

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
(EQAC)

DATE: Wednesday, July 8, 2020*

TIME: 7:15 PM – 9:38 PM

LOCATION: Electronic Meeting via WebEx

EQAC Member Attendance

| Name | Present (P)/ Absent (A) | Name | Present (P)/ Absent (A) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Stella Koch (Chairman, At-Large) | P | Larry Zaragoza (Vice Chairman, Mount Vernon) | P |
| Johna Gagnon (Lee) | A | Renee Grebe (At-Large) | P |
| Richard Healy (Mason) | P | Clare Sparling (Student Member) | P |
| Debra Jacobson (Dranesville) | P | George Lamb (At-Large) | P |
| Ken Lanfear (Hunter Mill) | P | Bryan Campbell (Braddock) | P |
| Alex Robbins (Providence) | A | Rich Weisman (Sully) | P |
| Clyde Wilber (Springfield) | P | Mike Zatz (At-Large) | P |

County Staff in Attendance

Joseph Gorney DPD
Susan Hafeli OEEC
Kathleen Daley OEEC
Kelly Naylor OEEC
John Friedman LDS
Jan Leavitt LDS
Hugh Whitehead DPWES
Charles Smith DPWES

Community Members in Attendance

Avi Sareen TNT Environmental

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:15 PM.

1. Electronic Meeting Findings and Determinations

Given that each member of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council was participating in the meeting from a separate location and in order to verify that a quorum of members was participating and that each member's voice was clear, audible, and at an appropriate volume for all of the other members, Chairman Koch performed a roll call of members and asked each Environmental Quality Advisory Council member participating in the meeting to state their name

*The monthly meetings of EQAC were cancelled during the months of April, May, and June 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

and the location from which they were participating. She moved that each member's voice was adequately heard by each other member of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Zaragoza and approved unanimously.

Having established that each member's voice could be heard by every other member, she next established the nature of the emergency that compelled these emergency procedures, the fact that the council was meeting electronically, the type of electronic communication that was being used, and how public access to this meeting was arranged. Chairman Koch moved that the Emergency Declaration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic makes it unsafe for the Environmental Quality Advisory Council to physically assemble and unsafe for the public to physically attend any such meeting, and that as such, the Freedom of Information Act's (FOIAs) usual procedures, which require the physical assembly of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council and the physical presence of the public, cannot be implemented safely or practically. She further moved that the Environmental Quality Advisory Council may conduct this meeting electronically through a dedicated audio conferencing line, and that the public could access the meeting by calling 1-408-418-9388 and entering the code: 129 201 2241. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilber and approved unanimously.

Finally, Chairman Koch moved that the matters addressed on today's agenda are necessary to continue operations of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council and the discharge of its duties and responsibilities. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lamb and approved unanimously.

2. RPA Replanting Requirements Update (presentation; discussion)

John Friedman of the county Land Development Services (LDS) gave a presentation regarding proposed changes to county planting requirements within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) for both the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (CBPO) and the Public Facilities Manual (PFM). His presentation covered the status of the amendments, background, and proposed standards. Currently, both the ordinance and PFM have planting densities for RPAs. However, the planting densities and computational methods are different. The amendments would eliminate the differences, locate all the requirements in one document, and provide additional planting options. The PFM is seen as the best place for density requirements as it includes all the field standards to implement RPA planting plans. Proposed planting standards are based on county experience with stream restoration projects. The four components of the standards would be overstory trees; understory trees; shrubs; and groundcovers. Future steps in the review process include soliciting additional comments; presenting the amendments to the Engineering Standards Review Committee (ESRC) for approval; Board of Supervisors authorization; Planning Commission public hearing and recommendation; and Board of Supervisors public hearing and decision.

EQAC members questioned how to assess the proposed amendments in terms of the number of plants and the quality of those plantings. In their response, staff stressed the importance of shrubs in restoring RPAs to a more naturally-occurring streamside condition. Shrubs often have a high mortality rate due to deer browse pressures and competition with weeds. Grasses are also included in the planting recommendations to stabilize the soil, provide erosion and sediment control, and minimize weeds. Enforcement and follow-up certifications were discussed. Messrs.

Campbell and Wilber stated that they would be willing to draft a memorandum from EQAC to LDS regarding the proposed changes.

3. 2020 Legislative Packet (discussion; decision)

EQAC members discussed the legislative recommendations that the council sent to the county in 2019. Two of the three recommendations were largely addressed by the state in their most recent legislative session, including “Solar Freedom” and “Clean Energy.” EQAC would like to see the state Clean Energy legislation strengthened and a tax on disposable bags put into effect. EQAC noted that there were no advanced clean air standards in the Clean Energy legislation. Vice-Chairman Zaragoza and Mr. Healy stated an intent to draft a memorandum to the county with a recommendation that the county include in their recommendations to the state strengthened Clean Energy legislation. EQAC members were to speak with Mr. Healy regarding any other input. EQAC intended to come back to this item at the August meeting.

4. Environmental Excellence Awards (EEA) Selection Subcommittee (discussion; decision)

Mr. Zatz and Mr. Lanfear, as the two members of the Environmental Excellence Awards Selection Subcommittee, presented information to the council regarding their recommendations for the 2020 Environmental Excellence Awards. They noted that nominations were received for one business, one county employee, and three individuals. They felt that all five nominations were deserving of an award.

