

**COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (EQAC)**

**JOINT MEETING WITH THE FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
DATE: May 23, 2024
TIME: 7:30 p.m. – 9:33 p.m.
LOCATION: Conference Room 11
12000 Government Center Pkwy
Fairfax, VA 22035**

EQAC Member Attendance

Name	Present/ Absent*	Name	Present/ Absent*
Larry Zaragoza (Chair, Mount Vernon)	P	Renee Grebe (At-Large)	P
Johna Gagnon (Franconia)	A	Stella Koch (At-Large)	A
Richard Healy (Mason)	P	Oaklen Kalinichenko (Student Member)	A
Ken Gubin (Dranesville)	A	George Lamb (At-Large)	P
Ken Lanfear (Vice-Chair, Hunter Mill)	P	Bryan Campbell (Braddock)	P
<i>Vacant</i> (Providence)	-	Eric Goplerud (At-Large)	P
Rich Weisman (Sully)	A	Clyde Wilber (Springfield)	A

* P indicates present; A indicates absent; V indicates attended virtually

Staff Attendance

Matt Meyers, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC)
Neely Law (OEEC)
Allison Homer (OEEC)
Maya Dhavale (OEEC)
Katie Hermann, Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
Joe Gorney (DPD)
Corinne Bebek (DPD)

Planning Commission Attendance

Mary Cortina, Chairman
John Ulfelder, Vice Chairman Emeritus
Chris Landgraf, Vice Chairman
Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner
Timothy Sargeant

Agenda Items, Discussion, Decisions and Votes

Chairman Cortina called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The Planning Commission Environment Committee members addressed the two administrative items on the agenda, the Election of Commissioner Landgraf as Vice Chairman and approval of the Committee's April 25, 2024, meeting minutes.

Afterward, the following presentations and discussions occurred:

1. Policy Plan Amendment

A presentation, led by Joe Gorney, was given on the Policy Plan revisions and updates in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Gorney introduced the Policy Plan which includes 14 different elements that have been updated on ad-hoc basis. Appendices have been added over time and there was a need for a holistic review of the policy plan as it has not been updated since 1990.

The December 2022 Board Authorization included additional direction to update the Policy Plan including updating and streamlining, developing new policies, and aligning with other county plans and policies including the Strategic Plan, One Fairfax, Resilient Fairfax, etc.

Mr. Gorney introduced two phases to the Policy Plan revision. Phase one is focused on updates to the elements: preface, land use, transportation, environment, parks and recreation, human services, and a new element known as community health and equity. Phase two of the Policy Plan update is focused on housing, economic development, heritage resources, revitalization, visual and performing arts, and Chesapeake Bay Supplement. The Policy Plan update has been branded as 'Plan Forward'.

Next, Gorney addressed the timeline for these updates –

- Informational Outreach phase: May 2024
- Policy Development phase: June-December 2024
- Opportunity for feedback: January-May 2025
- Policy Refinement phase: June-Fall 2025

Chairman Cortina shared the environmental elements of the Comprehensive Plan, including its primary environmental goals which are open space and environmental protection. Beneath these goals are objectives grouped into three categories: environmental pollution, environmental hazards, and environmental resources. Chairman Cortina noted that these are meant to be viewed in the context of land development.

Chairman Cortina introduced four general topics of discussion: climate, landscape, neighborhood, and site. The general topics and their respective sub-topics are mentioned in the plan, but there needs to be discussion on how well it is addressed.

Under the landscape topic, there was discussion over Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) and the expansion of preservation efforts rather than maintaining preservation. There was also discussion over the issue of Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs) not being tracked or mapped and other issues with the accessibility of EQC data. Mr. Gorney responded that EQC data is not readily available, but increasing accessibility for public

consumption is something that intends to be done by the Department of Planning and Development.

Chairman Cortina introduced the neighborhood topic including LEED Neighborhood Design (LEED ND) and Green Neighborhood Development for compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. There was discussion over how to measure the “greenness” of neighborhoods including the LEED Neighborhood Design and SITES which are certifications. Corinne Bebek from DPD mentioned LEED ND has been added to their internal research list. There was further discussion over how to measure data, its pros and cons, applicability, and which method is most effective.

Chairman Cortina opened the site topic (better site design) to discussion. There was discussion over improving policy language regarding redevelopment, specifically when talking about adding more developments to a property lot.

The Planning Commission asked EQAC members what they thought was the number one issue that should be focused on and revised in the Comprehensive Plan. EQAC members responded saying the three things to worry about were trees, transportation, and water. By addressing those environmental issues, other things will fall into place.

2. Climate Topics in the Comprehensive Plan

Chairman Cortina allowed Matt Meyers, Division Director, OEEC, to lead the next segment of the presentation. OEEC wanted to build on the conversation and make the connection between the goals and strategies in the county’s three climate plans and their relation to the Comprehensive Plan and Policy Plan. He introduced OEEC’s three climate action plans: the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), the Operational Energy Strategy (OES), and Resilient Fairfax.

Mr. Meyers introduced the goals outlined in CECAP and OES to reduce emissions. Allison Homer introduced the goals of Resilient Fairfax, which she noted is to reduce vulnerability to the hazards we experience here in Fairfax County due to climate change.

Maya Dhavale and Ms. Homer presented recommended updates to the Comprehensive Plan using the three climate action plans as a basis for these recommendations.

Next, Ms. Dhavale suggested the Comprehensive Plan language be strengthened to introduce climate concepts and extend existing guidance. She laid out the roles of OEEC staff, the PC, and of EQAC members, noting that EQAC members should monitor the progress of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

After the OEEC’s presentation, there was discussion with Planning Commission Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner over whether these recommendations were essentially a suggestion of changed language and did not acknowledge the policies already in place that tackle resilience. There was concern over terminology, and whether that would be effective in policy implementation.

Commissioner Sargeant was concerned that some of the recommendations were for things that cannot be changed and that the goals were too specific. He suggested they make bigger and broader goals. For example, ones that align with overarching policy such as the VA Clean Economy Act.

OEEC staff responded by noting that updates to the Comprehensive Plan is just *one* strategy out of 48 strategies outlined in Resilient Fairfax. Their scope is much broader than just policy work.

Ms. Grebe suggested appendices about data centers and an extended conversation on equity and housing.

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m. by Chairman Cortina.

DRAFT