



**City of Harrisonburg Environmental Performance
Standards Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2017 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

Members in attendance: Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh, Benjamin Meredith, Johann Zimmerman, Daniel Downey, Doug Hendren, Richard Baugh, Raymond Sellers, Dierdre Smeltzer, Tom Benevento, Ritchie Vaughan

Staff/Others in attendance: Tom Hartman, Ande Banks, Thanh Dang, Rebecca Stimson

Introductions

Thanh Dang opened the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) meeting and thanked the members for their commitment. Introductions of each staff member and EPSAC member were made.

Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh: Mikaela is an assistant professor at James Madison University (JMU) and an environmental scientist by training. Her main interests are urban forestry and urban community food forests, and urban greening.

Benjamin Meredith: Benjamin brings extensive building knowledge. He is a home inspector and energy auditor and is interested in energy efficiency in Harrisonburg.

Johann Zimmerman: Johann owns JZ Engineering, a structural engineering and sustainability consulting firm based out of Harrisonburg. He is interested in cost savings in building practices by utilizing sustainable practices such as solar panels and green roofs.

Daniel Downey: Daniel is a professor at JMU. He is an environmental analytical chemist who teaches aquatic resources courses. His research focuses on aquatic resources with some climate change projects. Daniel also serves on the Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District as a board member. He is passionate about Dry River, a native trout resource west of Harrisonburg which is owned by the City.

Doug Hendren: Doug is a retired orthopedic surgeon who is interested in climate change and is interested in reviewing this issue.

Richard Baugh: Richard is Vice Mayor of Harrisonburg and also serves on the Local Government Advisory Committee to the Chesapeake Bay Program. Richard is interested in developing an urban tree canopy plan in Harrisonburg.

Raymond "Scott" Sellers: Raymond has 18 years of engineering design, Low Impact Development (LID) experience, and is interested in pursuing these subjects.

Dierdre Smeltzer: Dierdre is the Undergraduate Academic Dean at Eastern Mennonite University, which has several sustainability initiatives, including the 2015 Climate Action Plan. She has a background in theoretical mathematics and a personal interest in sustainability

Tom Benevento: Tom B. is an integral part of New Community Project. He is interested in sustainable transportation, food systems, and energy. He sees the urgency surrounding climate change in parts of Central America. He is inspired by other localities that are tackling environmental issues and sustainability in their areas and would like to do the same in Harrisonburg.

Ritchie Vaughan: Ritchie has degrees in forestry and is currently a real estate agent. She is interested in environmental standards that the community and businesses can adhere to.

Tom Hartman: Tom H. is the Assistant Director of Public Works.

Ande Banks: Ande is the Deputy City Manager.

Thanh Dang: Thanh is the City Planner.

Rebecca Stimson: Rebecca is an Environmental Program Support Specialist.

Committee Background and Review Committee Bylaws

Ande described the background of the EPSAC, which was formed through efforts of former and current City of Harrisonburg council members in response to Harrisonburg's 2011 Comprehensive Plan Objective 8.3: "To create a set of environmental performance standards for public and private development and redevelopment projects." Last year, the City Manager's Office brought together city staff including Adam Wright (City Facilities Manager), Tom H., Jim Baker (Director of Public Works), and Adam Fletcher (Director of Planning and Community Development). Staff brainstormed what the EPSAC would look like, and based off of the successful model of the Stormwater Advisory Committee drafted recommended EPSAC bylaws for City Council consideration. Staff then coordinated to put together a list of existing standards and regulations the city already complies with. In July 2016, City Council adopted the EPSAC bylaws and then later appointed members.

Logistics

Ande explained that Thanh and Tom H. will be the city staff coordinating and leading the EPSAC. There will be an EPSAC Chair and Vice Chair appointed from EPSAC members. It is not anticipated that the chair or vice-chair will have an additional workload but they will be asked help co-present with staff for City Council presentations. EPSAC members were asked to please keep this in mind as these members will be appointed at the next meeting.

Thanh informed the committee of additional logistical information: the EPSAC will mimic the SWAC, with meetings every quarter. Committee consensus set the day of meetings as the 4th Wednesday of the month each quarter, in the same location (City Hall, Room 011) and time (5:00pm to 7:00pm) as the first

meeting. Meeting times and dates will be posted online and open to the public. Additional work will be set outside of quarterly meetings and additional meetings can be set up if needed.

Agendas and meeting minutes will also be posted online; minutes will be available for review by committee members before being posted.

Thanh explained that other city departments and staff members will be assisting in their specialties as needed.

Review Existing Standards Spreadsheet

Ande asked to touch on Objective 8.3 from the 2011 Comprehensive Plan before reviewing the existing standards spreadsheet. The objective is included below:

Objective 8.3: To create a set of environmental performance standards for public and private development and redevelopment projects.

Staff explained that some strategies to consider would be to use existing state standards, to coordinate with state agencies, or to create local standards as policy or regulation.

Benjamin asked if development means new or existing. Thanh explained that for the EPSAC, development will mean new and existing.

Richard asked the EPSAC to remember that from a legal standpoint there might be difficulty imposing regulations that go above and beyond state or federal regulations because Virginia is a Dillon Rule state, which means we cannot impose more stringent standards unless given the authority to do so by the state government. Johann asked if standards can be mandated for the public sector, staff confirmed this is correct. Ande pointed out that Roanoke has a robust program that uses incentives, not regulations, for the private sector. Tom H. brought up Harrisonburg's Stormwater Utility Fee Credit program as a good example of an incentive program whereby property owners receive a credit for their Stormwater Utility Fee for implementing water quality practices on their properties. Ande suggested that at the next EPSAC meeting Chris Brown (City Attorney) could present legal parameters to the EPSAC.

Tom H. began an overview of the existing standards spreadsheet, which includes the federal, state, and local standards on water protection, air, noise, lighting, energy use, and land use and transportation already being followed in Harrisonburg. This was not a comprehensive list but a reflection of what staff commonly works with. Benjamin asked where improvements are needed. Ande replied that they City would like citizens to tell us where they would like to see improvements and that the EPSAC will hopefully use their expertise to find sustainable initiatives and improvements.

During the air standards section, there was a discussion about monitoring at the old landfill site – Daniel asked if the city monitors for sulfides. Tom H. replied that in addition to air monitoring, there is also a groundwater monitoring program at that site.

During the transportation section, Daniel asked how much land is left in Harrisonburg for development. Thanh explained that there is information in the 2011 Comprehensive Plan about acreages by zoning type and that this information is currently being updated and can be shared with the EPSAC when it is complete. Thanh stated that much of the undeveloped land in Harrisonburg remains undeveloped because of site constraints. Ande explained that as an independent city, and because of the moratorium on annexation of new land in Virginia, the boundaries of the Harrisonburg will remain as is at 17 square miles. Mikaela asked what city staff is looking for in future land use and transportation. Thanh suggested that this will be discussed during the Comprehensive Plan update happening at this time. She personally is seeing an interest on mixed-use development, redevelopment in certain areas, and maintaining well-established neighborhoods. Tom H. is seeing a focus on sustainable development and maintenance needs. He gave an example of the Traffic Signal Synchronization Program – where the City has implemented new technology over time that synchronizes traffic signals. This program saves citizens about ½ million gallons of fuel annually. Johann asked how the City decided to spend money on the synchronization program. Tom H. explained that the program has been a long range planning project (started about 10 years ago) where the new technology needed has been installed as old signals neared the end of their useful life, so the budget impact was minor, especially as grants were utilized. Daniel asked about our projected population growth. Thanh stated that the current population is about 54,000. Ande explained the general rule is 1,000 people per year. Tom H. added that the City serves a larger region and the City's transportation network serves 120,000 people. Daniel pointed out that with the Chesapeake Bay TMDL pollution reduction requirements- pollution is required to decrease while population is increasing.

Discuss Project Ideas

Thanh began the discussion of project ideas by asking the EPSAC to brainstorm topics. She explained the committee can add topics before the next meeting, at which point the committee will prioritize the topics and break into small groups. Diedre asked if topics could go outside the bounds of the existing standards spreadsheet, staff confirmed yes. Thanh explained that topics can be aspirational or implementable. Some topics could be proposed directly to department heads to consider while larger ideas would have to be proposed to council. Tom H. asked the EPSAC to also consider how help staff implement plans. Ande suggested that efforts be prioritized and analyzed to see how they can be implemented, how easy implementation would be, and the cost associated.

Some initial topics proposed by EPSAC members included:

1. Energy use intensity
2. Climate Control
3. A policy to require the City to consider operational costs of new projects or redevelopment
4. Appraisal crediting for environmentally friendly practices on properties
5. Home energy score cards
6. Community education about codes
7. Implementation of high performance environmental practices across all zoning types

A Google document was proposed so additional topics could be added before the next meeting date.

Next Steps

Thanh reviewed homework for EPSAC members:

1. Continue brainstorming topics. Add topics to the list (Google document) before the next meeting. Topics will be prioritized at the next meeting
2. Review other municipalities efforts in environmental performance standards
3. Review Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide (map and definitions),
<https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/2011-comprehensive-plan>
4. Consider means and methods of additional community input
5. Consider a nickname for the EPSAC
6. Consider the Chair and Vice-Chair positions

Staff homework:

7. Staff will set up discussion about legal parameters of the EPSAC at the next committee meeting
8. Staff will investigate if an additional member could be added to the committee

The next ESPAC meeting will be held on June 28th.