

**SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE  
HRPDC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE  
October 1, 2020**

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 Regional Environmental Committee meeting was held electronically via Webex. These electronic meetings are required to complete essential business on behalf of the region. A recording of the meeting is available on the website.

**1. Attendance**

A complete attendance list is available. In addition to several non-voting committee members and other interested parties, the following members participated electronically:

**Regional Environmental Committee Voting Members:**

Barbara Brumbaugh, CH  
Tammie Clary, SM  
Angela Hopkins, NN  
David Imburgia, HA  
Beth Lewis, WG

Heather Markle, WG  
Meg Pittenger, PO  
Thomas Quattlebaum, PO  
Justin Shafer, NO  
Diana St. John, VB

**2. Summary of the September 3, 2020 Meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee**

There were no comments on the August meeting summary.

**3. Public Comments**

Ms. Tyla Matteson of Chesterfield County and affiliated with the York River chapter of the Sierra Club requested that the Committee and the Commission create or expand on a sustainability committee for greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the region. She cited new legislation and Virginia's Energy Plan as a reason for the region to have a focus on placing solar panels on schools, address vehicle emissions, and requested localities gather a baseline of GHGs and emissions to determine how well the region is doing now and for the future.

**4. Norfolk Zoning Ordinance**

Mr. George Homewood and Mr. Jeremy Sharp, Norfolk, shared with the Committee efforts to develop and implement a resiliency quotient for new development in the city. Before the presentation began however, Mr. Homewood announced that the American Planning

Association (APA) will be adopting a climate change policy guide at their October 15 meeting and he wanted interested parties to be aware.

The goal of Norfolk's new zoning ordinance was to plan for flood resilience through zoning to "rise above the risk". Important features are the addition of freeboard and no new basements for new construction. The focus is on flexibility and choice for developers, and there is a list of 'must dos', 'should dos', and 'nice to dos'. The baseline standards were developed around stormwater standards flood and risk reduction, and energy self-reliance. Bonus points are awarded for additional features that contribute to the resiliency quotient. There are 3 resilience overlays in the city, coastal, upland, and neighborhood resilience. More points are awarded if conservation easements are developed in high-risk areas while development occurs in low-risk areas. Unfortunately, no one has capitalized on this option.

Mr. Sharp shared some lessons learned as well. This has been challenging for the developer community, and there has been some pushback. However, he emphasized that it's really important to clearly connect the code provisions to the comprehensive plan and other city resilience goals, offer a range of flexible options and alternatives, be open and adaptive to change during implementation, begin and maintain a dialogue with the local development community, repackage innovative solutions as case studies for future users, and be prepared to go "off book" to adjust requirements in unique circumstances. Another issue that is coming up is in regards to tree preservation. Without adequate data on how much water a mature tree stores, it's difficult to convince a developer to leave a tree in place for treating water quantity on-site. These issues and more they intend to keep working through since this zoning ordinance is new and unique.

A question regarding how this will apply to low-income housing was asked. Mr. Homewood said this is an issue they struggle with and will continue to work on. It may be best to develop a plan book with design options to choose from in order to make resiliency options more affordable. Another participant asked what the chances are that this would be added into the VA uniform statewide building code. And some aspects, like generator connections, have been proposed but there has been pushback that those additions will be too costly for developers.

## **5. Legislative follow-up and new proposals for 2021**

Ms. Jill Sunderland briefed the Committee on what may be happening at the special session of the General Assembly. There has been little movement on the budget and funding is still on hold for DEQ, DCR, and other programs. Similarly, no movement has been made on any of the proposed legislation. Due to the pause in funding, DEQ has not released a solicitation for Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) applications. Staff will update the Committee on any new developments.

Dr. KC Filippino briefed the Committee on a second iteration of adding in nitrogen criteria to the evaluation of SLAF. This initiative failed during the 2020 session due to a high budgetary ask. It is the intention for staff to develop criteria options that DEQ can adopt with very little time and effort on their end. Staff are in consultation with the VAMSA

SLAF Committee and other localities are supported of this proposed legislation. Once a patron is found, the Committee will be briefed on the legislation's progress.

Ms. Sunderland briefed the Committee on efforts she's made in considering proposed tree legislation. A group of stakeholders came together this summer to discuss tree policy. The Green Infrastructure Center and VA Department of Forestry (DOF) put the effort together and developed a report that summarizes current state codes related to trees and forest. Ms. Sunderland then summarized recently passed legislation that enables localities to provide protection and mitigation of trees in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. And a report will be coming out in November from DEQ that will provide details on how trees can be a stormwater BMP. Localities were encouraged to reach out if there was an interest in supporting any legislation following the release of this report.

#### **6. askHRgreen.org Environmental Education Program Annual Update**

Ms. Katie Cullipher provided an extensive overview of the work that the four askHRgreen Committees have done over the past year. One of the big highlights was the launch of a new web look-up tool for recyclables on their website.

The annual report is posted on the website. Through social media, print ads, radio, television, and website links, askHRgreen made many impressions on the region with a 2 to 1 return on investment. The grease grinch was the most popular campaign. As folks stayed home in the early parts of 2020, traffic increased on their website. They achieved a 25% increase in traffic over FY18-19, and have the highest number of pageviews ever. While the in-person campaigns have been on hold temporarily, there is much more planned for the upcoming year and the exposure and environmental awareness continues to grow across the region. Currently, localities and staff are working on a cigarette butt campaign, oversized cigarette butts will be placed around the region to bring awareness to this pervasive form of litter.

Ms. Cullipher also shared a new video that was created to give thanks to the essential workers from the localities in the region that work in the water industry. They all have been working throughout the pandemic and this video honors their efforts.

#### **7. Coastal Resilience Updates**

Mr. Ben McFarlane briefed the Committee on on-going and future work on coastal resilience in the region. The group is working on developing regional design storm standards. Virginia Beach already has set guidelines for the city and the Resilience Committee are working on developing recommendations for policies and regulations related to precipitation, stormwater and floodplain management. With respect to increasing precipitation and consistent with VA Beach's recommendation, localities should adopt local standards reflecting a 20% increase in the 24-hour duration rainfall above local conditions in NOAA Atlas 14. For stormwater, localities should adopt higher standards for larger projects that reflect larger contributions to runoff and additional capacity for mitigation. Localities should also adopt design tailwater elevations for individual watersheds and localities should incorporate sea level rise and non-linearity

into design tailwater elevations. For the floodplain, localities should regulate development in the 0.2% annual chance floodplain and localities should incorporate future probabilistic floodplains with sea level rise into their comprehensive plans and floodplain ordinances.

The group is also considering several legislative proposals, like creating a Commonwealth Flooding Board to oversee state resilience planning and implementation, updating precipitation data products to reflect new data and climate forecasts, requiring disclosure of flood damage and vulnerability in real estate transactions, and adding resiliency to SMART SCALE criteria to encourage transportation projects to incorporate adaptation. Some initiatives are on-going at the state level, DEQ is looking into developing guidance to make the CBPA more resilient. And the state Coastal Resilience Master Plan is still in development and should be released to the public for comment soon.

#### **8. Other Matters**

None.

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 and it will be held virtually via WebEx.