

Approved by EQAC, January 12, 2011

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

DATE: NOVEMBER 29, 2010

The public hearing commenced at 7:30 P.M. in the Board Auditorium of the Government Center. A remote public hearing testimony site was established in room 221A (Woodlawn) of the South County Center, with communications between sites established through a two-way audio and visual communication hookup via Fairfax County Cable Channel 16.

There were eight speakers, four of whom provided written testimony or other materials either during or after the public hearing. The speakers were:

Stewart Schwartz (Government Center)	Eleanor Quigley (South County)
Clyde Miller (Government Center)	John Byrne (Government Center)
Glenda Booth (South County)	Ned Stone (South County)
Nathan Farley (Government Center)	Dann Sklarew (Government Center)

Four others provided written testimony but were not present at the public hearing:

A. Diane Blust (Fairfax Coalition for Smarter Growth)	B. Stephan Greene
C. Barbara Scott	D. Ed Tennyson

Unless otherwise noted, participants presented testimony as individuals rather than on behalf of groups.

1. Stewart Schwartz, Coalition for Smarter Growth

Mr. Schwartz commended EQAC for its Annual Report and commended the environmental efforts of both county staff and the Board of Supervisors. He spoke of the need for revitalization of the Richmond Highway corridor while recognizing impediments to date (e.g., difficulty in land assemblage). He focused his comments on the need for the concentration of new growth in the county in already-developed areas, particularly through redevelopment of parking areas within the county's commercial corridors. He stressed this approach as a way to foster sustainable redevelopment in a manner that would support a range of environmental goals, noting that such redevelopment can have water quality benefits (e.g., providing effective controls through redevelopment where there are no controls now) as well as energy benefits. He also referred to a national infrastructure crisis and stressed the benefits of locating new growth in already-developed areas as opposed to building new infrastructure in rural areas.

Chairman Koch asked Mr. Schwartz if he had specific suggestions regarding the “how-to’s” of redevelopment, such as land assemblage. Mr. Schwartz stated that he could compile a list of such practices for EQAC. Mr. Lamb commended Mr. Schwartz for a recent presentation focusing on the future of Fairfax; Mr. Schwartz referred to links posted on the Coalition’s website. Dr. Zaragoza thanked Mr. Schwartz for his work and asked him to provide more specific recommendations at opportune times.

2. Clyde Miller

Mr. Miller’s comments focused on the issue of private maintenance of infiltration trench stormwater management facilities in Fairfax County. His verbal comments were a subset of a more detailed “Proposal for County Maintenance of New Stormwater Detention Facilities,” which is attached. While his verbal comments focused on infiltration trenches, his written proposal addressed a broader suite of facility types and was not limited to infiltration trenches.

Mr. Miller noted that there are currently 106 infiltration trench facilities in the county, with additional facilities being added at the rate of roughly one per month. He noted that Fairfax County will not maintain these facilities but instead requires homeowner associations to do so. He questioned whether this was appropriate, noting that the county maintains sanitary sewer lines and could maintain stormwater management facilities as well. He suggested that the county assume maintenance responsibilities for any new infiltration trenches that are constructed, with funding for such maintenance taken from fees that would be assessed to the homeowners associations getting the benefits of this service.

Chairman Koch noted a more extensive maintenance issue associated with a broader range of facilities and suggested that EQAC discuss the issue further as a future meeting agenda item. *[Again, as noted above, Mr. Miller’s written proposal is broader in scope.]*

Ms. Gagnon encouraged Mr. Miller to discuss the issue with homeowners associations, noting the likely difficulty of getting these associations to buy-in to fee increases. In response, Mr. Miller stressed that the fee would only be applied for new facilities and would not affect any existing facilities.

3. Glenda Booth (speaking in part for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia and Friends of Dyke Marsh)

Ms. Booth identified herself as a member of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, the Friends of Dyke Marsh and the Fairfax County Wetlands Board. She spoke, in part, on behalf of both the Audubon Society and Friends of Dyke Marsh. She thanked EQAC for the remote testimony opportunity at the South County Center. Her comments focused on five areas:

- Climate change: Ms. Booth thanked EQAC for including this as an Annual Report topic, citing it as one of the most serious environmental problems of all time and noting that the county is taking important steps to address it. She referred EQAC to a study by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy noting that Virginia could cut its energy use by 19%; she asked EQAC to review this study to see if there are further steps the county can take. She stressed that there are serious costs of inaction.
- Trees: Ms. Booth commended the county's Tree Action Plan. She recommended that the county reevaluate its 45% tree canopy goal in light of a higher goal for similar areas recommended by American Forests. She also cited a report from the Potomac Conservancy identifying much higher canopy coverages needed to provide for good (60% tree cover) or excellent (65%) water quality in the Potomac River. She stated that she had recommendations regarding tree preservation during development and that she'd send those to EQAC later. Finally, she recommended that the county stop "volcano mulching" trees on its property.
- Stormwater management/streams: Ms. Booth expressed concern about the statement in the Annual Report noting that 88% of the county's streams are in fair to very poor condition and expressed particular concern about a declining trend. She noted numerous stream impairments identified by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and stressed that more needed to be done to reduce impervious surfaces. She supported EQAC's recommendation to raise the Stormwater Service District tax rate. After her presentation was completed, Chairman Koch noted the variability in the stream quality data and stressed that many more years of data would be needed for trends to become evident. Ms. Koch did agree, though, that the variability in the results highlights the fragility of the county's stream system.
- Richmond Highway corridor: Ms. Booth applauded the comments of Mr. Schwartz and expressed disappointment at a lack of focus on Richmond Highway in EQAC's Annual Report. She noted that the Base Realignment and Closure actions under way will create adverse impacts but also opportunities (revitalization efforts along the lines of what Mr. Schwartz discussed).
- Impact of communication towers on birds: Ms. Booth noted that lights on towers can be confusing to migrating birds, especially on foggy nights. She noted that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has produced guidelines on the siting of communication towers (e.g. avoidance of migratory paths). She also noted footprint issues (infrastructure needs on the ground) and opposed efforts to locate towers on park land (and natural resource parks in particular). She noted that a Planning Commission task force is looking at the siting of these towers and hoped that they'd factor these considerations into their decisions.

Dr. Zaragoza thanked Ms. Booth for her comments and asked if she would follow-up with specific written comments.

4. Nathan Farley

Mr. Farley spoke on behalf of Richard Good, who was unable to attend. He expressed his view that not enough was being done to support citizen efforts to implement renewable energy systems (e.g., solar, geothermal). He noted that the City of Virginia Beach has established a program to reduce the property tax rate for qualifying energy efficient buildings by 15 cents per \$100 of assessed value; he circulated a copy of a related Web page (attached). He also expressed concern that real estate appraisers may not be recognizing the value of solar energy systems. He also noted that federal tax credits are available for solar and geothermal systems as well as for energy-related retrofits of buildings. He stressed a need for additional requirements and/or tax benefits at the state level to support renewable energy sources.

Dr. Zaragoza expressed support for Mr. Farley's comments and noted that similar issues had been highlighted in the Annual Report. Mr. Farley stressed a need for requirements for more efficient energy systems in houses, noting benefits to subsequent home owners. Ms. Burchfiel expressed interest in this idea, noting that homeowners are not encouraged to invest in energy efficiency measures because they may not reap the financial benefits (e.g., if they'll be moving shortly after selling their houses).

5. Eleanor Quigley

Ms. Quigley introduced herself as a member of the Fairfax County Tree Commission but was speaking as an individual. She made note of three issues/efforts:

- She updated EQAC on one of the efforts of the Tree Commission—modeling excellent practices on its own properties regarding tree preservation/tree cover. She stated that a task force including Tree Commissioners and county staff is reviewing multiple facets of tree preservation/tree cover practices on county development projects and noted the potential for broader benefits of this effort.
- She discussed a visioning effort under way in the Mount Vernon District; she cited a critical need for revitalization along the Richmond Highway corridor, using mass transit as a key feature along with the re-creation of green infrastructure along the corridor.
- She expressed concern about by-right development, noting that such development is not required to do anything to correct the impacts of past practices. She asked if it would be possible to require new development to provide such improvements.

She concluded by thanking EQAC for providing the remote testimony opportunity.

Chairman Koch and Dr. Zaragoza thanked Ms. Quigley for her support of coordination with EQAC and for her efforts on the Tree Commission.

6. John Byrne

Mr. Byrne read from a prepared statement, which is attached. His statement focused on global climate change and related policy and regulatory actions that the county should take. He stressed the need for:

- Recognition in the Comprehensive Plan that the level of the Potomac River will rise and that storm patterns will change.
- Creation of walkable communities.
- Discouragement of the use of fossil fuels.
- Encouragement and rewards for green, eco-friendly development and lifestyles.

Ms. Gagnon encouraged Mr. Byrne to become involved with the next round of the Area Plans Review process.

7. Ned Stone

Mr. Stone identified himself as a 30-year resident of southeast Fairfax County, a retired scientist and the Vice President of Friends of Dyke Marsh. He spoke, however, as an individual. He presented a short “to-do” list to EQAC:

- Support acquisition of undeveloped land in Fairfax County, especially where it creates corridors for wildlife.
- Oppose encroachments of developments on streams and watercourses, as well as the channelization/containment of streams.
- Continue an emphasis on stormwater management efforts, particularly the conversion of impervious surfaces to pervious areas.
- Support a beverage container deposit law, a plastic bag tax and a ban on Styrofoam food containers.

Subsequent to the public hearing, Mr. Stone provided a written copy of his testimony, which is attached.

8. Dann Sklarew, Ph.D., George Mason University

Dr. Sklarew, Fellow of Sustainability Studies, Office of the Provost, George Mason University, discussed a number of sustainability efforts that are under way at George Mason University. After providing introductory remarks, he noted that the President of the university has signed the American University Presidents' Commitment to Climate Change, resulting in the hiring of a sustainability manager in 2007. Dr. Sklarew was recently appointed as the university's second Fellow of Sustainability Studies—his role is to focus on developing solutions to sustainability problems at the local and regional levels.

He highlighted a few sustainability efforts at George Mason University:

- He made note of efforts to reduce the university's ecological footprint, both in terms of university operations and emissions associated with commuters coming to and from the university (both for educational and recreational/entertainment purposes). Energy use is being reduced, and a shuttle system has been implemented. A "Zimride" ride-matching service has recently been established, and Dr. Sklarew hopes to be able to present results of this effort next year. He noted that the isolated nature of the Fairfax campus creates particular challenges in connecting with the communities from which students, faculty and staff are coming.
- In the area of green building, all new buildings are to be constructed to the LEED Silver level or better; a LEED Gold building is now under construction.
- George Mason University has been training for green jobs for several decades, and these efforts are continuing to grow. A Bachelors degree in Environmental Sustainability Studies is now available; also available are a minor in Sustainability Studies and environmental engineering and conservation degrees. He noted that, on a personal level, he's teaching a "Sustainability in Action" class, which focuses on "real-world" problem solving. He offered EQAC an opportunity to identify issues for his students to address.
- With respect to scholarship, he cited the Gunston Cove study as a long-term effort that has recently demonstrated that there can be a positive turnaround in environmental conditions in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. On a more micro-scale, he noted the university's efforts in studying stormwater management best management practices and a new effort, in conjunction with county schools, to bring meaningful watershed education experiences to middle school students throughout the county. He stated that the university is looking forward to additional efforts in the future to provide technical support on a range of environmental issues. As an example, he noted university efforts to inventory commercial, industrial, residential and governmental contributions to the county's energy and carbon footprints. Other examples include the possible reintroduction

of brook trout into Fairfax County, research associated with the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (e.g., Chesapeake Bay; Accotink Creek) and the establishment of an Occoquan Water Trail.

In closing, Dr. Sklarew stressed that George Mason University is aiming to be a good citizen, neighbor and partner in support of regional environmental sustainability, and he offered his assistance in facilitating communications with the university.

Mr. McLaren asked Dr. Sklarew if reports are being published on the efforts he noted. Dr. Sklarew indicated that he would share with Mr. Kaplan a stormwater management best management practice evaluation tool that had been developed by Dr. Jones. Mr. McLaren expressed interest in follow-up guidance regarding the experiences gained through the use of this tool.

With respect to stormwater management, Mr. McLaren suggested that the university could retrofit low impact development practices in its parking lots and expansive lawn areas and study their effectiveness. Dr. Sklarew replied that the university is doing some of this work; he cited a study of permeable pavement at the Masonvale development as an example. He also noted studies of Mason Pond, which collects drainage from much of the Fairfax campus; he noted a sizable amount of good macroinvertebrates and fish in the pond, suggesting that upstream controls have been effective.

Mr. Weisman noted several transit alternatives at George Mason University and asked if the university intended to look at this in a more quantitative fashion (e.g., options for moving forward and effects on reductions in trips and vehicle miles traveled). Dr. Sklarew noted that much had been done in regard to the greenhouse gas inventory for the Fairfax campus (and the county in general) and that this information can be useful in planning shuttle systems (e.g., concentrations of students, faculty and staff residences). He noted that a transportation coordinator had recently been hired at the university.

Closing

Chairman Koch thanked everyone for coming out and participating.

Written Testimony

Mr. Kaplan noted that four people submitted written testimony prior to the public hearing. He also noted that he had circulated a response from Solid Waste staff of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services to one piece of testimony. Each piece of testimony is attached to this summary. The people who provided this testimony, and a summary of the issues they addressed, are as follows:

A. Diane Blust, Fairfax Coalition for Smarter Growth

- Concerns about possible attempts to develop a parcel of land in the Reston area that includes the Sunrise Valley Nature Park, and a recommendation to include, within revised Comprehensive Plan text for Reston, language calling for the protection of this wetland area.
- Additional background regarding the Sunrise Valley Nature Park was included; the background paper is included in the attachment.

B. Stephan Greene

- Recommendations for more places to dispose of household hazardous wastes and for better publicity for community recycling events (e.g., opt-in e-mail notifications).

C. Barbara Scott

- Recommendation for strengthening recycling requirements (e.g., a requirement for recycling for residents of apartment complexes).
- Recommendation for Fairfax County to implement facilities similar to the waste-to-energy facility near the Van Dorn Metro station.
- Commendation to Fairfax County for a well-organized and well-executed electronics recycling event at the West Ox Road facility.

D. Ed Tennyson

- Support for public rail transportation, preferably electric.
- Note of the benefits of rail transportation on reducing the need for widening of highways.
- Support for extension of the Virginia Railway Express to Haymarket as a way of reducing motor vehicle-related impacts to Fairfax County (air pollutant emissions; stormwater runoff from additional impervious surfaces associated with widened highways and parking spaces).
- Support for a light rail transit line from the Huntington Metro station south to Richmond Highway, Hybla Valley and Fort Belvoir and then north to Newington and the Franconia-Springfield Metro station.
- Recommendation to extend the Columbia Pike streetcar route westward to Tysons Corner.
- Opposition to buses as an alternative to rail for a variety of reasons.