



**City of Harrisonburg Environmental Performance Standards Advisory
Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 25, 2019 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

Members in attendance: Jeff Heie, Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh, Brad Striebig, Daniel Downey, Doug Hendren, Tom Benevento, Emani Morse, Leons Kabongo, Benjamin Meredith, Richard Baugh (Council Representative)

Staff in attendance: Tom Hartman, Thanh Dang

Public Input

Alleyn Harned, Executive Director of Virginia Clean Cities, shared information about grants available to fund electrifying school buses and transit buses. See handout titled “Funding and Resources for Alternative Fuel Vehicles” at end of meeting minutes. Alleyn explained that electric vehicles have no tailpipe emissions and can use locally generated electricity which are environmental and human health benefits. Mikaela asked if there are funds available for replacement fleet vehicles to be electric. Alleyn answered there are not.

Tom H. said that this information will be shared with the Interim Director of Public Transportation and encouraged Alleyn to reach out to the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) staff.

Doug stated that the American Medical Association (AMA) just declared climate change as a public health crisis.

Discussion of Updated EAP Draft, Endorsement Decision, Schedule Update and Next Steps

Thanh opened up discussion on the updated Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Draft. Tom B. suggested that the group first talk about the process for decision making. The group decided to discuss the content within each Focus Area/chapters separately and to vote on each Focus Area. After discussing each Focus Area, there would be a vote where each member would vote by showing one, two, or three fingers. A vote of three fingers would indicate the committee member’s support and endorsement of the Focus Area; a vote of two fingers would indicate willingness to support, but that there was some concerns remaining and possibly more work is needed; a vote of one finger indicated that the committee member is not ready to support the Focus Area and that they believe more work is needed. Additionally, the EPSAC will have the opportunity to vote on the entire EAP document later.

Focus Area 6 - Water Resources

There was a unanimous vote of three fingers for support and endorsement.

Focus Area 5 – Waste Reduction & Recycling

Tom B. stated that he and Tom H. still had some details they were still working on including further describing zero waste principles and amendments to the goal and strategies statements within this Focus Area. Tom B. suggested that the City should consider eliminating free bulk pick up because it encourages people to throw out more. Tom H. said that he had reviewed all the comments received from Tom B. and that he would be coordinating with Tom B. concerning how those comments are addressed. Tom H. did share that “Zero Waste” was added to the sector and that it references the 7 R’s of solid waste management, which expands the previous 3 R’s terminology.

Doug mentioned Earth Day 2020 celebrations that are being planned and said that the group members working on Earth Day celebrations might ask for synergies with the City’s efforts.

The vote for Focus Area 5 – Waste Reduction & Recycling was:

- Jeff - 2
- Mikaela - 3
- Brad - 3
- Dan - 3
- Doug - 3
- Tom B. - 2
- Emani - 3
- Leons - 3
- Benjamin - 3
- Richard – 3

Eight people gave a 3 vote. Jeff and Tom B. voted 2 and said they could be three fingers pending anticipated amendments Tom B. and Tom H are working on.

Focus Area 4 - Sustainable Transportation

Tom H. and Tom B. are working together on additional amendments to the chapter. For example, referencing active transportation and mentioning the value of modal shifts from single occupancy vehicles to high occupancy vehicles and to active transportation modes will be added in the introduction to bring an ideological framework to transportation planning – active transportation is healthier for the body and for the environment.

Doug said that a problem is that every time the City is making headway, JMU is building another parking garage. Doug said that there is a student group that will be asking JMU to not build more parking garages. Dan said students should be encouraged to take public transit more.

Dan expressed issues with the emphasis of electric vehicles (EVs) in the EAP. He said that EVs are a small piece of the pie and there is an environmental cost to building EV infrastructure and the cost of manufacturing and disposing of the battery. The best environmental option is to reuse vehicles, not to replace them all with new vehicles.

There was more discussion about active transportation and how to encourage it. There was a suggestion that a solution is to put things in our built environment closer together and that could be encouraged through changing the zoning regulations.

The vote for Focus Area 4 – Sustainable Transportation was:

- Jeff - 3
- Mikaela - 3
- Brad - 3
- Dan - 2
- Doug - 3
- Tom B. - 3

- Emani - 3
- Benjamin - 3
- Leons - 3
- Richard – 3

Nine people gave a 3 vote, except Dan who’s 2 vote reflected his comments about EVs.

Emani asked how amendable the EAP was. Tom H. replied that the plan is a vision document and that much review and analysis is still to be done to determine feasibility of the suggested strategies and tasks. Dan added that no plan is perfect, but the plan will set a framework for decision making and creates an atmosphere for direction.

Focus Area 3 – Regional Food Systems

Brad expressed concern about Strategy 2.1 with the scale of the recommendations as they apply to urban agriculture. For example, “reducing or eliminating tillage” is an appropriate to recommendation for large non-urban farming operations, but he thought not smaller scale urban agriculture operations. There was discussion about agricultural operations that could occur in the City and possible sizes, and mechanical tilling versus human-powered tilling.

