these funds will be allocated. He also noted that funds for maintenance have been excluded from this analysis because those funds are a separate state responsibility. His presentation included an overview of major transportation emphasis areas, criteria for future project selection and a cost benefit analysis that is being used as a means of comparing costs and benefits of various proposed projects (recognizing that benefit-cost factors for highway and transit projects could not be compared with benefit-cost factors for bicycle and pedestrian projects). He stressed that, even with the infusion of a substantial amount of new funding, the additional funding will still fall well short of the county's needs.

During his description of a series of public meetings that were being held to solicit input on the proposed projects, Mr. Johnson provided a link to the Department of Transportation's Facebook site for the Countywide Dialogue on Transportation, which can be found by scrolling down the County's Facebook page by scrolling down a bit on the page: www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty. Also, the general website for the Countywide Dialogue as at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/cdot/engage/>. Mr. Johnson closed his presentation with an outline of remaining steps in the process, culminating in a January 2014 Board of Supervisors adoption of a Priority Project List and a spring 2014 presentation from staff to the Board of a proposed funding/cash-flow plan for the priority projects.

Dr. White asked about how maintenance will be addressed. More specifically, he raised a concern that historical maintenance has been much better than recent maintenance schedules. Mr. Johnson replied that maintenance is a state responsibility and is not a consideration in the project identification. He added that he wasn't sure if we would see an increased rate of repaving as a result of increased availability of funding.

Mr. Johnson explained that staff has been holding sessions with focus groups in Northern Virginia and the sessions were about to be completed. Summaries of these meetings would then be discussed by Tom Biesiadny (Director of the Department of Transportation) with each member of the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Lamb asked how closely the Department of Transportation was connecting its list of transportation projects with county land use goals, such as revitalization. Mr. Johnson discussed a map showing the locations of projects in relation to revitalization areas and activity centers, noting that there was an effort to take stock of how the projects relate to these areas.

Ms. Koch asked how benefit-cost ratios would be calculated for projects like pedestrian improvements in Tysons, and Dr. White asked what percentage of the funding would be allocated to bicycle and pedestrian projects. Mr. Lamb expressed concern that the public meetings were not addressing specific projects or the relationship of biking and pedestrian corridors, which help to make communities walkable and have a high return on investment relative to roadways, although the return on investment will depend on the way that the analysis is structured. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Strunk reiterated that there were different approaches to the determination of benefit/cost ratios for transit and road projects vs. bicycle and pedestrian projects; they stressed that the benefit/cost ratios could not be compared across these categories, noting that the latter were more qualitative and that low scores would not preclude such projects from being included on a final priority list. Mr. Johnson added that the benefit/cost ratio was just one tool that was being applied; community support and opposition were also important.

Dr. White asked about the status of the Columbia Pike light rail project. Mr. Johnson replied that the project is in preliminary stages; work is under way on an agreement between Fairfax County and Arlington County that would kick off preliminary work on this project.

Dr. Zaragoza asked if it would be possible to see how the various projects would perform in regard to connectivity (multi-modal opportunities) and air quality benefits. Ms. Koch suggested that EQAC keep this in mind as it prepares comments on this effort.

Update on the draft Stormwater Management Ordinance—Department of Public Works and Environmental Services

Ms. Koch provided context regarding adequate outfall concerns as they relate to the proposed stormwater management ordinance. She introduced Helman Castro (with Pennoni Associates), who has chaired a Northern Virginia Building Industry Association/National Association of Industrial and Office Properties stormwater management team. Randy Bartlett, Deputy Director of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (Stormwater and Wastewater Programs) commended Mr. Castro for his role in creating a partnership between county staff and the development industry that has sought ways to improve the ordinance through evaluation of impacts on development sites.

Bruce McGranahan, an engineer with the Site Code Research and Development Branch, DPWES, provided a briefing that he had provided to the Board of Supervisors on the adequate outfall issue. The presentation and related question and answer discussion included the following areas of focus:

- Requirements of the state's stormwater management regulations pertaining to both water quality and quantity, and requirements that will provide strong encouragement of stormwater infiltration and reuse approaches as opposed to detention.
- Current adequate outfall requirements of the Public Facilities Manual.

- Mandates and options within the stormwater management regulations as they relate to current adequate outfall requirements.
- “Limits of Analysis” requirements of the stormwater management regulations as they relate to current PFM requirements.
- Recommendations from the industry/county staff workgroup on how to apply limits of analysis for channel protection and flood protection in light of state requirements and in light of a desire to not weaken current protections, even if they are more stringent than the state requirements.
- Relationship between the adequate outfall recommendations and broader provisions of the draft stormwater management ordinance (e.g., requirements for phosphorus load thresholds for new development and reductions for redevelopment).
- Stormwater management efforts in other localities facing similar issues.

