

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT MINUTES
Potomac Building
Minutes of July 2, 2008

COE Members present were Barne Wheeler, Chairman, Marta Kelsey, Troy Hansen, Susan Blake, Larry Hartwick, Caroline Miller, and Frank Allen. Members absent were Bill Shreve and Sandy Neville. Others present were Sue Veith, LUGM, and Gloria Bailey, Recording Secretary.

- I) **Call to Order:** Mr. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
- II) **Discussion & Approval of June Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of June 4, 2008 were approved as amended.
- III) **Continuing Business:**
- a. **Discussion of the Adequate Public Facilities Proposal & County Growth Policy:** Mr. Wheeler sent the attendees two PDF documents (Recommended Changes to the Zoning Ordinance and Annual Growth Policy) and Mr. Allen's original letter so everyone could compare changes. The new letter deals with three issues:
- (1) Adequate Public Facility (APF) Zoning Changes.
 - (2) The Proposed Annual Growth Plan (AGP)
 - (3) APF, Additional Considerations for Commissioners to Consider

APF Zoning Changes: The letter strongly urges the Commissioners to continue discussions with the State to reconcile new school construction criteria. Currently County APF provisions are triggered when schools become 19% overcrowded, but the State requires 50%. Consequently, the proposed APF provisions, which raise the overcrowding threshold from 7 to 15%, will only temporarily alleviate the problem. Considerable discussion ensued with Ms. Veith and Mr. Hartwick stating they did not believe the difference was that large, and Mr. Hansen, Ms. Miller and Mr. Wheeler maintaining they believe the difference to be correct. The group decided to reword the paragraph framing the State and County overcrowding thresholds in a less specific sense.

The Proposed Annual Growth Plan (AGP): Ms. Blake referred to the letter of July 2, on page 2, paragraph 1, "The Resolution above", and indicated she was not sure what is being referred. The COE decided to refer to the resolution documents as named exactly. Mr. Wheeler stated he felt the AGP should not be approved without a public hearing (currently approval can come a regular BOCC session without soliciting public input). Since the AGP deals with many items, more than just the annual growth percentage (growth allocation between the rural development areas and allocations of single and multi-family housing, etc.), he believes a public hearing should be held. The COE agreed a public hearing each year is appropriate and will approve this recommendation in the COE public comment letter.

APF Additional Considerations: COE comments proposed in the original COE public comment letter have been incorporated in the revised letter. These comments refer to additional areas, which should be included in the APF portion of the zoning ordinance. The COE re-approved their inclusion in the revised letter.

A motion was made and seconded that the COE public comment letter be approved with the changes mentioned above and be circulated to COE members for electronic approval so the letter could be submitted within the 10 day public comment period to the County Commissioners. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. **Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC):** Mr. Wheeler was able to contact Mr. John McCloud. There is recycling available in eleven communities in the County. If you want recycling in these communities, you have to call Waste Management. Mr. Wheeler did not ask about payment. The remainder of the County does not have this service. Mr. McCloud told Mr. Wheeler that Charles County is making money from this service.

Ms. Kelsey suggested posting this information on the County website as well as additional information. We need to know who to contact, how to order the service and how much does it cost. A return email from Mr. McCloud will be sufficient confirmation to post. Ms. Blake stated Valley Lee has a sign with the price of every ton of trash, and the revenue generated by every ton of recycling. Therefore, the sign implies that the County is generating revenue by recycling yet however, this is not what Mr. James told us. He said that it costs less. The sign is inconsistent with the data given to us. Mr. Hartwick stated as a citizen he would like to know once in awhile what the latest recycling laws are.

Mr. Wheeler discussed the Draft COE letter prepared by Ms. Miller. This letter concerns the inadequate staffing of the SWAC and its inability to obtain a quorum for the last seven months. Ms. Veith stated she did not know if the County Commissioners were responsible for changing the by-laws or if they have to be changed by the group itself. She thought the Commissioners established the Committee and the framework were decided by the members. A motion was made and seconded to approve the dispatch of the letter to the County Commissioners with copies to Mr. James, Chair SWAC and to Mr. Tarr, Solid Waste Manager and to Mr. Erickson, Dir. Dept. of Public Works & Transportation. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

- c. **Update on WPTF Issues and Plan of Attack:** Mr. Wheeler indicated Steve King, Director Metropolitan Commission (MetCom), called the other two counties to discuss water issues. There was agreement that there are still some outstanding issues which need resolution e.g., management level, recharge areas, large commercial and industrial potable water users. The consensus was to go to MDE and articulate what the COE feels are still unanswered issues. This would at least make them aware that they are not providing the assistance we think they should be giving us.

