



**City of Harrisonburg Environmental Performance
Standards Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2018 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

Members in attendance: Jeff Heie, 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, Rebecca Stimson, Harsit Patel (Business Services Manager at Public Works)

Public Input & Welcome to Jeff Heie

There was a student present to observe the meeting but no public input. Tom H. welcomed Jeff Heie to the committee. Jeff introduced himself as a contractor and builder in the area who has been involved in the voluntary gas tax initiative for the past few years. His main interest is encouraging alternatives to fossil fuels.

Working Group Updates

Water Working Group: Dan presented that the Water Working Group has met a few times over the past few months, including a meeting with the City's Dry River Group. The Water Working Group received buy in from Parks and Recreation and Public Utilities to begin the ecosystem valuation in that watershed. Brad has received funding from JMU and has a student who will be undertaking this task. There will be an invite-only meeting of stakeholders to discuss the ecosystem valuation on May 1st.

Building Energy Standards Working Group: Doug asked the group if he, Jeff, and Deb could work together on renewable energy, separate from the work Johann and Benjamin are undertaking with the building code and energy standards. Doug mentioned a 1% rule for renewable energy, Tom H. asked for clarification. Doug said that there is currently a 1% cap on solar within our municipal grid, which is a voluntary, HEC imposed limit. The 1% is calculated as solar input divided by peak demand. Richard mentioned that Harrisonburg is not the only community concerned with renewable energy and as such, there are opportunities to collaborate with other municipalities. Johann asked how important it is to stick to the "working groups." Tom H. clarified that the "sectors" within the integrated plan are most important, and that as one working group finishes a sector, they can move on to the next. The seven sectors are currently: energy efficiency for buildings; transportation; affordable renewable energy; waste and recycling; land use and planning; stormwater, water quality, and water conservation; food and forest canopy. Tom B. stated that Doug's plan for pursuing renewable energy on the EPSAC would fit very well within the "affordable renewable energy" sector. Mikaela suggested that eventually the groups will set goals, objectives, and strategies for each sector to put into the integrated plan, since the integrated plan will be going to City Council. Tom B. asked if the plan needs to be completed before actionable items are taken to City Council. Tom H. asked if the integrated plan group will set a

framework so that the other groups will have a template for formally writing up information about their sectors. Tom B. said that the template is mostly completed and has been sent to everyone. The template will be sent out again to EPSAC members.

Johann then updated the EPSAC that the Building Energy Standards Working Group is done with their work and Benjamin agreed. Mikaela asked what they would be proposing to Council. Johann explained that the main proposals would be to adopt the latest building code and look at cost benefit analysis for projects instead of first construction costs. Johann clarified that this would be a proposal to adopt the latest code for public projects and incentivize using the latest code for private projects.

Tom B. presented the **Integrated Plan Working Group's** activity over the past few months, including trying to meet with council members to get feedback about the integrated plan. JMU and EMU students are also doing a policy analysis for each of the sectors in the integrated plan. Tom B. stated that the integrated plan is in draft form and is ready to be reviewed by the group. Tom B. said that through discussion with other localities and writing the integrated plan that it seems important to staff a "sustainability coordinator" position. Dan asked how the working group proposes to fund the position and Tom B. said that would be up to the City to decide. Doug said Nell Boyle from Roanoke would be a good basis for setting up and funding this position. Dan asked how the Stream Health Coordinator is funded and Tom clarified that most of the funds come from the Community Foundation and the rest is funded by the general fund. Dan suggested grants or a benefactor be pursued as funding options. Johann suggested the group comes up with evidence that the position pays for itself through the energy improvements, etc. the coordinator would make. There was discussion about attending a conference for sustainability leaders to learn how other communities justify these positions.

Tom H. asked that the group consider the integrated plan's steps/goals to ensure the whole group agrees with them. Then, for example, when Johann is ready to share the building energy standard's work, he can point to the group's goals and explain how changing the building energy standards will meet the goals. Tom H. asked the group to figure out exactly what the main goals or "tenants" of the EPSAC are so each sector meets the tenants. Tom H. suggested that maybe EPSAC's first ask of City Council is to agree with the tenants of EPSAC. This could happen in a July Council Meeting, after the June EPSAC meeting. Johann asked for clarification about what happened at the last council meeting. The last council meeting was intended to present the work of EPSAC so far, as well as the sectors the EPSAC is considering pursuing. However, no goals or tenants were presented. Mikaela said that her group was trying to set up meetings with Council members to gauge how they feel about the integrated plan, but asked if the EPSAC sets the goals quickly, if they could introduce the goals to them. Tom H. said if EPSAC emails him to set up meetings, he can facilitate those meetings – and that the EPSAC should start with a meeting with Eric Campbell and Ande Banks, as soon as the EPSAC agrees on the tenants he can facilitate that meeting. The goals can be put on a Council agenda before July if the whole group has goals they agree on. Johann asked Tom B. review the sectors, which are: 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. Tom H. asked that the sectors and the overall tenants be agreed upon by the EPSAC group. Deidre clarified that these would be high level goals, and each sector's work would provide details on how to meet the goals. Mikaela suggested that

the vision is important but strategies are also necessary. Diedre asked if in order to move the plan forward, the high level goals would be helpful. Tom H. said it would be helpful to the sectors to do their planning if they know the strategies would help meet the goals. Richard said that it helps in planning to have a set of values or goals that are already affirmed. Benjamin asked how affirmed values get the group to the end point. Brad said that he thinks first the group needs to establish direction through the affirmed values/goals. Tom H. says the higher-level goals will help the EPSAC explain to Council why they should pursue initiatives and asked if a sustainability coordinator is the “big get”. EPSAC confirmed. Tom H. suggested in that case, when the goals are presented, the EPSAC asks for a sustainability coordinator to be hired. There was discussion about the hiring process and timing, as well as the definition of sustainability.

Recycling and Waste Management Discussion

History of Waste Management in Harrisonburg: Tom H. introduced Harsit Patel to the group, the business services manager at Public Works. Harsit overviewed the history of waste management in Harrisonburg, which included burning trash, picking up mixed recyclables from the curbsides, and then the Van der Linde facility, which was a single stream system, where recyclables were mixed with trash and then sorted out at the Van der Linde facility. The curbside collection continued in private communities with dumpster service.

Update of Convenience Center: The convenience center is open on Beery Road from Monday to Saturday. The convenience center accepts sorted recyclables as well as yard waste from residents and small businesses. Benjamin asked if the recyclables are being sold are if the City is paying for them to be taken away. Harsit stated that curbside pick-up is continuing at the moment and the City is paying for those recyclables to be taken away. There was discussion about the state of recycling in the United States, where recyclables were being sent, and how many communities are facing the same situation as Harrisonburg. Johann asked if Harrisonburg is mandated to recycle. Harsit clarified that yes, they are mandated to recycle but are also motivated to do so to divert waste away from the landfill.

Plans Moving Forward: Tom asked EPSAC members to email him if they are interested in working with staff on the recycling sector of the integrated plan. There will also be opportunities for EPSAC members to help with public education and outreach about recycling and the convenience center.

Other Matters

The next meeting will be June 27, 2018.