There was additional discussion regarding Maryland’s “rain tax” and why a different approach (the Stormwater Service District) has been pursued in Fairfax County. There was also discussion of maintenance of stormwater management facilities and whether the county should assume additional maintenance responsibilities. An October 2013 presentation to the Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee was noted.

Later in the meeting, EQAC discussed this issue further. Ms. Koch and Mr. McLaren expressed their comfort with what was being proposed and therefore did not see the need for any follow-up action on EQAC’s part. There was general support for this view, and no action was taken. EQAC did, however, add as a discussion item for a future meeting a discussion of public-private partnerships on stormwater improvement. It was suggested that the Director of DPWES-Land Development Services (Michelle Brickner) be invited to this discussion, along with Helman Castro and the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District.

Consideration of correspondence to the Board of Supervisors regarding transportation priorities

The following issues were discussed in reaction to the earlier presentation on the Countywide Dialogue on Transportation:

- “Apples and oranges” concerns about benefit/cost analyses for different categories of projects.
- How the benefit/cost information would be used to set priorities.
- The need to look at the projects within the broader land use context.

- Lack of clarity regarding how strongly multimodal transportation (e.g., bus; Metrorail) would be considered in determining priorities.

A consensus developed in support of preparation of EQAC correspondence to the Board of Supervisors that would include the following:

- Reiteration of recommendation #3 (transportation) from the Land Use and Transportation chapter of the 2013 Annual Report on the Environment (supporting prioritization of non-motorized/multi-modal transportation options).
- The need to avoid comparing benefit/cost ratios of bicycle and pedestrian projects with benefit/cost ratios of other projects.
- The need to emphasize interconnectedness in relation to land use policy.
- The need to consider ecological resources and how each project would affect these resources.

Mr. Lamb agreed to draft such correspondence. Mr. Sanio and Dr. Zaragoza offered their assistance.

Mr. Zaragoza moved that Mr. Lamb be authorized to prepare EQAC correspondence to the Board of Supervisors to capture the items noted above, with the draft to be circulated to all EQAC members present for the vote to ensure consistency with the motion. Mr. McLaren seconded the motion. It was agreed that the correspondence would be signed by both Ms. Koch and Mr. Lamb. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

2013 Annual Report on the Environment: Preparation for the November 19 presentation to the Board of Supervisors

Mr. Kaplan noted that copies of the Annual Report on the Environment had been delivered to the Board of Supervisors. He encouraged chapter authors to attend the presentation of the report, scheduled for 10:30 AM on November 19. Chairman Koch will give the presentation.

Mr. Kaplan requested that EQAC discuss the Annual Report preparation process at its December meeting; he expressed concerns about how the process worked this year and noted that he felt that this approach was not sustainable into the future.

Approval of meeting minutes

Deferred until the December meeting.

Chair's items

Ms. Koch noted that the Governor Elect has stated that he would veto proposals for uranium mining in Virginia.

Council member items

Mr. Sanio noted a proposed land swap associated with the redevelopment of a property in the Lake Anne area of Reston. The land swap would replace mature trees with seedlings and is opposed by at least some concerned community members.

Ms. Burkly noted a 5k run fundraiser at Nottaway Park to support the provision of an outdoor classroom at Oakton High School. She asked that EQAC members sponsor her for this event.

Dr. Zaragoza noted that two grants had been received for restoration efforts at Dyke Marsh, beginning in the 2015/6 timeframe. He viewed this as a good model for reestablishing wetlands. Ms. Koch noted that Michael Rolband was very helpful in securing \$1.5-2 million from National Airport mitigation money for this project.

Mr. McLaren stated that he would miss the December meeting.

Staff items

Mr. Kaplan noted the meeting of the Planning Commission's Environment Committee on December 4, which will be a discussion of electric vehicle charging.

He also noted a January 22 workshop on the Green building policy. The workshop will address geographic equity/differentiation and public-private partnerships on county land.

He also noted that committee meetings would be held on January 29 and February 19.

Mr. Kaplan noted that the Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee would meet on January 21 from 10-12 in Conference Rooms 9-10.

Mr. Kaplan reviewed future meeting agendas. He noted that a discussion of green building policy as related to hotels would be included as an agenda item on December 11. There will also be some discussion of the Annual Report on the Environment process.

Ms. Koch asked that the issue of funding for monitoring by the Occoquan Watershed Monitoring Laboratory be added to the December 11 agenda.

Dr. Agazi, highlighted legislation related to net metering that is being proposed in the state legislature this year.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM.