



Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC) Strategic Retreat—June 18, 2025

Purpose of the Retreat

To align EQAC's work with its purpose.

Who, When, and Where

- Participants:
 - EQAC Members
 - Larry Zaragoza, Chair
 - Ken Lanfear, Vice Chair
 - Bryan Campbell
 - Ken Gubin
 - Clyde Wilber
 - Kathy Alsegaf
 - Alexis Dickerson
 - James Albright
 - Kersey Manliclic
 - Andreana Lin
 - Eric Goplerud – (via phone)
 - Nishka Shah, Student Member
 - Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC staff- Matt Meyers, Maggie Beetstra, and Kelly Zitzer)
 - Opening Remarks: Andrea Lewis, Supervisor Walkinshaw's Office
- Date: Wednesday, June 18, 2025
- Times: 5:30 pm – 9:30 pm
- Location: Woodlands Stewardship Education Center, 5301 Walney Road, Chantilly, Virginia

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Agenda

Time	Agenda activities
5:30 – 6:00 pm	<p><i>Working Dinner</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening remarks – Supervisor Jimenez • Welcome, retreat purpose, and agenda review • Introductions & icebreaker • Set retreat agreements • Review decision-making styles
6:00 – 6:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline review • Summary of interviews – What value does and could EQAC provide? • Small group activity
6:30 – 7:00 pm	Discuss EQAC Purpose
7:00 – 7:10 pm	Break
7:10 – 7:30 pm	Finalize EQAC purpose statement
7:30 – 8:30 pm	<p>Align EQAC actions to the new purpose statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group brainstorm, small group work, then make decisions as a large group
8:30 – 9:00 pm	Determine next steps with responsible parties and timelines
9:00 – 9:05 pm	Break
9:05 – 9:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap-up and closing activity • Vote to adjourn

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Session Summary

- Andrea Lewis from Supervisor Walkinshaw's Office shared opening remarks focusing on how EQAC provides value to the Board now and sharing ideas for how EQAC might provide even more value in the future.
- EQAC members developed session agreements and a decision-making strategy, which guided the discussions for the rest of the retreat.
- Members marked relevant dates in EQAC history on a shared timeline.
- The group reviewed and discussed themes from the timeline, interviews, and the opening remarks from Supervisor Walkinshaw's office.
- Members collaboratively developed a purpose statement for EQAC and discussed how to align the work of EQAC to the updated purpose statement moving forward.
- Members concluded with a closing activity: Learn, Thank, Do.

Next Steps

- Priority next step: **Discuss changes to the structure, format, or style of the Annual Report on the Environment (ARE) at the next EQAC meeting (add to agenda).**
 - Members are encouraged to think of options for the ARE (either adjustments to the report or ideas for what EQAC could do in lieu of the ARE) and email them to the Chair ahead of the next EQAC meeting.
 - The goal with this discussion is to make sure that the Board is getting the information or reporting that they need from EQAC while also reducing the burden on EQAC and staff.
- Other discussions for future EQAC meetings:
 - What is the role of EQAC in terms of addressing global, state, and local issues?
 - How might EQAC serve as advocates in the community and/or get information directly from residents?
 - What does consensus-building look like for EQAC members and how might they handle a situation where one member doesn't agree with the group?

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- Decide how EQAC might provide recommendations on legislation to the Board.
- Other next steps:
 - Clarify Board recommendation about community outreach.
 - Create some form of mentorship program or relationship between tenured and new members.
 - Staff will send out the 2021 ARE which includes a timeline of the 50 years of EQAC.



Additional Detail about the Retreat

Andrea Lewis provided opening remarks on behalf of Supervisor Walkinshaw's office.

She encouraged EQAC to consider:

- Updating the EQAC mission and vision statements in a way that they:
 - Focus on environmental elements beyond just physical aspects (soil, water, trees) of the environment – incorporating equity and social issues and the need for EQAC to think about ways to support the county's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
 - Align with the Community-wide Climate Action Plan, including community outreach and education on sectors with high GHGs.
 - Align with the Resilient Fairfax Plan.
- Collaborating with the Tree Commission and the Wetlands Board.
- Developing recommendations that focus on one or two top funding priorities in the CECAP or Resilient Fairfax Plans.
 - Avoid overly prescriptive recommendations that are better left to agency management.
- Consider attending or supporting OEEC events or doing community outreach to inform residents about Flood Mitigation, Charge Up Fairfax, Solarize VA, Weatherize, Sustain Fairfax, or Green Business Partners programs

EQAC members made Retreat Agreements and decided how they would make decisions during the retreat.

Retreat Agreements

What is the atmosphere we want to create?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Courteous● Attentive● Respectful● Active● Focused● Curious

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What is the atmosphere we want to create?

- Open to change
- Fun
- Not afraid of conflict
- Energizing
- Hear from everyone
- Encourage participation

How do we want to handle disagreements tonight?

- Probing – “tell us more”
- Good conflict
- Listen and honor different points of view
- Respectful
- Agree to move on
- Check in on yellow cards
- Take a pause
- Presume positive intent
- Call it out

How will we hold ourselves accountable?

- Be prepared
- Self-awareness
- Speak up even if it’s not comfortable
- Check in if others are uncomfortable
- Be present and explain why
- Do not take things personally
- Do not interrupt one another
- Call the play/”yay game”/call the question → throw a card

Decision Making during the Retreat

How EQAC will make decisions tonight

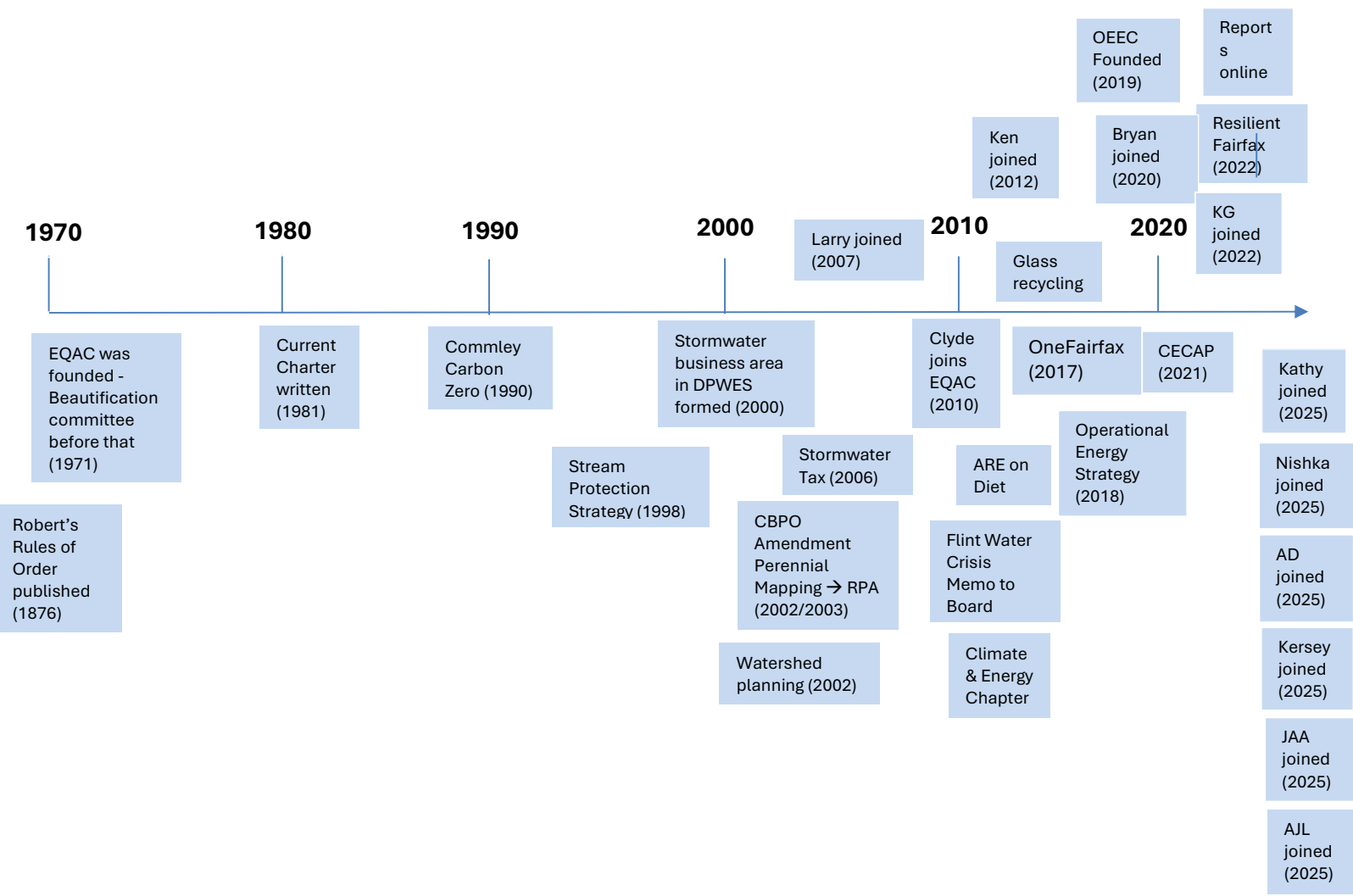
EQAC members agreed on **consensus style** decision making, with a majority-rules model if the group cannot reach a full consensus.

