

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT (COE) MINUTES
Potomac Building
Minutes of October 3, 2012

COE Members present were Mike Thompson, Barne Wheeler, Justin Barlow, Steve Tripp, Larry Langley, Mindy Johnson and Heather Moritz. Members absent were Justin Barlow & Paul DiBenedetto. Others present were Paul Waxman, Mike Fitzpatrick and Andrew Bell.

- I) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. The normal meeting conference room was again locked ,so the smaller one in the same building was again used.
- II) **Discussion & Approval Meeting Minutes:** The August meeting minutes were approved as changed.
- III) **Continuing Business:**
- a. **Attendance.** Mr. Langley announced that Marta Kelsey had resigned.
 - b. **Web & Facebook sites:** No major discussions, except that COE members are still not using our Facebook site.
 - c. **Critical Area (CA) Regulations Update.** No update
 - d. **Green Building Incentives:** Continuing from the previous month's discussion on how to get more green building accomplished in the county. The discussion this month centered on what should be incentivized and how. The following are the essential points made:
 - 1. Mr. Wheeler said that a review of the information provided by Mr. Barlow indicated to him that most of the incentives centered around achieving the Green Building Silver, Gold or Platinum rankings for buildings construction. No attempts were made to single out specific building criteria in the incentives probably because it was much simpler to say that the credit was given for achieving one of the above categories rather than specifying items in a zoning ordinance. It was mentioned that the Green Building was only one of the several ways of rating a building's greenness.
 - 2. It was mentioned water runoff, which pollutes the bay, should be included in the incentives.
 - 3. It was cited that whatever criteria is chosen, improving existing structures should definitely be included, as there are many more of those than new construction; consequently, the environmental benefit would be greater.
 - 4. A discussion of whether individual homes should be included ensued. A comment was made that the time it takes to amortize the additional expenses green buildings might cause would be a factor.
 - 5. A suggestion was made that waiving permit fees for commercial and residential green initiatives might be a way to create positive incentives.
 - 6. A discussion of water conservation ensued, including Metcom's water metering program. The point was made that lowering water consumption lowered the amount of effluent that has to be treated or which is discharged into septic systems. This benefited the environment by lowering the amount of Nitrogen reaching the waterways. The exact status of Metcom's metering program was uncertain, but enabling all facilities to be metered would enable a pricing structure to be developed that penalized excessive water use. It was mentioned that 40-60% of the county's water use is from individual wells which are not part of the metering project. A comment was made that perhaps incentives could be created that would cause private well owners to be willing to meter their consumption and in so doing get some kind of credit for lowered water consumption. The complexities of this initiative was mentioned, including the comment that water consumption does not directly correlate to nitrogen discharge into the waterways.
 - 7. Actions to be taken prior to the next meeting:
 - i. Steve Tripp will get a sense of other organizations and activities degree of involvement in the green building incentive initiative
 - ii. Barne Wheeler will contact Metcom and ascertain the current status of their water metering program.
 - iii. Justin Barlow will find out how other MD counties fared in actually executing their incentives programs.
- IV) **New Business:** None
- V) **Announcements:**
- a. Ms. Moritz handed out documents on the new MD septic system regulations that will require enhanced nitrogen removal on all new septic system applications in the county after January 1, 2013. She indicated that there is

grant money available to assist homeowners. Details are available at the County Health Dept. She also handed out a brochure titled "From My Backyard to Our Bay" that is a resident's guide to improving our environment.

- b. Mr. Thompson stated that solar energy within SMECO's area now accounts for 1% of all energy generated. He expects this to grow in the ensuing year.

VI) Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.