

**Baltimore County Commission on  
Environmental Quality  
Minutes of Meeting June 23, 2010**

**Attendance**

CEQ members: Brian Fath, Lois Jacobs, Russell Donnelly, Rex Wright, Joan Norman, Jerry Jurrick, Mike Pierce, Kathy Reiner-Martin, Nell Strachen

Absent: Carri Beer, Ray Davis, Linda Davis, Tom Moore, Willie Greer

County Staff: Don Outen, John Alexander

**Minutes**

The minutes of the April meeting were approved with changes.

**Upcoming elections**

The group had a general discussion concerning how it should address upcoming elections and the significant turn-over of County Executive and County Council members, since the CEQ members are appointed by these elected officials. It was agreed that individual discussion with candidates would be appropriate to let them know about the CEQ and to request that, during their meetings with the public, they enquire about what environmental concerns they have.

After the primaries, it would be appropriate to make more formal contact with the remaining candidates. Brian will begin drafting a paper or letter.

**Speaker**

Liz Glenn, Chief of Community Planning and Development of the Office of Community Conservation (OCC), spoke on the environmental aspect of the process of providing financial support, in the way of loans, to low- and moderate-income home-owners who wish to refurbish their homes.

While the office of "Conservation" sounds like environmental, it didn't start out that way. It began with mapping all the data as it affects the conservation of neighborhoods and infrastructure. The office operates under the Office of Planning on many facets, especially impacting older neighborhoods.

OCC, with a staff of 32, also has responsibilities for disabilities, housing finance, grants, and sector revitalization.

New procedures developed in the past several years for new buildings emphasize the inclusion of plans to incorporate energy efficiency in future projects. It is now a priority. For example, paying for automatic dish washers in low-income residences may seem strange, but the savings in water usage over the life-time easily justifies the expense.

The office manages a large loan portfolio, and its inspectors have Code Enforcement authority. While giving out rehab loans, it is natural to add energy efficiency and indoor air quality standards. At the present time, many green, healthy rehabs are quietly being done. It has been found that every house needs roof insulation.

The loan program requirements include: homeowner, income below 80%, have insurance, historic trust review, floodplain review, etc. The program has not been advertised, but clients generally come through referrals or simply have contacted the office to find out what assistance they may receive. The plan allows the loan repayment to be deferred until the owner takes equity out of a property.

It has been found that comprehensive rehab leads to savings. When judged on a rate of return on the loans themselves, the program gets a lousy return. However, because of the raised property values and tax, improved health, and worker productivity, there are significant benefits for the community. So far, there has not been a true analysis of this value, but this needs to be done, possibly with an intern.

Most of the projects involve an investment of about \$10,000 and the houses were generally under 1200 sq ft. There has been a wide variety of house types, so experience has been gained regarding what techniques work in each case, which may be applied to other similar homes.

The office is planning an "energy makeover" program, which involves finding a housing example in each community, with people submitting applications. This will allow further demonstration on a type of house that is prevalent in the community, so people who do not qualify still get a benefit from the lessons learned.

There is a need to push PACE and other mechanisms for people that do not quite qualify for this program. There is also a need for contractor training to get them certified as green technicians.

### **Sustainability Network**

There is not many specifics to report on the Sustainability Network. Efforts up to this point have been in three areas:

1. Green at work (campaign initiated, publicized, and on-going)
2. Built environment (efforts more in the beginning stage to continue evaluating current county buildings)
3. Stakeholder meetings scheduled in the fall.

### **PACE**

Although authorized by State law, this requires County Council action to put it in place. The financial community generally opposes the program, since PACE is like a tax and thus puts repayment in front of lien-holders and mortgages.

### **Plastic Bags**

Lois and Mike continue to gather information on legislative initiatives around the country in order to prepare a report this fall for possible County Council action.

### **Deer**

It was noted that presently the County Code prohibits harming or killing wildlife in County Parks, so the first step in implementing the CEQ recommendation to control deer population is to pass a minor revision to the Code.

### **Living sustainability**

This initiative is to look into what the CEQ could do towards increasing public awareness of environmental issues. A list of 10 ideas will be distributed to the CEQ members and Nell requests ideas on how these could be disseminated.

### **Tours**

Planning for additional tours is on hold for now. It was noted that the information/routes/etc from the past tours could be a valuable resource, for example, to take new County Council members on the same tour.

**CEQ open seat**

There continues to be an open seat. There was a question if a county employee is eligible to be on the Commission. (Note: There is nothing in Article 3, Title 3 of the County Code that implies that a county employee is not eligible to serve on a commission.)

**Future meetings and CEQ Picnic**

There will be no meeting in July.

The August 25 picnic will be held at Kathy's property at 7412 Greenbank Rd at Oliver Beach. We will invite the sitting County Council members and department directors.