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EQAC members collaborated to create a timeline:





Zelos shared high-level themes from the pre-retreat interviews.

To help Zelos design a useful and productive retreat, Zelos interviewed six (6) EQAC members, two (2) Board offices, and eight (8) Fairfax County staff.

EQAC members are:

- Experts
- Trusted
- Influential
- Innovative
- Representative of the County

EQAC can maximize its strengths by:

- Updating its charter and guiding documents
- Clarifying its purpose and aligning its work to it and County plans
- Building strong relationships within EQAC and with the Board, staff, and the community
- Streamlining its procedures and onboarding

Other ideas for the future of EQAC:

- 1. Focus on High-Impact Priorities**
Align with county goals (e.g., CECAP, Resilient Fairfax); focus on 3–5 urgent, local issues.
- 2. Reimagine the Annual Report**
Shorten, streamline, and center it on key, meaningful analysis and accountability data.
- 3. Enhance Community Engagement & Advocacy**
Actively connect with the public, host events, and serve as ambassadors to build awareness and support for County goals.
- 4. Demonstrate Impact**
Track and show influence on County action; spotlight successes and future consequences of inaction.

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5. Take on Strategic Roles

Serve as conscience, policy reviewer, or environmental accountability partner—especially on major projects.

Next, EQAC members discussed what they learned or what stood out to them during the opening remarks, timeline, and summary of interviews.

- The importance of data-informed decision making and staff analysis.
- Increased complexity over time.
- Lots of new members in EQAC in 2025.
- How important a positive relationship with Board members is to EQAC's success.
- EQAC Advocacy – where can we speak as a team and where is there flexibility for individual perspectives.
 - To Board – through the ARE and recommendations
 - To Staff – Might be new for EQAC?
 - To public – How might this work?
- Some Board members are interested in just 1-2 priority recommendations.
 - Some EQAC members are concerned that this is too narrow and might not be helpful.
- Proud of EQAC's history! Keep up the track record of success and positive influence.
- Should EQAC be technical experts or advocates?
- How successful is the ARE?
 - How many people are reading the full document?
 - Is this the best use of everyone's time?
- We want to share success broadly → Give a win to the Board like Flint Water Crisis memo.
- EQAC needs more onboarding for new members.
- How should we handle working toward consensus vs honoring dissenting opinions?

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Next, EQAC reviewed its 3 purpose statements and create a new draft.

Previous EQAC Purpose Statements

- Official Charter (from 1981)
- Draft By-laws (as of Feb 2024)
- Annual Report on the Environment (most recent from 2024)

EQAC determined that none of the purpose statements captured the full scope of EQAC so they drafted a new statement and then discussed how the work of EQAC could align to that purpose.

New draft EQAC Purpose Statement

Fairfax County EQAC provides informed, independent environmental advice to the Board of Supervisors to promote sound decision-making.

How the work of EQAC aligns to this purpose

- Comment on issues of policy not specific projects
- Reinvigorate legislative recommendations by tracking bills and giving guidance to the Board
- Make advice clear and concise with support
- Need a mechanism to talk to the constituency and to determine what EQAC's role is
- Maximize voice and impact by partnering with other BACs
- Community involvement with EQAC meetings
- Actively seek feedback from Board of Supervisors and staff on memos and reports
- Meet with Environmental Committee before ARE is published
- How might we tweak the ARE to be more effective with its reporting to the Board?

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Closing Activity: Learn, Thank, Do

Each EQAC member shared one thing they learned, one person they would like to thank from the Retreat, and one action they plan to do in the future. Themes of this activity are listed below.

Learn

- Learned more about EQAC members – developed deeper relationships
- Learned more about EQAC – EQAC initiatives, history
- ARE - learned more about the ARE, discussed opportunities to improve the ARE
- Learned the value of having a retreat like this

Thank

- Members thanked each other, OEEC staff, and the Zelos Team

Do

- Community Outreach – personally engage in community outreach, create opportunities for others to engage in community outreach, gather community input, attend more community events
- Speak to Board Supervisor for input
- Continue building relationships within EQAC
- Review ARE from a new, more critical lens