

askHRgreen.org | Water Awareness Committee Meeting Summary
Thursday, July 22, 2021
Zoom

Attendees:

Cyndi Masterstaff, NN
Laura Tworek, VB
Jerry Hoddinott, CH

David Schleck, NO
Katie Cullipher, HRPDC
Rebekah Eastep, HRPDC

1. Meeting Summary

The June meeting summary was accepted without changes.

Action: Summary approved.

2. askHRgreen.org Event Schedule

The current listing of outreach events is as follows:

7/21	YNot WINDsday	Virginia Beach
8/20	TGIF	Suffolk
9/11 - 9/12	Mid Atlantic Home & Outdoor Living Show	Virginia Beach
9/16 - 9/19	Isle of Wight County Fair	Windsor
10/2/2021	Arbor Day	Norfolk
10/2/2021	VB Master Gardener Fall Gardening Festival	Virginia Beach
10/6-10/11	Suffolk Peanut Festival	Suffolk
10/9	Lynnhaven River Now Fall Festival	Virginia Beach
11/5	Litter & Recycling Expo	James City County

YNot WINDsday was well attended by a general public audience. Skoy clothes were very popular.

Volunteers are needed for the Mid Atlantic Home & Outdoor Living Show in Virginia Beach in October.

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

3. FY22 Media Campaigns & Promotions

The Committee discussed priorities for media campaigns and promotions in the new fiscal year. Below is a listing of FY21 campaigns and a link to a Google Drive file of creative assets available.

- Fall Imagine a Day Without Water Promotion & Media Campaign (October)
- Fix a Leak Week (March)
- Drinking Water Week (May)
- Media asset library:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/151D62d0d2zX2c2hb5-0jTef7L2G0W8bu>

The Committee discussed media promotions for FY22:

- Imagine a Day Without Water - animated Day Without Water creative
- Drinking Water Week - essential water workers creative
- Fix a Leak Week - “man on the street” running toilet creative

Action: HRPDC staff will work with RCS to develop FY22 media plan for Committee review.

4. Work for Water Campaign

The Committee continued to discuss production of a three-part “Work for Water” video series, featuring employees in the following fields: Customer Service, Operations, and Laborers. .

- The Committee previously approved one main video with the option to create additional shorter videos to feature individual staff interviews.
- RCS is ready to schedule site visits and interviews. Committee members need to identify staff to appear in the video and locations for capturing b-roll. Virginia Beach and Newport News would like to meet with RCS staff to help develop list of needs for filming.
- Not planned for a media campaign but assets can be used locally or on social media (paid or unpaid)

Action: HRPDC staff will coordinate a production meeting with RCS to talk through next steps for Work for Water video.

5. Printing & Promotional Items

The Committee approved via email the purchase of 5,000 bamboo toothbrushes and stainless steel straws. The order was held until after the start of the new fiscal year and is now processing.

HRPDC staff will perform an inventory of supplies this fall to determine what items may need to be restocked.

Action: Stainless steel straws and bamboo toothbrushes are on order.

6. Roundtable

- Norfolk - David Schleck has joined the Committee and comes to the City of Norfolk with a professional background in Journalism.

- Outreach for resuming cutoffs after the expiration of the moratorium
 - HRPDC staff discussed regional messaging with the Directors of Utilities. They seemed to feel that each locality would be handling this on different timelines which might make regional messaging difficult.
 - Newport News may not begin residential cutoffs until January. Additional temp staff has been brought in to make calls to residents with highest balances. A letter will also go out and possibly a bill insert. Commercial cut offs are scheduled to begin in November.
 - Virginia Beach cutoffs start August 30th. The following public outreach strategies are being used to announce the resumption of cutoffs: hold message at call center, customer service newsletter article, bill message for delinquent accounts, and daily targeted mailing to delinquent accounts. August news release and social media outreach are planned and possibly an outbound call. Staff wants to ensure residents have an opportunity to use all CARES Act funds before they expire.
 - Chesapeake has not made a decision about resuming cutoffs.
 - Norfolk had no updates on the decision to resume cutoffs. Housing & Redevelopment Authority have expressed concern about the end of the eviction moratorium as well. Utility outreach efforts should be cognizant of compounding issues for low income families/the unemployed.
 - CARES Act funding needs to be utilized by the end of 2021. The Help to Others program remains an option to help local families in need of assistance with their water/wastewater bill. There is a program eligibility cap of once per year per person. Without cutoff notices, the program has been underutilized in recent months and funding is available to assistance families impacted by resuming cutoffs.
- Chesapeake - There is a proposed water rate format change. Rate would increase based on usage (five CCFs offered at lower rate with two additional tiers for higher water consumption). A public hearing is scheduled for next week and full ad in the Chesapeake Clipper to lay out changes. If approved, the new rate structure would go into effect April 2022.
- Staffing vacancies - 22 percent vacancy rate for Chesapeake Utilities. 1 in 4 positions open for Norfolk Public Utilities. Regional Public Works departments are also experiencing staffing shortages, particularly for CDLs to perform trash/recycling pickup. Recruitment and retention of staff continues to be a priority for local government staff.

Action: None.

7. Staff Reports

FY22 Budget - The FY22 budget was provided for review. Final rollover amount to FY22 has not been finalized.

June Digital Marketing Report - Pet waste campaign was top visited site for the website. Conserving water page was among top visited pages. Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week post was top performing post for Facebook. May/June newsletter had a 25 percent open rate with a 12 percent click through rate to the website – these are great statistics based on industry standards.

Meeting schedule - HRPDC staff inquired about return to in-person meetings. HRPDC administrators are working with a vendor to improve capabilities of hybrid meetings at the HRPDC offices. The Committee was open to meeting in person in September. The August meeting may be cancelled but more information to come in August.

Action: The Committee would like to meet in-person at the September meeting.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 26, 2021.

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