

# askHRgreen.org | Water Awareness Committee Meeting Summary

## Thursday, January 28, 2021

Pursuant to the declared state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the public health and safety of the Committee members, staff, and the general public, the askHRgreen.org Water Awareness Committee meeting was held electronically via Zoom. These electronic meetings are required to complete essential business on behalf of the region. A recording of the meeting is available on the website.

### Attendees:

Jerry Hoddinott, CH  
Laura Tworek, VB  
Lacie Wever, HRSD  
Cyndi Masterstaff, NN

Rachael Gaul, NO  
Katie Cullipher, HRPDC  
Rebekah Eastep, HRPDC

### 1. Meeting Summary

The December meeting summary was accepted without changes.

**Action:** Summary approved.

### 2. askHRgreen.org Event Schedule

The current listing of outreach events is as follows:

3/26 - 3/27	Great American Cleanup	Hampton Roads
3/27 - 3/28	2021 Daffodil Festival	Gloucester
4/10	Go Green Market	York
6/19	ERP RiverFest	TBD

The Recycling & Beautification Committee will be hosting the Great American Cleanup on March 26-27. Volunteers are needed for small neighborhood cleanups as COVID-19 restrictions prevent traditional large scale projects.

**Action:** Committee members should reserve the trailer for any upcoming events.

### 3. Media Campaigns & Promotions

The following media and promotional campaigns are planned for this fiscal year:

- Fixing Leaks paid media campaign (March) – existing creative
  - The media plan will be available for review at the February meeting.
- Value of Water paid media campaign (May 3-9) – existing creative
- askHRgreen social media branding campaign – ongoing

COVID Municipal Utility Relief Program:

- Media campaign has concluded. The Directors of Utilities discussed extending the media campaign when the deadline for applications was extended through December 2021. Ultimately, it was decided additional promotions were not needed due to the extra time available to use the funding, popularity/response to the program launch, and assisting customers when shutoffs resume.

- Campaign earned several news stories and interviews in print, online, and TV.
- Newport News has moved to a call center due to demand from program. Have used over \$400k in relief funds.
- Norfolk has also been overwhelmed with calls from interested customers. Thousands of customers have been assisted through relief programs.
- Chesapeake has briefed City Council on returning to water shutoffs and got approval to move forward. Utility relief program will help support customers in danger of shutoffs.
- Recommendation to add regional messaging to let customers know that the utility staff is working hard to get requests approved and payments processed to water and wastewater utility accounts.
- Local deadlines have been removed from the website due to extension but Committee members should notify HRPDC about any changes with deadlines or funding availability to keep website as accurate as possible for the public.

#### Educational Outreach

- Most educational/classroom outreach has been paused due to virtual learning. Many teachers are overwhelmed just with meeting the needs of virtual learning curriculum without having to facilitate special programming.
- HRSD offering virtual presentations and classroom activities. Some teachers are able to deliver supplies to the students for more hands-on activities.
- HRPDC staff have discussed the concept of a virtual “ask the experts” series to post on website/social media to cover FAQs and highlight localities and other local partners. Content calendar can be synced with upcoming media campaigns as well.
- The Stormwater Education Committee is planning to do a virtual workshop on stormwater BMPs.

**Action:** None.

#### 4. Printing & Promotional Items

The following items are available for pickup: water bottle stickers, seed bookmarks, and sky cloths. There is plenty of available funding to support a special promotion in FY21 since promotional item needs have not been needed to support outreach events. Dye tabs are available to support Fix a Leak Week.

HRPDC staff are recommending use of existing mini grant funding to support a reprinting of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Green Learning Guide. Applications to the mini grant program have been down this year due to ongoing school closures. There are currently no hardcopies of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Green Learning Guide in stock although the file is available for download on the website. The Committee agreed to reprinting the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Green Learning Guide with mini grant funds.

Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals Appreciation Day – may be an opportunity to recognize local staff.

**Action:** None.

## 5. Roundtable

- Newport News - utility relief, lead and copper rule, gooseneck connectors
- Chesapeake - smoke testing (Virginia Beach is using NextDoor to reach residents street-by-street), can share lead and copper plan to assist localities in development of their own plans
- Norfolk - AWWA Communications Committee looking for volunteers
- HRSD - 17,000 customers and \$6 million used in utility relief
- Outbound calls/text alert technologies
- COVID vaccines for local staff
- Help 2 Others - new allocation will be available next week, program use has been impacted by lack of shutoffs

**Action:** None.

## 6. Staff Reports

*Budget* - The FY21 budget was provided for review.

Digital Marketing Report - HRPDC staff reviewed the December Digital Marketing report. E-newsletter has high engagement and click-through.

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission - Katie Cullipher presented to the Commission an overview of askHRgreen.org programs and projects. The Commission was pleased with the efficiency and effectiveness of regional educational programs and will be discussing a possible expansion into energy efficiency and climate change/resiliency at future Commission meetings.

**Action:** None.

**The next committee meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2021.**