Mikaela suggested adding a strategy that to allow livestock such as goats in the City. There was discussion about how goats are an environmentally friendly way to clear land, discussion about limited or temporary basis use of livestock versus keeping livestock permanently on property in the City, discussion about how other urban localities allow livestock with regulations for minimum property size, etc. Tom B. suggested the group vote on language to “explore” the provision to allow goats and livestock. Dan said he would be okay with language to “explore,” “study”, or “consider” in the EAP, but would not support the idea in general. Everyone voted in favor of this of this approach.

The vote for Focus Area 3 – Regional Food Systems was:

- Jeff - 3
- Doug - 3
- Benjamin - 3
- Mikaela - 3
- Tom B. - 3
- Richard – 3
- Brad - 2
- Emani - 3
- Dan - 3
- Leons - 3

Nine people gave a 3 vote, except for Brad who’s 2 vote reflected his comment about Strategy 2.1.

Focus Area 2 - Land Use & Green Space

Mikaela stated that she is pretty satisfied by the changes made to the chapter. She suggested an additional strategy that would add food forests because it is different from urban forestry. Group members suggested adding food forests under Strategy 3.1 or 4.1

The vote for Focus Area 2 – Land Use & Green Space was unanimously 3s with amendments to add food forests.

Focus Area 1 – Buildings and Energy

Benjamin said that the word “consider” still appeared too often in this chapter and that the “if” statements in Strategy 2.1’s tasks are confusing. Brad asked what the process was for removing the word “consider” during staff’s last review. Tom H. said that he, Thanh, and Rebecca reviewed all the items and removed the word “consider” in instances where the City was already doing the work or were close to initiating. Where items were still aspirational and still more work to determine feasibility was to be done, staff kept the word “consider.” Benjamin stated that the whole document is a “consider” and that using the word “consider” in the strategies and tasks is redundant. Doug wondered if a statement in the Introduction chapter could explain how the EAP is to be used; specifically that these are recommendations and not directives. A comparison was made to the Comprehensive Plan, which is a document that is to guide decision making. However, people still point to the objectives and strategies to force action. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan is so broad that it is generally recognized that everything cannot be accomplished before the next plan update. Its purpose is to provide a framework to guide decision-making.

Brad said he was concerned with how the public would perceive the difference between statements in the EAP that included “consider” versus statements that did not. Would statements without the word consider be interpreted to be directives? Thanh suggested that she could add more explanation to the statement in the Introduction on page 8 of the EAP and look at removing the word “consider” from more statements to address Brad’s point. Mikaela expressed concern that a broad statement for everything would put the plan back to where we started at the last meeting; with most statements being “considers.”

Emani suggested replacing some “considers” with statements such as “based upon further analysis or research...” Brad suggested “encourage” instead of “consider.”

Tom B. and Dan suggested that for each focus area, the committees working on them review the statements still containing the word “consider.” The group agreed to email comments for each Focus Area to the point of contact. Additional details are described later in this summary.

The vote for Focus Area 1 – Buildings & Energy was:

- Jeff - 3
- Mikaela - 3
- Brad - 2
- Dan - 1
- Doug - 3
- Tom B. - 3
- Emani - 3
- Leons - 3
- Benjamin - 2
- Richard – 3

Eight people gave a 3 vote, except for Brad and Benjamin who’s voted 2 and Dan who voted 1. Dan wants to see the changes to the chapter before giving a higher vote.

Introduction

Thanh shared that three new Guiding Goals were added to the EAP as recommended by various public comments.

In reference to Guiding Goal 2, Mikaela said that the term “resilience” is ambiguous; it is not measurable. Thanh explained that the term “resilience” encompasses a lot of things from preventing and minimizing

disasters to how communities recover from disasters. The disasters can be social, economic, or environmental. Staff tried to focus resilience in the context of the EAP is on “changing environmental conditions.” The group discussed resilience as being able to adapt. A comparison was made between adaptation versus changing back to a prior state.

Benjamin didn’t think that Strategy 2.2 (Sustainability Coordinator) belonged within Guiding Goal 2. Richard suggested switching the order of Strategy 2.1 and 2.2. Mikaela suggested that the group may want to add another new guiding goal to be about sustainability – economic vitality, social equity, and environment – and then the strategy for the Sustainability Coordinator could be placed within the new Guiding Goal 1. Mikaela volunteered to lead the charge to work on the language for Guiding Goal 1 and 2.

Doug said that he worked with Richard, Jeff, and Tom B. on new language in the Introduction regarding HEC and shared the new language with the group. Doug still felt that this new language comes short, but should not be an obstacle to adopting the EAP. There was some discussion and suggestions for additional edits to this section. Doug volunteered to be the point-of-contact to edit language in the EAP about HEC.

