

Minutes
Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
October 24, 7 PM

Jefferson Building, Chesapeake Room, **105** W. Chesapeake Avenue, Towson, MD 21204

CEQ meeting dates, membership information, and reports are available online
Here: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/ceq/index.html

Lois Jacobs, Brian Lindley, Kui Zhao, Linda Davis, Andy Miller, Valerie Androutsopoulos,
Glenn Elseroad, Lynda Eisenberg, Chris Overcash, Karen Wynn, Brian Bernstein, Carol Newll

Mike Rubey with the Country Chronicle and Villager newspapers

Open Meeting

I. Welcome and Comments/Updates – Lois Jacobs, Chair

Next month Brian Fath will be bringing four students who are working on a Greenhouse Gas Inventory Project and will present them to CEQ. Lois points out that we have to remember that our mandate is to weigh in on environmental matters and that we should not be commenting on issues outside of our purview.

II. A. Discuss and Approve minutes of May 23rd meeting (postponed from 9/26).
B. Discuss and Approve minutes of September 26th meeting.
Minutes approved unanimously with minor corrections.

III. Meeting of Solid Waste Management Citizens Review Committee (SWMCRC) on New Plan Content – Monday, 10/29, 7 PM in Executive Conference Room at 400 Washington Avenue, Towson. Let DPW know if attending by 10/25 (410-887-2000, Bureau of Solid Waste Management).

After the public meetings they get together and talk about all the recommendations that were made. This is not a forum for public comments but the meeting itself is open. Lois plans to attend. It will be interesting to see if they include any of the items that we have discussed. We will still be addressing recycling as one of the issues this group deals with. Valerie re-read the plan again and comments that while they mentioned that plastics are commodities whose price fluctuates with supply and demand and they said that so far it has been economically viable, but they do not mention what happens when there is a rapid drop in demand and a big drop in price. There was much talk about the incinerator and differences of opinion about what policy should be pursued. We don't know what the group will recommend. Valerie recommends Charlie Reichart, recycling coordinator. According to the mandate that formed this group, not only EPS but also DPW is supposed to have a representative to this group but they have never appointed anyone.

IV. Bill 67-18 Regulation of Park Activities passed 6-1 on Monday 10/1. Lois and Karen attended the Council Meeting.

This is the first bill ever to be passed by the County Council that originated from something proposed by CEQ. Councilman Jones asked whether the bill would have an effect on decisions such as cutting down trees to build a playing field; Lois was not sure of the answer.

Speakers who signed up included the following:

- cutting painted trees – suggestion by Robert Stanhope

He is retired, was Chief Naturalist of Baltimore County – he argued that the trees should all be cut down. There was also a lot of discussion about removing paint.

- Lake Roland Park “art” – suggestion by Stuart Stainman

There is some wooden art among the trees and finds this interferes with his enjoyment of the woods. This appears to be strictly aesthetic and was not causing any harm.

- “information walk” and unexpected consequence of Painted Trees.

Lois’s husband walked the trail and talked to people who were there in order to get their viewpoints. Some liked the painted trees, some hated them. Back at the Nature Center he spoke with one of the rangers, who told him that an unexpected consequence of the painted trees was that people sometimes go off the trail to look for the more remote painted trees and get lost, and the rangers then have to send someone out to search for them.

Proposed Equine Facility/Activities in Parks.

A. The Populous Study

At our last meeting we were going to start with Andrea van Arsdale; she was not available but Jack Mayhew did send Lois the study and copied Andrea, Brian and Kui and it was sent to us. Lois points out that the horse trails don’t cross the hiking trails but Linda points out that they do cross Baisman Run, which is a trout stream, at 14 locations. Equine activities in parks are traditionally a common feature; having equine activity share a park is nothing new, but there is a difference between sharing and repurposing. Lois saw things being added but didn’t see anything being taken away or repurposed. The plan itself calls for public input and transparency before anything is done.

There is a lot of controversy but not much clarity - many of the complaints have been about a lack of publicly shared information about what was being planned. According to Glenn, people at the Ag Center are concerned about potential change in the original intent and the possibility that the front fields may not remain available for their purposes – they use those for demonstration plots, growing vegetables or sunflowers or other crops. It’s not clear to what extent Shawan Downs serves a public purpose or what kind of control they might exert over future planning. Many concerns are not overtly environmental and some are political, but some do have environmental implications and those are things we should keep in mind – for example, an environmental impact study of having horse trails cross the streams. Glenn feels it’s likely that the stream crossings will

be addressed before anything is done given existing regulations about livestock in streams.

The main issues that would concern this group would have to do with any changes in the park. Linda looked up some work on environmental impacts of horse trails from USGS and from USDA. To the extent that CEQ has any interest in this, it might have to do with the question of how water quality in Baisman Run will be protected.

Glenn argues that none of these things may even be issues after the election. So it makes the most sense for us just to keep our eye on any planning that would have relevance for environmental quality in the park.

B. Sun Article and Plymyer Blog

He concludes that it's possible the plan itself might have been ok, but that the lack of transparency was more troubling than anything else.

V. Solar Facility Law Review

- no action by County Council

As far as Lois knows there has been no County Council action on recommendations by the planning board. When the planning office formed the Solar Facility Law Review Committee they tried to get stakeholders from many different groups. One thing that was brought up at this planning board meeting was that nobody was asked to be on that committee who represented the horse industry and they asked to have the committee re-formed with representation from a broader range of perspectives. Our suggestion in the solar bill was to allow for animal husbandry and pastures and our report would not have excluded those uses. The report of the planning board did not have some of the items we recommended.

There were many people in attendance who were outspoken about wanting to leave more open land and thought their points of view were not represented. Many of the issues they raised probably would not be problems if our recommendations had been incorporated into the report. Right now nothing will happen until we see the outcome of the election.

VI. Other issues of concern to us: Solar bill, road salt, recycling, update about deer.

Suggestion by Carol – the sewage and stormwater system from the Towson area gets directed down along the Jones Falls, with sanitary sewer overflows during storms causing water quality problems downstream as far as the harbor. Some of the county's reports have been challenged and it is not clear what will be done to prevent this from happening and how that affects development loads upstream. Some concern also about infill development along the Jones Falls at the lowest part of the valley which would bring in higher density in places where density currently is fairly low. The County has an open space policy or regulations and the document was rewritten in the past few years by one person, not by an expert panel, and was never taken to the County Council to be proposed as law. But it is being used as though it had legal standing and has been given to the group that wants to add the development near Lake Roland north of Lake Avenue. According

to Kui Zhao, the person who did the study on open space retired a few years ago and it was subsequently taken over by her boss. She thinks it was submitted to the planning board but isn't sure what happened beyond that. According to Mike Rubey, open space is handled by the landscape architect for Recreation and Parks and Planning handles the exceptions.

The new County Executive takes over in early December (first week) and then will appoint new department heads who might take office between early January and February. They have to first be approved by the County Council.

VII. Adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Next regular Meetings 7 PM:

- November 28, 2018
- January 23, 2019
- February 27, 2019
- March 27, 2019
- April 24, 2019
- May 22, 2019