

**BALTIMORE COUNTY ADVISORY
COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
(CEQ)**

**2007 ANNUAL REPORT TO
BALTIMORE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND BALTIMORE COUNTY
COUNCIL**

March 2008

BACKGROUND

The Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ) met regularly throughout the 2007 calendar year. Rex Wright, Chair, set the agendas and presided at the meetings. This Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ) 2007 Annual Report to the Baltimore County Executive and Baltimore County Council fulfills the requirement specified in County Bill No. 86-03 and provides a summary of CEQ activities during 2007.

CEQ MEMBERSHIP

As of December 2007, the CEQ membership included the following individuals:

District 1:

Joan Plisko, Ph.D., *District Representative*, Environmental. Systems Engineer
Steve Schreiner, Ph.D., *At Large Science*, Senior Scientist and Information Technology Manager

District 2:

Lois Jacobs, *District Representative*, Landscape Architect/Designer
Nell B. Strachan, *At Large Representative*, Attorney, Venable, LLP,
Rex Wright, (Chair) *At Large Industry*

District 3:

Linda Davis, *At Large Educator*
Charlie Conklin, *District Representative*, Retired – Bethlehem Steel

District 4:

Clifford Collins, *District Representative*, Special Education Instructor

District 5:

Shirley Carl, *District Representative*, Community Activist/Environmental Educator
Kathy Reiner Martin, *At Large Representative*, Community Activist
Brian Fath, Ph.D., *At Large Academia*, Associate Professor, Biology

District 6:

Ray Davis, *District Representative*, Retired - Educator

District 7:

Russell Donnelly, *District Representative*, Community Activist

Vacant: Home Builders Industry; Agricultural

CEQ MISSION STATEMENT

The CEQ activities in 2007 furthered the mission previously established for CEQ:

The purpose of the CEQ, through its duties and responsibilities as stated in the County Council Bill No. 86-03, is to encourage protection and preservation of the natural environment in Baltimore County and its waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay, by educating the community to make environmentally sustainable decisions and enlightening, advising, and initiating dialogue with County officials. We will facilitate communication between the County government and its residents on environmental needs, programs, and legislation.

The CEQ worked on two substantive issues it had selected (**Green Building and Conservation Landscaping**) and two that it was asked to evaluate by the County Council, all with successful results. Each of these projects is summarized below. The CEQ was asked by Councilman Sam Moxley to evaluate the Sierra Club's **Cool Cities/Sustainability** program. In addition, the CEQ was asked by Councilman Vince Gardina to evaluate the county policy for **removal of street trees** (located on private property but within the county right-of-way)..

COOL CITIES/SUSTAINABILITY

Cool Cities Report

In response to a request from Councilman S.G. Samuel Moxley, Chair of the Baltimore County Council, the CEQ reviewed the Sierra Club's Cool Cities program. This program encompasses a series of recommendations for local governmental entities to lessen their environmental impact.

Seven members of the CEQ and one graduate student worked to review the Cool Cities program as well as other State and national programs that address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The report offered background information and addressed each of the Cool Cities components (1. GHG emissions inventory; 2. Greening the County's fleet of vehicles and transportation planning process; 3. Energy efficiency; and 4. Renewable energy) and included attachments of supporting information.

In the report the CEQ recommended that the County:

1. Join the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) to receive technical assistance and other support services.
2. Create a County structure to develop and implement a comprehensive policy to address climate change and sustainability. To achieve this, the County would:
 - Establish a County policy to guide the Sustainability Program;
 - Designate a Director of the County Sustainability Program;
 - Establish a Public-Private Sustainability Workgroup, which would work with the Director of the County Sustainability Program and ICLEI, in implementing specific program components. Suggested participants on the Workgroup include, at a minimum, representatives from the Office of Budget and Finance, Purchasing Bureau; the Department of Public Works Bureaus of Building and Equipment Services, Engineering and Construction, and Traffic Engineering and Transportation Planning; the Office of Planning; and the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management, among others.
3. At a minimum, include in the County Sustainability Program, the core programs of Sierra Club's Cool Cities:
 - Conduct a GHG emissions inventory;
 - Green the County's fleet of vehicles and consider GHG emissions in the transportation planning process;
 - Increase energy efficiency of County owned and operated facilities and equipment; and
 - Procure and foster the use of renewable energy, credits, and technologies.
4. Encourage, educate, and incentivize County employees and citizens to conserve energy. Design and implement a public outreach and education program about ways that citizens can reduce GHG emissions.