Next Steps/Schedule

- October 8 – EPSAC members send comments on each Focus Area to respective points-of contact (see list of names and responsibilities below)
- October 9 – EPSAC points-of-contact to email Thanh, Tom, and Rebecca suggested edits
- October 18 – staff to send EAP draft to EPSAC members for review and voting
- October 27 – EPSAC members complete voting to endorse the EAP or not
- Week of October 28 – city staff to meet with City Manager’s Office to discuss EAP
- November 12 – anticipated City Council presentation date

The following people are “points-of-contact” who will facilitate collecting comments and submitting them to city staff:

- Statements within the Introduction about HEC - Doug
- Create new Guiding Goal 1 – Mikaela (Note: this would create 4 total Guiding Goals)
- Edit current Guiding Goal 2 (Resiliency) – Mikaela
- Focus Area 1 – Buildings & Energy “consider” statements - Benjamin
- Focus Area 2 – Land Use & Green Space “consider” statements - Mikaela
- Focus Area 3 – Regional Food Systems “consider” statements – Leons
- Focus Area 4 – Sustainable Transportation “consider” statements – Tom B.
- Focus Area 5 – Waste Reduction & Recycling “consider” statements - Tom B. and Doug
- Focus Area 6 – Water Resources “consider” statements – Dan

Revisions to Bylaws and Terms

This item was not intended to be on the agenda and was an artifact of the previous meeting’s agenda. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Adjourn

The next regular meeting will be on December 4, 2019.



Funding and Resources for Alternative Fuel Vehicles

Federal

DOE Clean Cities Program

Annual competitive grants that award up to 50% of vehicle cost for deployment/pilot projects.

EPA

- Diesel Emissions Reduction Act competitive grant funds up to 45% of alternative fuel vehicle. Must be Class 5-8. Requires scrappage of existing diesel vehicle.
- School Bus Replacement Lottery Program. Fleets can apply annually to a lottery program that awards funding to school districts to replace diesel buses.

FTA Low or Now Emission grants – Fund up to 85% of the cost of alternative fuel transit buses.

DOT

BUILD \$900 million, \$90 million per state max, 80% federal share.

FAST Act - \$5 billion in grants for EV charging (not law yet, still in Congress)

USDA REAP

For rural areas and smaller transit paratransit. Limited by population size and project scope (\$30,000 projects)

State

Volkswagen Diesel Emission Mitigation Settlement - \$93 million

- DRPT MERIT 96% requires scrap – heading into Round 2 with \$15 million for electric transit buses.
- DEQ/Department of Education - \$20 million for electric and propane school buses up to \$265,000 in incremental cost per bus

SMART SCALE – Annual application for road and transportation projects through VDOT and DRPT

CMAQ Alternative Fuel Vehicle Program

- Can submit project ideas to MPOs who receive CMAQ funding
- 6-year delay but used in past for transit vehicles / infrastructure 80% fed funding
- 100% Buy America compliance restrictions

VRA Loans - VRA provides financing to local governments for essential projects.

Private sector

Utility side support (Dominion and APCO time of use rates for EVs, vehicle and equipment financing)
Energy Contracting link with DMME

Federal

EPA Clean Diesel Program (class 4-8 diesel replacement) <https://www.epa.gov/cleandiesel>. VCC can assist with drafting a proposal when this program opens again in May 2019,

EPA Clean Diesel School Bus Rebate Lottery - <https://www.epa.gov/cleandiesel>. This program just closed. It is annual and opens in September/October.

FTA LoNo Program - <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/lowno>

DOT BUILD - <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/about>

USDA REAP – <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency>

DOE Clean Cities Program - <https://cleancities.energy.gov/partnerships/projects>

State

DEQ VW Mitigation Funding - There is no official program yet, but they have submitted a plan that includes reimbursing fleets for alternative fuel school buses.

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Air/VWMitigation.aspx>

SMARTSCALE - <http://vasmartscale.org/projects/fy-2020-projects.asp>

EVgo Statewide EV Charger Network - \$14 million in VW funding for DC fast chargers and L2 chargers throughout the state. Their model is to rent parking spaces from partners and then provide the equipment at little or no cost. Stacey Bradford is the point of contact (stacy.bradford@evgo.com).

DRPT MERIT Grant Program - \$14 million for electric transit buses. Opens December 1. School Pool programs are eligible. <http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/transit/grants/>

CMAQ Propane, CNG and EV Incentive Program - \$10,000 rebate per LPG, CNG, or EV cars, trucks, refuse haulers and buses. This program is currently on hold due to an administrative issue at Federal Highway Administration. As soon as we get it running again I will let you know.

<http://vacleancities.org/reports-2/cmaq-incentive-program/>

VRA Loans - <https://www.virginiaresources.gov/page/virginia-pooled-financing-program/>

Private

All-Electric Vehicle (EV) Rebate - Virginia Utilities

Current employee and customers of Virginia utilities can receive a \$3,000 rebate for the purchase of a new 2018 Nissan Leaf. Rebates are available through September 30, 2019. To receive the rebate, applicants must show proof of employment at a Virginia utility or a copy of a current Virginia utility bill at participating Nissan dealership. This rebate is not applicable to purchasing a LEAF on the state contract.