



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

**Members in attendance:** Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh, Benjamin Meredith, Bradley Striebig, Daniel Downey, Doug Hendren, Raymond Sellers, Deirdre Smeltzer, Tom Benevento, Johann Zimmerman, Richard Baugh (Council Representative), Deb Fitzgerald (School Board Representative)

**Staff/Others in attendance:** Tom Hartman, Thanh Dang, Rebecca Stimson, Adam Wright, Ande Banks, Brian O’Dell (General Manager of Harrisonburg Electric Commission)

**Public Input**

There were no members of the public present. Thanh introduced Adam Wright, Facilities Manager for the City, as a new staff facilitator to the EPSAC committee.

**Presentation/Q&A with Harrisonburg Electric Commission - Brian O’Dell**

Brian gave EPSAC an introduction to Harrisonburg Electric Commission (HEC). Harrisonburg has had electricity from different sources since around 1905, including a stable source of hydroelectric power until Hurricane Hazel hit the area. As a result, in 1957 the City was having issues with the power supply, so City Council formed HEC. HEC operates in an independent businesslike manner, although they are a part of the municipality.

HEC has a five-member board, current board members: William Culbreth, Daphyne Thomas, Hobert Bauhan, David Frackelton, and Randy Aikens. Each member serves a three-year term and can be reappointed for a second term. Board members are appointed by City Council. As a part of the charter, HEC is required to give five percent of annual gross revenue to the City, as well as, property taxes for properties owned/managed by HEC. . This year, and the past three years, they have contributed five million dollars per year to the City (above the five percent) and an additional \$500,000 per year in property taxes. Since 1957 HEC has contributed \$134 million to the City.

There are 21,000 meters served by HEC – of which 17,600 are residential, and the rest are commercial. Although HEC has some diesel generators (limited), they purchase all power from Dominion Power and sell it to their customers. In January 2011, through a contract with the Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV), which HEC is a member, HEC entered a new 20-year power supply contract with Dominion (expires May 31, 2031). The contract is a full requirements contract, which means that HEC cannot purchase power from anyone else, and HEC’s retail costumers cannot purchase power from other sources either. The contract also precludes HEC from installing and generating their own power instead of purchasing it from Dominion. Energy conservation does not violate the contract. Some communities have purchase power agreements for the installation of solar; however, those are strictly prohibited in Harrisonburg’s contract. Installing rooftop solar and net-metering is allowed, and

Harrisonburg has around 94 total solar panel systems (80 residential and 14 commercial installations). Harrisonburg's percentage of renewable energy is the same as what is produced by Dominion. Harrisonburg has had the lowest billing rate in the state for residential customers since July of this year.

Brian thanked the EPSAC for their time and welcomed any further questions by email.

### **Appoint New Chair**

Thanh explained that Ritchie had recently resigned from the EPSAC committee, which means the Chair position is now vacant. Thanh asked if anyone would like to nominate themselves or another person for the position. There were no nominations immediately so the item was revisited at the end of the meeting.

### **Discuss and Outline Update Presentation to City Council**

Thanh introduced the next agenda item – the update presentation to City Council around the February/March time frame. Thanh explained that the presentation would be a short introduction of what each working group has done, what the future vision of the working groups is, and then ask Council if they have any questions and/or suggestions for the future work of the EPSAC committee. Thanh asked each working group to give a short update.

Starting with the **Building Energy Standards Working Group**, Johann explained that their group has studied the energy plans of other municipalities and universities, and has spoken with Harrisonburg's building officials and other employees to learn the issues they are facing. The working group suggests the creation of a City Internal Energy Team, made up of city staff with HVAC, electrical, and plumbing skills that are responsible for maintenance and operations of all building and facility operation needs. The team would also be consulted for design of new buildings and renovations. The other thing the group has been working on is energy efficiency standards for municipal owned buildings and facilities – they suggest adopting the 2015 International Building Code as well as considering life cycle costs during project implementation. The group is also considering different ways to generate energy on-site. Johann also asked EPSAC to consider an incentives program to encourage private property owners to build and renovate with reducing energy consumption in mind, as well as advertising of the program similar to how the City runs and promotes the stormwater utility fee credit program. Tom H. reminded Johann that the stormwater utility fee credit program is available because the City receives a benefit through the Chesapeake Bay TMDL pollution reduction credits, and asked the working group to consider what the City's incentive to provide incentives to private development or businesses would be.