Mr. Zatz moved that EQAC accept the recommendations of the EEA Subcommittee and that all five nominations be awarded an Environmental Excellence Award. Mr. Lanfear seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5. Student Member Selection Subcommittee (discussion; decision)

Ms. Sparling and Vice-Chairman Zaragoza, as the two members of the Student Member Selection Subcommittee, presented information to the council regarding their recommendations for the 2020-2021 EQAC Student Member. They noted that it was a difficult decision, given the high quality of the candidates. Each had excellent grades, was taking rigorous coursework, and demonstrated strong initiative.

The subcommittee recommended Prasi Thapa as the primary student nominee and Emma Wood as the alternate nominee. Ms. Sparling moved that EQAC accept the recommendations of the Student Selection Subcommittee of Prasi Thapa as the primary student nominee and Emma Wood as the alternate nominee. Vice-Chairman Zaragoza seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6. 2020 Annual Report on the Environment (discussion)

Chairman Koch noted that it had become clear that the completion of an Annual Report on the Environment (ARE) would not be reasonable in 2020. As an alternative, EQAC discussed the potential for an abbreviated letter (three to four pages) to the Board of Supervisors with focused recommendations and the selective use of an ARE “Scorecard” for identified actions. It was agreed that chapter authors for the 2019 ARE would review the 2020 staff response to EQAC recommendations to focus their comments.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes (decision)

- January 8, 2020 (issues summary)
- February 12, 2020 (minutes)
- March 11, 2020 (minutes)

The issues summary and minutes were not available for review.

8. Chairman Items

Chairman Koch thanked staff for coordinating the virtual meeting. She noted that the upcoming August EQAC meeting would follow the same format as the July meeting, i.e., EQAC would meet through a virtual “WebEx” meeting.

9. Council Member Items

- Mr. Zatz asked staff whether there had been any significant changes regarding the accomplishment of environmental functions in the county due to COVID. Mr. Gorney mentioned that many staff have been accomplishing some of the same functions remotely. Some county functions, such as permits, are accomplished over the internet. Mr. Wilber mentioned that certain staff, such as wastewater and stormwater staff, might still need to go into their workplaces. As with waste collection staff, they often work in proximity to others, so that their risk of contracting COVID is higher. He mentioned that there has been some COVID among staff but that contact tracing has been working well. Chairman Koch observed that other staff are in the field, so that their risk is lessened. Mr. Zatz noted that government revenues may be reduced in the future, which could result in government layoffs.
- Vice-Chairman Zaragoza noted that certain staff, such as those in schools and recreation, might be redirected to other jobs. He also stated that he watched a webinar offered by the State regarding Environmental Justice. He thought it was very good and recommended that council members watch the webinar.
- Mr. Lanfear mentioned that his condominium association was in the middle of discussions regarding whether and how to open pools and fitness centers.
- Ms. Sparling thanked the council for the opportunity to serve as student representative during the 2019-2020 term. Chairman Koch was highly complimentary of Ms. Sparling and thanked her for her service to the council.
- Mr. Lamb noted some public comments regarding the RPA replanting discussion. He recommended that these comments be made available to staff. He also mentioned that the Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) Task Force would meet in late-July.
- Ms. Grebe recommended that the council think about how to integrate Environmental Justice into the Annual Report on the Environment. She also voiced concerns about residential developments that were approved within the noise contours for the Washington Dulles International Airport. She felt that EQAC should consider the topic of noise contours further. Mr. Weisman, the Sully District representative to EQAC, mentioned that he and Mr. Zatz had a conversation regarding noise contours with the Sully District Supervisor. It was noted by Chairman Koch that the council explores issues of broad applicability but does not generally take positions on individual proposed development actions.

- Mr. Healy mentioned that the Tree Commission was meeting via teleconference (phone) next week.
- Ms. Jacobson provided some comments in the “Chat Box” stated that she would be stepping down from her EQAC position. Chairman Koch voiced her appreciation for all the extraordinary work of Ms. Jacobson as a member of the council. Chairman Koch mentioned that she had enormous respect for Ms. Jacobson and appreciated her leadership, particularly for her work on climate change.

10. Public Input

Avi Sareen, a member of TNT Environmental, posted the following comments and questions in the WebEx “chat box:”

- *“Chapter 12 of the PFM use different stock sizes (1”, 2” and 3” trees) to calculate the required 10-year tree canopy. There is no conversion of canopy coverage for 1.5” or ¾” trees to the sizes outlined in proposed Table 12.14. How is this addressed?”*
- *Table A of the DCR “Riparian Buffers Guidance & Mitigation Guidance Manual” densities recommend 654 stems per acre for sites less than ¼ acre of buffer which likely represents the majority of RPA replanting efforts in the County. Why was this not used?*
- *Were environmental consultants and industry practitioners [sic] (not ESI) part of the discussions regarding the proposed revisions?*
- *Using Table B from DCR's guidance document puts onerous planting requirements on County residents, likely in excess of \$5,000 worth of plantings for a 1/4 acre site which puts undue burden on the residents of the County. Why is this being used?*
- *Not all stream restoration projects plant at these densities. We have seen tremendous success at planting rates of ~650 stems per acre for stream restoration projects.*
- *DEQ & the US Army Corps of Engineers require 400 stems/acre survival for stream restoration projects. Typically, when planting at ~650 stems per acre, we assume 60-80% survival. Several consultants have hundreds of study plots, were they consulted?”*

Following discussion of these comments, EQAC recommended that the comments be forwarded to staff, who could then respond to EQAC.

11. Staff Items

Mr. Gorney noted the following:

- The Comprehensive Plan amendment for Natural Landscaping at County Facilities was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 9, 2020.
- An Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) project is proceeding for Natural Landscaping at the county Government Center.
- Presentations are planned before the Land Use Policy Committee on July 21, 2020 regarding the airport noise contours associated with the Washington Dulles International Airport.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 PM.