

St. Mary's County  
Commission on the Environment (COE)  
Meeting Notes for September 2, 2015

Committee meeting called to order at 7:11pm in the Department of Land Use and Growth Management conference room of the Patuxent Building on September 2, 2015 by COE president, Thomas Brewer.

In Attendance:

Thomas Brewer, COE  
Gordon Smith, COE  
Mike Thompson, COE  
Mark Burroughs, COE  
Mary Ferns, COE  
Kim Egbert, COE  
Paul Waxman  
Bill Hunt, St. Mary's DLUGM Deputy Director

- 1) Minutes from Aug 5, 2015 were unanimously approved. Format for minutes will continue to be proposed agenda items bolded and discussion from tonight's meeting not bolded.

- 2) **Advisory Board Changes**

**-Was anybody able to determine the nature of the repeals made by the Commissioners?**

There has been no update from Sue Veith yet.

- 3) **Non-recyclable plastics**

**-I still have to research the Montgomery County plastic bag fee program and determine whether Trex works with Materials Recovery Facilities to obtain plastic bags and film packaging.**

Mark Burroughs talked to Nick Zurkan. Nick has researched Trex but has not talked to them about collecting bags from St. Mary's transfer stations. Kim mentioned her experience with schools doing single stream recycling but being unsure how much was actually recycled in the end. Schools generate so much that can be recycled.

- 4) **Facility Tours/CoE Field Trips!**

**-At the last meeting, we discussed touring a recycling facility, and after the meeting, Brad and Gordon sent me the following link: <http://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/Recycling/RecyclingFacilityTours.aspx>**

**These would be tours of the recycling plants at Capital Heights and Elkridge, noting that Baltimore's single stream material is processed at the Elkridge facility. George Erichsen mentioned a composting facility in Howard County, and upon researching this more, I found a link with more tours: <http://www.howardcountymd.gov/toursandpresentations.htm>**

**We can discuss which facilities we would like to tour at the meeting.**

Thomas will send out more info especially on tour times. Many COE members are interested in these tours. Gordon remarked how he was surprised about the relatively low cost of the Howard County composting facility. It was noted that where such a facility is built would influence the cost (county owned land or not). Kim is interested in what community members do for composting and if there could be a grass roots program.

- 5) **Green Team**

**-I will be meeting with college students in the near future to recruit members for the Sustainable MD Green Team. Once we have some more members, we will move forward with the certification process.**

Thomas will ask the MD Green Team lead to talk at St. Mary's College to generate interest.

Mary called LaShelle McKay and the proposed town council participant will likely not participate now.

- 6) **Long Range Transportation Plan**

**-Is it too late to turn in the questionnaire? If not, where can I turn it in?**

It is not too late for questionnaires, please send inputs to Bill Hunt. Bill asked for bicyclist to get involved too in the transportation plan. Kim mentioned World Gym may be a place to get bicyclist support also.

- 7) **Composting facility**

**-I have been corresponding with George Erichsen, Director of PW&T for St. Mary's County, and Brett Darcey, a VP for a local defense contractor. George identified the aforementioned Howard County facility at Alpha Ridge Landfill as a good model for our county. I was not aware of this facility, but it seems like exactly what we want to see here. They compost yard trimmings and food waste using aerated, covered static piles, similar to the facility in Vermont that originally peaked my interest.**

**I will be meeting with the student that plans to research the feasibility of having a composting facility in our area and producing a cost-benefit analysis. I plan to have her read the following reports that Brenda Platt sent me:**

<http://www.ilsr.org/size-matters-report-shows-small-scale-community-based-composting/>  
<http://www.ilsr.org/state-of-composting/>  
<http://www.ilsr.org/paydirt/>  
<http://www.ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Compost-Builds-Healthy-Soils-ILSR-5-08-13-2.pdf>

I will also have her research the Howard County facility and compare and contrast Howard and St. Mary's Counties.

**Brett Darcey is on the BRAC committee and feels that having support from the Base could prove beneficial for our project as well as for the Base. He interned for John Bohanan and has remained close with him since. We will be meeting with Mr. Bohanan to discuss strategies for moving forward, but in the meantime, he recommended forming a task force to provide political coverage for the Commissioners and spread awareness to residents. I asked George Erichsen about the process, and he said that the CoE could act as the task force rather than having the Commissioners formalize one. I am not sure when I should announce this to the Commissioners, but will determine that soon.**

Thomas will contact the Soil Conservation group in St. Mary's about possible teaming. Talking to an organic farm or the Navy base may offer additional insights.

The COE then started a long discussion on our strategy for discussing composting ideas with the County Commissioners. It was agreed the COE should first agree on the main reasons we want a composting facility before anything is presented to the County Commissioners. This COE discussion could help drive student research being proposed. This discussion could also provide insights to Public Works and Phil Shire in order to get their support too.

8) **Wheelabrator Incinerator in Baltimore**

**-Gordon sent me this link: <http://www.wtienergy.com/plants/waste-to-energy/wheelabrator-baltimore/index.html>, which discusses the incinerator in Baltimore. While the fish-raising seems to be beneficial, I read up and found that the incinerator produces more mercury, lead, and Greenhouse gases than either of the 4 largest coal plants in the state.**

There was limited discussion on this topic.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mark Burroughs.

The next COE meeting is scheduled for Wednesday Oct 7, 2015 at 7pm in the Department of Land Use and Growth Management conference room of the Patuxent Building.