

**Minutes**  
**Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)**  
**November 19, 2014, 7:00 PM**  
**Dept of Environmental Protection & Sustainability, Room 319: County Office Building,**  
**111 W. Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204**

Welcome and Introductions

I. CEQ Administrative Business /10 minutes – Brian

a. Updates

i. Expiring terms

Nell and Eric both stepped down as of end of summer; both were executive appointees but no names put forward yet. Jeff Supik has also decided to step down. Jeff was appointed by District 4; there is a new council member so we will wait and approach the new council member about appointing someone. So we are down 3 members now and hope to have those positions filled going into next year.

ii. Voting for new chair

Brian is stepping down at end of year and probably will miss the December meeting as well. We are looking for a volunteer.

iii. New Council members: (District 3- Kach; District 4 – Jones; District 7- Crandell)

We have to figure out a strategic way to introduce ourselves to the new members and have them get to know us. The Sustainability Network material we are working on offers a potential opportunity.

b. Review/Adopt September minutes

Motion to approve – passed unanimously. Ayla will put them on the web site. We are publicizing everything consistent with Open Meetings rules.

II. Fall Theme: Sustainability Research Results/1 hour – Group Discussion

The document was never released publicly – this is an effort to see if we can reopen the discussion. Ayla suggests we take individual sets of recommendations to different department heads to see how they respond.

a. Presentation of Recommendations

**Source Reduction, Recycling & Solid Waste - Valerie**

Yesterday Kevin Kamenetz and Charlie Reichert had a get-together for businesses that voluntarily report their recycling rates. They are going to increase the target from 30 to 50% of waste-stream tonnage as a county goal across the board. Commercial rates are voluntary and not all businesses report. Most commercial and institutional sites are currently recycling. There are problems with costs for small businesses to recycle. The next focus will be on multi-inhabitant dwellings. Not all jurisdictions in the county are at 30% so there will be targeting of those neighborhoods that are not at that level. There is great opportunity for growth with composting. Howard County does pickup for composting including food waste. Baltimore County picks up

leaves, grass and Christmas trees. The one Maryland facility that does food composting was shut down (actually there is one in Harford County but they may not be taking homeowners' food waste). Valerie will write up a couple of suggestions. Q: is it a problem if people don't clean recyclables? A: once you go to single stream it really doesn't matter. Food waste in containers is the least problem but about 25% has other materials that cannot be recycled. Recyclable types 3 through 7 are used for waste to energy. We will probably see more of those facilities and they will be called recycling. Styrofoam is a problem and just has to be thrown away. The numbers on the different plastic types are going away so it is not yet clear exactly what kind of labeling will be used. There will be labels that indicate what can be done. An education campaign to encourage people concerning which materials should not be used is a possibility. Most of our recycling is sent to China including 67% of paper – they sort it and make it into products that we then buy. Full-sleeve wraps on containers are now creating a problem – they help products sell but they cannot be recycled.

### **Buildings, Sites, Water & Energy – Rex and Jim**

Went back to old list and looked through it. A lot has happened since the report was written. Building codes have been strengthened including international energy code. A lot of items that were listed under LEED don't have as much impact as they might have, but strictly related to an energy perspective you don't get as much of an advantage because much of those standards have already become widespread and also adopted as part of the 2012 international building codes, which are now also Maryland building codes. So many of the items on the list from this report are now mandated by code anyway. One of the themes in the report includes a lot of discussion of monitoring energy usage and energy consumption. There is an energy tracking company that Ayla works with that tracks energy usage of some key county buildings and they are asking if the county has an energy reduction plan. There is not an energy person per se but requests and questions often go to Ayla. Some of the BGE incentives are being used.

One item that pops out is that there are enough buildings in the county to appoint someone as a full-time energy auditor or manager – a person in that job would pay for themselves just through the energy savings. There is a lot of low-hanging fruit that can be identified by inspecting buildings during off-hours. Actually upgrading the lighting controls is an expensive proposition. (Lighting retrofits make upgrading lighting controls even less cost-effective.)

BGE has picked up and run with smart meters which are now in many houses and they report to you on your energy efficiency in comparison with your neighbors. This is a bit harder to do with commercial enterprises. Studies show that people are more likely to modify behavior when they are being compared with peers.

