

CHESAPEAKE BAY and WATER RESOURCES POLICY COMMITTEE
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

MINUTES OF September 21, 2012 MEETING

ATTENDANCE:

Members and alternates:

Chair Penny Gross, Fairfax County
Bruce Williams, City of Takoma Park
Shelley Aloi, City of Frederick
Meo Curtis, Montgomery County
Jerry Maldonado, Prince George's County
Karen Pallansch, Alexandria Renew Enterprises
Craig Rice, Montgomery County
JL Hearn, WSSC
Andrew Fellows, City of College Park
Mark Charles, City of Rockville
Hamid Karimi, DDOE
Cathy Drzyzgula, City of Gaithersburg
J Davis, City of Greenbelt
Libby Garvey, Arlington County
Shannon Moore, Frederick County

Tim Stevens, City of Falls Church

COG Staff:

Stuart Freudberg, DEP Director
Heidi Bonnaffon, DEP
Karl Berger, DEP
Steve Bieber, DEP
John Galli, DEP
Brian LeCouteur, DEP
Tanya Spano, DEP

Visitors:

Jack Frye, Chesapeake Bay Commission
Sarah Neiderer, DCWater

1. Introductions and Announcements

Chair Gross called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m.

The Institute for Regional Excellence (IRE) draft stormwater project recommendations were shared with the committee. Chair Gross and Mr. Williams both recommended the IRE as an excellent opportunity for regional staff and the only certified public management program in the country.

2. Approval of Meeting Summary for May 18, 2012

Since there was not a July meeting, members approved the draft summary of the May meeting and Noman Cole Treatment Plant tour.

3. Regional Water Quality Messaging

Ms. Spano presented a proposed outline for a COG factsheet on water quality, focused on the Potomac River. Ms. Spano said the factsheet would allow us to have factual information compiled, rather than responding to news about the Potomac on the fly. The future factsheet would present the historical improvement of water quality in the Potomac, making note of regional water reuse efforts, and 21st Century challenges, such as legacy pollutants, aging infrastructure, and funding needs. Member feedback included: Emphasis should be on the burden of maintenance costs, when discussing funding, and Chair Gross said to tie the Potomac to local streams. Local streams often mean more to the public.

4. Economics of Nutrient Trading

Mr. Frye, from the Chesapeake Bay Commission presented their analysis of whether trading could save states money, and whether the magnitude of savings would be worth the pain of setting up trading programs and policies. He said some of this is no longer theoretical because Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and West Virginia are already looking to trading and setting up banks. In the Bay Commission's assessment set market restrictions, such as capping productive farm land retirement to 25%, and limited trades to 9 M lbs./year of Nitrogen and 200,000 lbs./year of Phosphorus.

Discussion:

Ms. Moore asked whether the credits would be calculated annually, and if it is assumed that the credits would continue into perpetuity? Are the credits amortized? Mr. Frye said he could follow up with COG on these points. Ms. Drzyzgula and Chair Gross both expressed concern about impairments to the local stream water quality, if the trading is measured at the edge of the Bay (remotely). For example, Mr. Charles was wondering if developers could continue to develop in non- "Bay friendly" ways, by trading with farmers and how long could this go on before agricultural trades would run out? Mr. Frye referred the committee to pages 34-35 of the Bay Commission Report, which discusses trading by river basin, and if trading is capped, such as the 9 M lbs. of Nitrogen, the models do not show degradation of local water quality. However there is limited monitoring of local water quality, so it would be hard to measure changes. Areas of trade that will be subject to further scrutiny, include credit reserves, credit retirement, and the local versus Bay impacts.

Mr. Karimi commented that EPA is coming out with a technical memorandum on trading by 2014. States are setting up the banks, but EPA is putting out the guidance. As economic and cap pressures excel, then there will be increased incentive to turn towards trading.

Mr. Frye was asked when agricultural lands are converted, does the land go into permanent easement, and Mr. Frye said, generally yes, via banks or conservation trusts.

Mr. Fellows asked whether trades are being done in non-public forums, and Mr. Frye responded that in river basins such as James, Rappahannock, and York, the trading is done via broker, without local government/public involvement.

Ms. Moore commented that the Maryland stormwater conservation districts have strict limitations on trading, only within sectors, and water bodies right now, which severely limits trading.

Action item: Chair Gross asked committee members to review the COG policy straw man and to revisit the policy outline at the November meeting.

5. Report on TapIt, a Community Engagement Campaign Project

Ms. Bonnaffon presented an overview of the projects headed by COG's Community Engagement Campaign, a committee of PIOs, doing regional messages on wise water use, do not flush, and tap water promotion. Ms. Neiderer, who serves on the CEC, presented the successes DCWater and the CEC have had with TapIt to-date. Mayor Fellows mentioned that he endorsed TapIt as a program that addresses several water issues, and that he has signed a letter in support of the program for businesses in College Park.

Action Item: Committee members were asked to support TapIt in their jurisdictions. Follow up items will include a letter of support from the CBPC Chair to the COG Board. The CBPC also recommended a possible resolution banning bottled water from council meetings, and TapIt bottles or glasses for committee members.

6. Report on Regional Agricultural Food Production

Mr. Galli and Mr. LeCouteur, COG staff, presented findings and recommendations from the draft report, "What Our Region Grows", a joint effort of the Regional Agricultural Work Group and COG staff. The Report details that farm numbers and sizes are decreasing in our area, as farms become more specialized and niche. Agriculture is a billion dollar industry for the COG region, yet we could only feed the region for five or six days on the food that is produced here. The average age of the farmer is 57, so the Report encourages tax incentives for farming, and new farmer incentives, such as leasing land and increasing equipment share programs. Also, a recommendation to include agriculture in school curriculums. The Report only touches on water issues, primary water supply from a drought perspective.

Mr. Rice said allowing agricultural equipment share programs is so important because the cost of a combine alone can be cost-prohibitive. He mentioned a farming magnet program in Montgomery County.

Action item: The Committee members were in favor of the draft report findings and the final report being transmitted to the region. COG staff will share the Report when it is final.

7. Staff Updates

Ms. Spano presented highlights from the STAC workshop on innovative wastewater practices, and the Chesapeake Bay Program Developments.

8. New Business

Mr. Rice announced the Montgomery County has followed the District of Columbia's lead in banning coal-tar sealants. Ms. Moore mentioned Frederick County has begun a Green Leader Challenge, building on its Green Homes Challenge, which can measure nutrient reductions of practices, etc., Ms. Davis mentioned Sustainable Maryland Certified Programs and that Rockville was one of four cities getting certified.

9. Adjourn

Vice Chair Aloï, who chaired the meeting when Ms. Gross left around 10:30, adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:20 a.m.