- d. **Gray Water Concerns:** Steve King, MetCom, expressed his concern regarding areas not serviced by METCOM water plants. He believes there is a life cycle issue associated with treating the gray water from independent systems not hooked up to public sewer. It was determined the new schools are being serviced by the water from METCOM. The group concluded these independent gray water systems have been around for a long time and should be maintained like any other system.

Mr. Wheeler stated Mr. King had mentioned when the new Sewage Treatment Plants in the County meet the new enhanced nutrient standards, the water coming out of the sewer treatment plants will be as clean as the water we drink. When this happens, we should make a case with MDE that we want approval to use gray water to water lawns and wash cars. This would be a major reduction of water taken out of our aquifers because external water use accounts for as much as 35 percent of total water usage.

- e. **LUGM Critical Area Update:** Ms. Veith stated at this point she should have a draft ready for internal review by July 16, 2008. It will contain text amendments and there will be public hearings.

IV) **New Business:**

- a. **Menhaden vs. Oyster Project:**

Mr. Hansen stated he has contacted Ms. Margarita Rochow, who is the contact that will present our proposal to the local area schools. Ms. Rochow thought Leonardtown High School would be an excellent candidate. Ms. Rochow would be willing to present either the proposal we already have or a revised one on August 13, 2008 or September 26, 2008. Ms. Rochow wants to attend our next meeting. Ms. Rochow and Mr. Hansen have met and discussed what to do with the the students results at the conclusion of the project. They now need to know how to proceed in dealing with them. Mr. Wheeler suggested having their presentation shown to the County Commissioners and the COE, as well as posting them on the website. Mr. Hansen stated he would like to incorporate that idea in the formal proposal.

Mr. Wheeler stated the bottom line is to see if we can determine whether the Menhaden is of value to the Chesapeake Bay. There is also a report that says the Menhaden is bad for the bay. Mr. Wheeler would like the High School students to come up with their own conclusions, and come up with a way to present this to parents, schools, Commissioners, and others.

Mr. Hansen stated he would use these points as guidelines. Mr. Wheeler asked what would be the relationship between them (students) and us. Mr. Hansen has not talked with Ms. Rochow about how long the project is intended to go on. Mr. Wheeler asked the group how they felt about the suggestions. Ms. Veith asked, what you think we can get out of it. Ms. Miller said we could get exposure to the public schools, scholarship opportunities from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which would fulfill our community outreach, which go along with our goals.

Mr. Hansen stated Ms. Rochow is thrilled about the project. Ms. Blake stated if this is the case then they need a solid commitment from us, they do all the work that we will follow through on the things we have to do to get the message out to the public. Mr. Calvano stated we are sponsoring a group of children to look into the environmental issue; and whatever the answer is, it is the answer and we put it on the website. Do not give them any boundaries as far as the format they want to use; but ask for a written report citing their sources. Mr. Wheeler stated the overriding goal is to perform a study to determine the value of the Menhaden. He asked Mr. Hansen to extend an invitation to Ms. Rochow to attend the forum next meeting. Mr. Wheeler suggested everyone develop his or her own thoughts, ideas, and questions in order to be prepared when Ms. Rochow appears.

- b. **Review of Goals & Objectives:** Mr. Wheeler would like to get the list of environmental concerns developed at our last Forum integrated into the COE's Goals and Objectives. How do we now educate the people and raise the people's awareness, better than we are now. Mr. Hartwick offered to combine his list with the current goals and objectives and have it ready for the next meeting.

Better Educating the Public on the Environment. Ms. Kelsey suggested having a series of presentations by persons speaking on different topics. It will have to be pre-scheduled. Set up a series of dates, fill in the dates with various interesting persons, or we can get movies at a modest rental and have discussions afterwards. We will have to publicize in the Enterprise and through press releases. In addition, the COE will have to identify other avenues available to make contact with the public.

The discussion continued over where we get the topics and who should do the work. Thoughts: Maybe each COE member could take a month and pick a topic; maybe it can be done quarterly; need to figure out a way to get the ordinary Joe involved; need controversial topics would get people's attention. Ms. Veith suggested looking at the COEs mission and using that as your guide.

Mr. Wheeler proposed that the group come to the next meeting with topic ideas for discussion. See if we can come up with some themes for public interest. Can have an informational sheet, hard data we can compile and present to the committee.

Environmental Summit. Ms. Veith reiterated the idea of inviting the major environmental groups in the county to a meeting and asks them what the big issues are. Other non-environmental groups such as the Home Builders Association, Realtors Association can be contacted as well.

c. Green Building Subcommittee Status: No report

- V) **Announcements:** St. Mary's County Land Use and Growth Management are holding a series of facilitated forums throughout the County to discuss the update of the Comprehensive Plan during the month of July. The dates: July 9, 10, 16, 23, and 31 and the time is 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- VI) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.