

Draft Meeting Summary

COG Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)

March 23, 2011

Members and Alternates

Hon. Johannah Barry, City of Falls Church
Hon. Robert Catlin, College Park
Hon. Adam Ebbin, Virginia House of Delegates
Hon. Jay Fissette, Chair, Arlington County
Hon. Henri Gardner, Bowie
Hon. Penelope Gross, Fairfax County Council
Hon. Mary Lehman, Prince George's County
Hon. Leta Mach, City of Greenbelt
Hon. Andrea McGimsey, Loudoun County
Hon. Del Pepper, Alexandria
Hon. Jonathan Way, City of Manassas

Kambiz Agazi, Fairfax County
Austina Casey, District Department of Transportation
Laine Cidlowski, District Office of Planning
Renee Hamilton, Virginia Department of Transportation
Brendan Shane, District Department of the Environment
Howard Simons, Maryland Department of Transportation
Dr. Dann Sklarew, George Mason University
Kanti Srikanth, Virginia Department of Transportation
Didian Tsongwain, Prince George's County
Luke Wisniewski, Maryland Department of the Environment

Tracey Funn, Washington Gas
Bob Grow, Greater Washington Board of Trade
Rachel Healy, WMATA
Suseel Idrakanti, Cambridge Systematics
Caroline Keicher, Institute for Market Transformation
Julie Locascio, DC Sierra Club
Stephen Pattison, Maryland Clean Energy Center
Caroline Petti, ACPAC Chair
Jeff Platenberg, Loudoun County Public Schools
Dr. Lise Van Susteren, Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Others Present

Dan Barry, District Department of the Environment
Dave Molchany, Fairfax County
Bob Owolabi, Fairfax County DOT
Najib Salehi, Loudoun County
Steve Walz, NVRC
Matt Ward, Climate Communities

Staff Present

Jeannine Altavilla, Environmental Planner, COG DEP
Leah Boggs, Environmental Planner, COG DEP
Maia Davis, Environmental Planner, COG DEP
Stuart Freudberg, COG, Director, Department of Environmental Programs
Ryan Hand, Intern, COG DCPS
Jeff King, Principal Environmental Planner, COG DEP
Ron Kirby, COG, Director, Department of Transportation Planning
Sunil Kumar, Senior Environmental Engineer, COG DEP
John Mataya, Regional Planner, COG DCPS
Joan Rohlfs, Chief, Environmental Resources, COG DEP

1. Call to Order/Introductions/Chair Remarks

Chair Fissette called the meeting of the Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) to order at 9:45 a.m.

The Chair noted that a document with the COG Board Policy Focus and Priorities for FY 2011 is in the meeting's information packets. The COG Board is focusing on programs to implement the Region Forward targets of accessibility, sustainability, livability and prosperity.

George Mason University Professor Dr. Dann Sklarew has his class on Sustainability in Action listening to today's meeting through Skype.

2. Approval of Meeting Summary for January 26, 2011 and Amendments to the Agenda

The meeting summary for the January 26, 2011 meeting of the CEEPC was approved with one amendment: in the paragraph above item 5 "energy-related project" was changed to "infrastructure project." There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Federal Update: Climate and Energy Legislation (Matt Ward, Climate Communities)

Matt Ward from Climate Communities presented information on the status of federal climate and energy legislation. There have been several attempts to restrict the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority to regulate greenhouse gases (GHG). The latest continuing resolution was close to passing with an amendment that would have restricted this. In an introduced Energy Tax Prevention Act, statutes would prohibit stationary source and vehicle GHG regulation, remove EPA's reporting authority, and undermine EPA voluntary programs through funding cuts. Currently EPA is moving forward with all GHG rules and regulations that have been enacted or are under development. The most recent continuing resolution for 2011 de-funds EPA Climate Showcase Communities grant program.

President Obama's FY2012 budget proposal shows a 20% increase in GHG funding. The Senate and the White House are driving clean energy legislation. Calling the legislation clean energy, rather than renewable energy, leaves questions about whether nuclear, offshore oil drilling and clean coal can qualify under their definition. Current legislation that could potentially pass includes a National Renewable Energy Standard, Clean Energy Deployment Administration (CEDA) and an Electric Vehicle Deployment Legislation. Thirty-two states already have some kind of clean energy standard. The CEDA is similar in structure to National Infrastructure Banks that have been proposed for transportation and water infrastructure. There is bipartisan support for electric vehicles in both Houses.