After the CEQ researched the fundamentals of ICLEI, CEQ representatives facilitated a meeting between Baltimore County Government and ICLEI representatives on August 9, 2007. Attendees included David Carroll of Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (representing County Executive James Smith), Councilman Vincent Gardina of the 5th District (representing Baltimore County Council), Rex A. Wright, Ray Davis, and Russell S. Donnelly (representing the CEQ) and Kim Lundgren (representing ICLEI). During the meeting, Ms. Lundgren illustrated the function of the ICLEI Program and highlighted the phased implementation of the program, incorporation and assimilation of existing local government efforts into the program, and the subsequent benefits of ICLEI's program implementation for Baltimore County.

GREEN BUILDING

CEQ members met with Councilman Gardina to discuss proposed Bill No. 118-06, which offers tax credits to residents for implementing energy efficient technologies in their homes. At this time, CEQ provided suggestions for modification to improve the proposed bill. This bill has been tabled.

In October, Bill No. 78-07, High Performance Buildings, was passed. This bill was a modification of Bill No. 85-06. The modifications expanded the tax credit to include the US Green Building Councils LEED-NC for new construction, LEED-CS for core and shell, and LEED-EB for existing buildings. The tax credit was changed to 50% Silver, 60% Gold and 80% Platinum levels. The term of the credit was reduced to five years. These changes will allow the credit to be available to most new building construction and major renovations.

CONSERVATION LANDSCAPING

The CEQ's Conservation Landscaping Project Team (CLPT) formed in May 2006, and comprised of members of the CEQ and representatives of Baltimore County's Departments of Environmental Protection and Resource Management, Recreation & Parks, Public Schools, Public Works, Permits & Development Mgmt and Community Conservation, continued the collaborative process to identify landscaping methods for County-owned and private property consistent with thoughtful environmentally-desirable practices.

Conservation Landscaping (CL) is a method of designing and maintaining public and private lands, such as parks, building and school grounds, roadside plantings, and yards to (1) reduce harm to the environment, (2) save time and money with lower maintenance requirements, and (3) maintain healthier places to live, work, and play. The CLPT addressed eleven (11) major areas that would benefit from CL practices: Air Quality, Energy Conservation, Pesticide/Fertilizer Reduction, Water Quality Improvement, Stormwater Management, Ecosystem Management, Resource Reduction, Aesthetic Improvement, Education, Community Engagement, and Maintenance Practices.

After a visit to Fairfax County, VA in December 2006, to learn first-hand about their CL Program, the CLPT finalized its recommendations and presented them to the directors or representatives of the participating departments on April 5, 2007 for their information and input.

There was a general agreement with the CEQ recommendations, which complement other current County initiatives such as Green Renaissance, the County's recognition as a Nature-Friendly Community, a gold award Chesapeake Bay Partner Community, and other innovative successful programs including the Builders for the Bay, Rural Residential Reforestation, Forest Sustainability, and the "Growing Home" Campaign.

It is the intent of the CLPT to meet with the administration to recommend the adoption of a county-wide policy for CL and to determine the most effective and efficient manner to integrate the proposals into county landscaping design and maintenance practices by (1) assessing landscaping practices on county lands, (2) implementing and maintaining CL practices, and (3) sharing the results and benefits with county residents and other interested parties. After meeting with the administration early in 2008, it is the intent of the CLPT to make a presentation to the County Council.

REMOVAL OF STREET TREES

In response to public concern in the Stoneleigh Community over removal of mature street trees, in August 2007, Councilman Gardina requested that CEQ look into County Policy on the removal of Roadside Trees, and make recommendations on what might be done to improve current policy and practices. CEQ then formed a committee to review this matter; we found that regulations, policies, permits and inspections concerning Roadside Trees were largely a State matter until December, 2003, when they were delegated to the County Department of Public Works (DPW) by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The Committee met with DPW and followed up with several phone calls and discussions which focused on careful compliance with regulations, documentation, and resident education. DPW had a positive response to further work with the Committee on alternatives to removal and provide information to residents - including a web fact sheet, improved brochure, and a list of appropriate Street trees.

CEQ adopted the report of the Committee on January 30, 2008, and voted to send a copy of the report to David Carroll (DEPRM), DPW, Councilman Gardina, and the other six Councilmen.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

The CEQ met with David Carroll, Director of DEPRM at its May 2007 meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT for 2007

The CEQ Communications Subcommittee worked diligently to gain media attention in 2007. The Subcommittee networked with a number of reporters at local newspapers.

On December 17, 2007 the Communications Chair contacted Tom Pelton, a Baltimore Sun reporter and Angie Bornemann, Editor of Patuxent Publishing with a press release regarding the CEQ's Cool Cities Report. They responded that although our group is to be congratulated for its hard work, they did not consider the report newsworthy unless the county acted upon the CEQ's recommendations.