

Draft Meeting Summary
COG Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)
November 28, 2012

Members and Alternates

Hon. Jay Fiset, Arlington County, Chair
Hon. Johannah Barry, Falls Church
Hon. Roger Berliner, Montgomery County
Hon. Del Pepper, Alexandria
Hon. Fred Schultz, Takoma Park
Hon. Jonathan Way, Manassas

Melissa Adams, Washington Gas
Jim Barrett, Applied Solutions
Elizabeth Chasson, Office of Del. Al Carr
Laine Cidlowski, DC Office of Planning
Larisa Dobriansky, Global Energy Network
James Flynn, Bladensburg
Bucky Green, EPA
Bob Grow, Greater Washington Board of Trade
Brian Hug, MDE
Caroline Keicher, IMT
Julia Koster, National Capital Planning Commission
John Lord, Loudoun County Public Schools
Sam Moki, Prince George's County
Katie Peterschmidt, Cooper Cary LLC
Caroline Petti, ACPAC Chair
Chris Randolph, GSA
Dr. Dann Sklarew, George Mason University
Nicole Steele, Alliance to Save Energy
Didian Tsongwain, Prince George's County

In Attendance

Sam Hancock, Emerald Planet/Emerald Planet TV
Devan Willemsen, MEA

Staff Present

Julia Allman
Leah Boggs
Amanda Campbell
Maia Davis
Jeff King
Joan Rohlf
Stuart Freudberg

Film Showing: *BAG IT: Is your life too plastic?*

- The documentary film examines the widespread use of disposable plastic packaging including bags, bottles, and other goods. It explores the impact of plastic packaging on the environment and provides a call to action for viewers to reduce their use of unnecessary plastic packaging.
- More information and to view the trailer, visit <http://www.bagitmovie.com/>.

1. Call to Order, Jay Fiset

- The meeting was called to order at 10:15am.
- Mr. Fiset remarked that the film demonstrates big-picture issues that individuals can take action on. He noted that Arlington County passed a resolution preventing the county from spending public funds on single-use water bottles.

2. Approval of Meeting Summary for Sept 27, 2012

The meeting summary for the September 27, 2012 was approved with no changes.

3. Organic Composting in the Washington Region: Opportunities and Limitations, Brenda Platt, Institute for Self Reliance (ISR), and John Snarr, COG DEP

- Ms. Platt and Mr. Snarr provided an overview on composting methods and benefits, and discussed current composting activities in the metropolitan Washington region.
- Composting is the decomposition of organic materials. The applications for compost are diverse and growing. In addition to use in agriculture, compost can be used in stormwater management and erosion control, as it can absorb up to 20 times its weight in water. It reduces waste, reduces methane emissions, and improves soil.
- Composting can support local economies. It is an inherently local activity, as organic waste and compost cannot be shipped over long distances. Applications can be small, regional, and decentralized. The product is produced and used locally.
- Medium to large-scale grass and leaf composting is being done in the region, but current facilities are at capacity. There are few opportunities to compost food matter, and this is seen as the “next frontier” of composting in the region. Most of the food debris that is being composted is sent to a facility in Wilmington, DE.
- Best practices in composting in the region include facilities at the University of Maryland, Whole Foods, and in community gardens, such as Eco City Farms in Edmonston, MD. San Francisco, (which has a zero waste by 2020 goal), Howard County, and Seattle are model cities for composting practices nationwide.
- COG addresses composting issues in the region through the NCR Organics Task Force. The Task Force is currently drafting recommendations on regional composting policies. It facilitates a Master Composter training program and promotes compost-amended soil policies.
- The Maryland Statewide Compost Study Group is currently addressing permitting issues that need updating and streamlining to better allow for composting facilities to be implemented.

Discussion:

- Mr. Fiset asked about COG’s involvement in this issue. Mr. Snarr replied that COG’s Recycling Committee has held workshops on this issue. A few years ago, the Organics Task Force was

established. It is not an official COG committee, but rather a partnership between ISR, the Alice Ferguson Foundation, and COG.

- Ms. Gross commented that Fairfax County has a “put or pay” scheme with its waste to energy plant, in which the County is contractually obligated to provide a specified amount of waste to the energy plant, and is charged a fee if not enough waste is provided. Mr. Snarr replied that some waste to energy plants are renegotiating contracts, and are moving away from put or pay clauses.
- Ms. Gross asked whether the filter fabric “socks” which are filled with compost and used for erosion control are available on the consumer market, and whether they were made of plastic. Ms. Platt replied that while her experience is in the commercial/industrial sector, Filtrexx is the leading company for those products. There is growing attention toward biodegradable plastics in this sectors.
- Mr. Grow asked how compost reduces methane from landfills. Ms. Platt replied that organics in landfills decompose without the presence of oxygen, producing methane. Organics that are composted biodegrade under aerobic conditions, thereby not producing methane.

4. “What Our Region Grows,” Draft Report from COG and Regional Agriculture Workgroup, John Galli, COG DEP

- Mr. Galli provided an overview of the findings of the draft report, focusing on what agricultural products are being produced in the region, and the estimated demand.
- Agriculture is still very vibrant in the COG region, contributing \$1 billion annually to the local economy. There are just over 12,000 farms in the region, yet regionally grown products make up less than 1% of total food sold. Key crops are corn and soybeans, which are used primarily in the Delmarva poultry industry.
- Challenges to maintaining and increasing local agriculture include high land prices and loss of support services. Additionally, an aging farmer population, farmland fragmentation, increasing labor costs, and regulations on environment, health, and zoning are impediments to agriculture.
- Due to increased demand for locally grown food, some opportunities have opened up for agriculture in the region. They include “niche” farming for specialty meats, fruits and vegetables; community supported agriculture (CSA); and agritourism.
- The COG report highlights local experiences in Montgomery, Frederick, Prince George’s and Loudoun counties. The report recommends developing a strategic regional agricultural support plan, removing regulatory obstacles, establishing a farm incubator, supporting more food hubs or aggregator distribution facilities, and maintaining funding for extension agents that provide technical support to farmers.
- Presentations on the report are been made to COG committees, and it will be presented to the COG Board in January.

Discussion:

- Mr. Schultz asked if the report discusses the growth of farmer’s markets, which help farmers and bring more local food to residents. Mr. Galli replied that the report touches on it briefly, as it is one valuable market for locally grown products. The challenge is that there is a need for more farmers producing the goods they want. Currently those products are coming from Pennsylvania and West Virginia.
- Mr. Lord noted that there is a movement to bring more local food to schools, but USDA regulations have been a barrier. Mr. Galli commented that though he is not an expert on health

regulations, he is aware of the attempt in Loudoun County to create an aggregator/food hub system that will help provide local products to schools, restaurants, and other institutions.

- Mr. Way asked how the 450,000-acre sustainability target in the Region Forward plan was set. Mr. Galli replied that the 450,000 acre goal is close to the area of currently active agricultural land in the region. The goal is focused on protecting and maintaining the current agricultural land base into the future.
- A member asked, to what extent did the report look at land use policies? The report looked at farmland fragmentation as a result of residential development and other factors. This can cause a culture clash between new residents and existing farmers around traffic congestion, noise/smell from farms, and other issues. There is a need to educate the public and officials about how farms work, and strategize about how to preserve them.
- Ms. Gross commented that the Metropolitan Washington Development Policy Committee should receive a briefing on this report. Mr. Freudberg replied that the report has been presented to that committee's successor, Region Forward, as well as its technical committee.
- Mr. Sklarew noted that there is a lot of attention and interest among college and high school students to get involved in local agriculture, but it is not always clear where the opportunities are. Small plots can be accessible learning opportunities.

RESOLUTION: To endorse the report moved forward to the COG Board; passed.

5. Adoption of the 2012 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), Ryan Meres, Institute for Market Transformation

- Mr. Meres discussed the process for updating the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and the status of state building codes in the region.
- The International Code Council (ICC) is responsible for developing model codes. They are developed on a 3-year cycle, with one-third of the development committee made up of state and local regulators. The IECC has one committee for residential and commercial building codes, respectively.
- In the region, Maryland automatically adopts the IECC on a 3-year cycle. The 2012 IECC has been adopted, and the 2012 International Green Construction Code (IGCC) has been adopted as optional. Virginia observes a 3-year adoption cycle, but adopts the code about 1 year after each edition. The current code is the 2009 IECC, and the 2012 IECC and IGCC are under consideration. The District observes a 3-year adoption cycle, as authorized by the Construction Codes Coordinating Board (CCCB). The residential code is equivalent to the 2009 IECC, and 2012 is under consideration. The commercial code is the 2006 IECC and 2007 ASHRAE standard. The 2012 IECC and IGCC are under consideration.
- Adoption of 2012 IECC is estimated to save homeowners an average of 27% on their energy bills, with a 5 year simple payback.
- Hurdles to achieving these energy savings are adoption of the code, and implementation/monitoring. Potential issues in the review process include the wood frame wall R-value, mandatory duct and envelope tightness testing, and eave baffling.

Discussion:

- Mr. Way asked, if these codes are helpful in saving energy, why are they not currently used in the market? Mr. Meres replied that builders are hesitant to implement changes that increase

the cost of the home. The Virginia Department of Housing believes that the new code will negatively impact residential buyers by increasing costs.

- Mr. Way asked whether Homebuilders Associations are opposing the change. Mr. Meres replied that the National Homebuilders Association will oppose it, but some local chapters are proponents.
- Ms. Gross asked if these codes were related to fire safety. Mr. Meres replied that nothing in the code deals directly with fire safety, but the codes have been checked to ensure there are no conflicts with the fire safety code.
- Ms. Gross added that synthetic foams can increase home fire hazard. Mr. Meres replied that it depends on what foam is used, and how it is installed. There are ways of installing synthetic foams that minimize fire risk, and training for first responders is important.
- Ms. Petti asked if a letter supporting the 2012 code is needed for DC as well as Virginia. Ms. Boggs replied that it is expected to pass in DC, while it faces a bigger challenge in Virginia. Mr. Meres suggested that COG sends a support letter during the public comment period in DC. Mr. Fisette commented that builders in this region want consistency in codes and policy across jurisdictions, since many companies work across state lines. He directed COG staff to craft a letter for DC, highlighting the consistency issue.

RESOLUTION: Adopting a letter supporting Virginia's and the District's adoption of the 2012 IECC; passed.

6. CEEPC Climate Action Plan 2013-2016, Maia Davis, COG-DEP

- Mr. Fisette noted that the Climate Action Plan working group has conducted several conference calls over the previous month in order to create this plan. There are two documents, the proposed action plan and the previous action plan, with the status of individual measures from the 2012 plan (carried over, modified, achieved, removed, etc.). Mr. Fisette requested that CEEPC members provide comments by December 14th.
- Ms. Davis provided further detail on the content of the 2016 Plan. New categories include energy financing, water, and energy security. The proposed plan differs from the 2012 plan by having fewer measures. There is a stronger focus on goal-oriented targets. Staff activities (such as holding workshops and conducting research) have been moved to a separate list. The proposed plan also does not have interim goals.
- Members are asked to provide comments on the actions and the percentages set for the goals.

Discussion:

- Ms. Dobrianski commented that she appreciates how the plan addresses energy assurance planning and integrated energy planning, and how it is tied in with climate resiliency. We can derive significant co-benefits through this approach.
- Mr. Fisette noted that this action plan is organized differently than the previous plan. Climate Adaptation has been subsumed under the Resiliency and Sustainability category.
- Mr. Grow asked how the region has performed on the 2012 goals. Mr. King replied that the progress report will be available in March, and utility data will be available in March or April.
- Mr. Way commented that the 2012 plan had 156 goals, and the newer version has just over 60. Does this represent a consolidation of efforts? Mr. Fisette replied that several of the previous plan's goals are covered by the Region Forward plan, so those have been removed but are still

priorities for COG. Others have been achieved, moved to the staff task list, or deemed to not be as valuable. He encouraged members to review the document summarizing changes to the 2012 plan and provide comments if anything that was removed should be reinstated.

- Mr. Barrett asked how the action plan will be moved to cities and counties. Ms. Davis replied that some work will be done through CEEPC, and also through technical committees.
- Ms. Chasson commented that the plan should do more to “encourage” action, and should do more to include businesses.
- Mr. Berliner commented that it is a good point that we encourage and engage the community as well as government. Governments account for only 2-4% of energy use, and thus solutions outside of government are essential to reaching our goals.

7. Staff Updates

- CEEPC is accepting applications for stakeholder members. Appointments are made for one year at a time. If interested or if you know someone who may be interested please email Joan Rohlf. Appointments will be made in January.
- CEEPC’s Legislative Advocacy Subcommittee held a meeting to discuss legislative priorities for 2013, focusing on energy efficiency and security, immediately following the CEEPC meeting. Any members interested in the topic were invited to participate.
- Mr. Freudberg acknowledged Mr. Fisette, who will be stepping down as chair of CEEPC. Mr. Fisette has served as chair since the committee’s creation, and Mr. Freudberg thanked him for his service and leadership.
- Mr. Freudberg also acknowledged Dave Robertson, Executive Director of COG, who is leaving in December. Incoming Executive Director Chuck Bean was present, and Mr. Freudberg introduced him to the committee.

8. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 am. The next meeting will be held on January 23, 2013.