There is a reauthorization proposal for SAFETEA-LU, a transportation investment act, which would see a large funding increase of two-thirds greater than 2010 levels. Hearings have begun in the House. There is bipartisan support for this measure that would represent a shift in transportation policy.

One issue that could see a good amount of debate is whether to keep the gas tax at the current level or to increase it. This tax is the main source of transportation funds and revenues have decreased over the years in a trend that is expected to continue. Alternatives could be a tax on vehicle miles traveled or a congestion tax. It seems like the momentum is shifting toward sustainable transportation.

Climate Communities is developing a national action plan. Several committee members were part of the group that developed the goals of this plan. The plan will be released in early April and will highlight the role of local governments in clean energy action and promote continued federal assistance in local financing to encourage further development.

Climate Communities is asking for resolutions, letters, calls, and visits on: FY2011 and FY 2012 spending; SAFETEA-LU transport reauthorization; active roles in the Climate Communities National Action Plan; and attendance at the Local Clean Energy Leadership Summit June 15-17.

Programs that give funds directly to local governments such as the HUD Sustainable Communities and Brownfield Programs have been successful and could likely continue. The clean energy bill will be a difficult debate. Renewable energy tax incentives could survive, but they are often based on very large systems and not for community scale projects. There should be a focus on incentives and electric vehicles for local impacts. It is important to push these issues now before presidential debates for the 2012 election begin.

4. Six Months' Result: Wise Energy By Capital Area Neighbors (WE CAN) (Joan Rohlf, COG DEP)

Education and Outreach was established as a priority for this committee in 2010. The result was the WE CAN six month pilot campaign.

The WE CAN pilot program had a goal of 150 total sign ups, with 50 per community. As of March 21 there were 154 participants who registered and linked a utility account. Over 200 additional households signed up to use the resources but did not link an account. Data from Earth Aid will allow staff to apply weather normalization to participants' energy use. Due to privacy concerns average household use and individual household statistics will not be available.

In April staff will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot campaign. Participating households will receive a survey through Earth Aid. The partnership with Earth Aid will be assessed and any remaining questions about the website and data capabilities will be addressed. Final results will be presented at the May CEEPC meeting and participating communities will be recognized.

Alternative outreach program structures will be considered and a strategy for regional expansion of the outreach program to increase energy efficiency awareness and actions will be developed.

Members brought up several concerns and suggestions. Virginia Energy Sense also uses Earth Aid, so comparing experience with the group could be useful. If the percentage of total households in communities that participated in the program is determined, expected regional results could be extrapolated. Several members were concerned that there was not enough communication among residents of communities. Chair Fisette reminded members that the goal of the campaign was to increase awareness and encourage some participants to take some steps. He suggested that the ad hoc evaluation committee consider whether the correct measures of success have been identified.

Brendan Shane, Johanna Barry, Najib Salehi and Howard Simons volunteered to participate in an ad hoc committee to evaluate the pilot success and design a program for regionwide expansion.

5. Progress Report on Workplan 2012 Goals (Maia Davis, COG DEP)

The COG Board began a climate change initiative in 2007 that led to a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, a best practices report, greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, a climate change report, this committee, and a climate action plan for 2010 through 2012.

CEEP established the top three priorities in the action plan for 2010: government and community-wide greenhouse gas inventories; tracking progress toward greenhouse gas reduction goals; and developing a regional energy outreach campaign.

To inform progress on the action plan goals, data was collected in surveys sent to local governments. Eighteen of twenty-one governments returned their surveys. School districts were sent a shorter survey and eight of twelve districts returned the surveys. Utilities are being surveyed on electricity and natural gas consumption, customer base, renewable energy systems, green power purchases, and smart grid/advanced meters. The utility surveys are due annually at the end of March.

Selected charts show progress towards all 2010 and selected 2011 and 2012 workplan goals. Specific challenges identified for future goals are: tracking residential retrofits; resource limitations for smaller governments; and limited ability to collect data from the private sector.