One of the recommendations was that at time of a real estate transaction the history of energy costs should be provided as part of the transaction information – this puts a value on an energy-efficient building and increases the value of energy-efficient properties.

EmPower Maryland Act of 2008 – all customers put money into this effort as a surcharges. A handout with details was provided from a public presentation that was made in Harford County. There is interest in doing more with Baltimore County. Recommendations extend from rebuilding existing infrastructure to bringing in whole new systems. Two case examples are provided. Lighting is a huge issue with large potential paybacks. Commercial properties and governments that don't take advantage of this program are basically giving away money they could be saving. Despite all of this they are not on target to meet 15% reductions (have to

remember the amount of growth since 2008, which was the baseline) and are trying hard to see what can be done to meet it.

Q: if someone is using renewable energy, is that considered the same as nonrenewable sources?

A: The measurements are for whatever is on the grid. Any time less energy is pulled from the grid this is noted.

On the government page is a list of relative cost percentages for different kinds of energy uses to indicate where the potential savings are. All of the applications and forms are online. Often the vendors will do the work needed to complete the application. County is working on the requirement that the vendor provides this service. John Becker at BGE is willing to come out and give talks at the county offices.

Residential – for \$100 you can also get an energy audit on your house. They will replace light bulbs on the spot and put in flow restrictors to reduce hot water use.

### **Community Form & Placemaking - Brian**

Brian has a “public life” study going on of downtown Towson to demonstrate how people use public spaces. He had his class redo the pages on this topic and they also had some comments, but the section in the report is already pretty good. The problem is getting buy-in for implementation. David Marks is supporting the kind of development going on but there is often community resistance. Towson Row is going in; Whole Foods will be first retailer. There will be substantial changes in the look of Towson over the next 10 years. It would be nice to restore trains to the area. There is \$750 million of project investment going into downtown.

Lois has some concerns that she will write up to combine with the items mentioned by Brian.

### **Transportation & Mobility – Bill and Steve**

The existing report is actually pretty good; some new items could be introduced. David Marks has indicated that mandatory bike racks and zip cars, bike sharing programs are under consideration. What is missing from the report is a sense of urgency; it is described as a set of options but without the sense as to where our priorities lie. Transportation represents ~30% of energy use so there should be significant opportunities for savings in this sector. Another interesting suggestion had to do with a potential government re-organization along the lines of a model followed 5-10 years ago by Montgomery County. The role of community planning and thinking about how people move around is part of the discussion. But public motivation is equally important. Many people are apathetic about these matters and don't appreciate their importance. Among all of the different topics a lack of education is a recurring theme. Pursuing available grants is another theme – a lot of money is out there but more could be done to go after it consistently. MTA seems to consider relatively low ridership numbers to be successful. We are the largest jurisdiction in the state that doesn't have its own public transportation infrastructure.

### **Community Engagement & Capacity – Linda and Brian**

This section was fairly well-written, but without a lot of urgency and without a lot of resources behind it. Linda pointed out that there was not a comprehensive approach. The wording used made no reference to protection of resources as opposed to maintaining current levels of resource use. We need to re-envision what we are doing and how and this report has the chance to get people's attention. The document could be bolder than it is. We as a commission can risk being bold and forthright and respond directly to challenges. What is missing is ecological literacy about how systems work. Town meetings, free movies, community games, contests, social media, citizen science – anything and everything that would motivate people would be worth

trying. Also best practices are missing from this section. Also the County's current web site contains only a few links on efficiency of energy use. Ayla handles this and can update some of it. For the natural resource section – it was well written but water quality was not addressed. We will save these and other section comments for next time.

#### Next Steps

Suggest that the groups that presented tonight should write something up and forward it to Brian to be circulated and other groups should come to the meeting prepared to present.

Our update/addendum should be structured as a short document that responds to the report.

Who is the audience for this? County council and executive and other department heads. The community outreach part is a little trickier but there are offices within the county that can be targeted with many of these items. The hope is to restore the level of activity to what it was when the Sustainability Network was more active. Submitting a whole new report is probably more than what is feasible but once we start communicating with departments we can work out what additional steps should be taken. The report ultimately will be revised and separated into sections.

Ayla will facilitate the next meeting.

III. Adjourn 8:55 p.m.

Next Meetings: 7:00 p.m., regular meetings

November 19, 2014

December 17, 2014

January 28, 2015