Deirdre and Tom B. presented the **Integrated Plan Working Group's** activity over the past few months. The first step for this group was also to review the work of other municipalities, specifically Blacksburg, Roanoke, and Charlottesville. They found that many municipalities followed the same steps to creating these types of plans, with similar key initiatives. With each key initiative, policies, standards, and incentives would be researched. The group has proposed seven steps towards development of the Action Plan: (1) approve targets for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and increased use of renewable energy, (2) conduct a GHG emissions inventory using ICLEI ClearPath program, (3) identify

key initiatives for the Action Plan, (4) develop goals, objectives, and strategies, (5) solicit citizen feedback to prioritize and clarify strategies, (5) finalize and adopt the plan, and (7) create a monitoring system to track progress. Key initiatives suggested for the Action Plan include: energy efficiency for buildings; transportation; affordable renewable energy; waste and recycling; land use and planning; stormwater, water quality, and water conservation; and food and forest canopy. The group has been speaking with JMU about potential partnerships. The next steps of the group are to continue research and then develop a working framework with a timeline and benchmarks for the plan and greenhouse gas inventory.

Dan presented the **Water Working Group's** actions so far – which included background research about city policies and the Dry River property. The group will focus on the Dry River Property and would like to recommend a recreational plan for the property. The group will work with Public Utilities, Parks & Recreation, and the US Forest Service. The recreation plan would serve a dual purpose – (1) provide passive recreational opportunities and (2) support water security. The next step for this group is to create an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats towards using the Dry River property while focusing on preserving water quality.

Thanh outlined what the potential presentation to Council could look like. This would be the first opportunity for City Council to receive an update on what EPSAC has been working on for the past year, since Council formed EPSAC. This would also be the opportunity to give the update and to get a feel for what Council thinks about EPSAC's direction and ask for feedback. Dierdre asked how detailed the presentations should be. Thanh suggested that this first presentation just give an overview to introduce EPSAC's work – meaning the presentation does not have to be in-depth or extremely detailed. The recommendations and suggestions would come during a later presentation to City Council. Tom H. suggested that this is an opportunity to ask Council if the scope of EPSAC's work is correct. He also suggested that a staff member introduce the presentation, but the EPSAC members do the bulk of the presentation. Brad suggested that each working group appoint a point person to coordinate the presentation. The following people were appointed as point persons:

- Integrated Plan Working Group – Tom B. & Deidre
- Building Energy Standards Working Group – Johann & Benjamin
- Water Working Group – Daniel

Johann asked about the appointment of a new member. Richard suggested that anyone interested in joining EPSAC re-apply or check with the City Clerk to make sure that their application is still in. City Council does not have to appoint new member, as the EPSAC still has the minimum number of members (seven) as required by the bylaws; however, having an application submitted would start the process.

Thanh suggested the February 27 Council meeting as a target date. Tom H. asked for materials to be submitted to staff by the end of January so staff can review and then have all the materials submitted to be on the Council agenda. Materials would include pdf documents of any handouts and the power point presentation. Tom H. would then work with the chair to create the Council memo, and have a meeting with presenters to run through the presentation.

Deidre accepted the position of the EPSAC chair.

### **Other Matters**

Future Guest Speakers: Thanh asked the group to think about any guest speakers that would be beneficial at EPSAC meetings and to contact staff with any suggestions.

Meeting Schedule: The meeting schedule for 2018 was set at 5pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> Weds each quarter:

- a. Weds, March 28, 2018
- b. Weds, June 27, 2018
- c. Weds, September 26, 2018
- d. Weds, December 5, 2018