Members provided suggestions for editing the action plan. Ms. McGimsey requested that waste heat be added to the plan. Staff will incorporate CHP into the program and revisit the green building policy to lessen the standard for the community. It was requested to move action no line 138 to agriculture to keep things together.

Ms. McGimsey noted that Loudoun is working on local food but is not sure where the work is being done. COG staff will share the list of contacts used to gather survey results. Discussion on local food plans determined that the region may need guidance and examples in order to implement such plans.

Ms. Keicher mentioned that there are resources and guidance to help. Possibly a centralized location for this guidance would be helpful. Mr. Agazi noted that there is a question for local governments about selecting where to invest.

Chair Fissette requested that a revised action plan incorporating comments be brought to the committee in May, including priorities for the next year. Additionally, staff should communicate with those governments with no response and no inventory or government plan. Follow up with questions from the self-reporting. Green Building is a COG Board policy enacted before the climate report. It's disappointing that the adoption of green building policies is not closer to 100%. This needs to be highlighted.

The committee asked that staff continue to reach out to governments who have not responded and follow up where there are any questions on information received in surveys. Mr. Tsongwain noted that a letter would help to get the County Executive's office active in these areas.

Members debated whether to use a GHG emissions or an energy use inventory. Some offered that GHG equivalent makes sense to combine various forms of energy. Mr. Agazi offered to share Fairfax County's template for inventories. Mr. Simons noted that a Maryland Department of the Environment State inventory will be available early summer.

Ms. Gross requested that 2010 population data be used in the progress report.

6. Projects and Subcommittee Updates

Reports:

- a) **Advocacy Committee: State Legislative Update:** There is a one page summary in the meeting packet that lists all bills the committee commented on in the Virginia and Maryland legislative sessions. Most of the efforts were focused on Maryland due to the timing of the legislative sessions. Roger Berliner and J. Davis participated in the committee, along with David Snyder.

Brendan Shane mentioned that there is pending legislation on solar power in the District's renewable portfolio standard that the committee could examine.

- b) **Green Building Trends Report:** The report was a joint effort between the Planning and Environmental Programs departments over the last year and a half and is available on the website. The report looked at total square footage of green buildings and their proximity to identified Regional Activity Centers and Metro stations. Most projects sought LEED Gold, and not just LEED certification. Most of the projects were in the DC core. The data represents trends of registration and certification in LEED from a USGBC database from 2003 to 2009. This information has not been compared with total construction because available data would not provide an equivalent comparison.
- c) **Chesapeake Crescent Initiative, Report:** The released report is posted on the CEEPC website. The report builds on the community energy process in Arlington and Loudoun Counties, expanding discussion to the tri-state area. In four months the group will meet again to hear a proposed work program. The public and private sectors attended a meeting and created a list of six to eight action items that will be in the work program.
- d) **NOAA Adaptation Workshop:** COG is developing a regional adaptation plan through a Smart Growth Implementation Project with EPA. NOAA came to COG for a training to teach local representatives how to do a risk and vulnerability assessment. Forty-eight participants attended representing all sectors. The training was followed by regional presentation on what is already under way locally.

The insurance sector has not been included in the plan development however costs of past events are being analyzed. Mr. Indrakanti mentioned that he has completed this training previously and is now testing a model with a metropolitan planning organization in New Jersey that could be helpful here.

It was suggested that NOAA present to the committee in the Fall.

Announcements:

- a) **Electric Vehicle Workshop and AFV Update:** The workshop will be on April 29th at COG, evaluating the readiness of the region, and discussing strategies and examples of best practices.
- b) **Community Solar Meeting:** COG has been working with EPA's Green Power Purchase to adapt a Santa Clara County model for a bundled solar purchase in this region. There could potentially be three groups that would seek to cooperatively procure solar: government, higher education, and the military.
- c) **Workshop: Green Building Tools for Climate Protection:** The workshop will be May 5th at COG. IGBG is hosting this workshop as an outreach and education piece to address concerns in green building.
- d) **Additional:** Dr. Van Susteren requested that materials be submitted electronically and that committee members be given a chance to opt out of receiving a hard copy packet at the meeting in order to reduce paper waste.

7. Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2011 from 9:45am to noon. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm.