



**Minutes**

**EPC ANNUAL RETREAT**

**May 6, 2023**

**Business Center Drive, Training Room A/B**

**[Zoom Meeting Recording](#)**

**8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Attendance**

<b>EPC Members (13)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Dan Beattie	P	Felipe Ip, T&ES
Eldon Boes	P	Melissa Atwood, T&ES
Alexander Clark	A	Bill Skrabak, T&ES
Benjamin Cuddy	P	Ryan Freed, OCA
Jennifer Debias	P	Julian Gonsalves, OCA
Cynthia Elliott	P	
Oleksandr Faryga	P	<b>Guest Speakers</b>
Kathie Hoekstra, Chair	P	John Morrill, FFX County
Anna Marino	P	Mike Town
Michael Olex, Vice-Chair	P	
Theresa Romanosky	P	<b>Guests</b>
Marta Schantz	P	Stephen Walz
James Vandeputte	P	Russ Bailey
		Scott Barstow
		Steve Banashek
		Stephen Koenig

**P:** Present; **PR:** Present Remotely; **A:** Absent - Unexcused; **E:** Absent – Excused; **N:** Not a Member

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

No public in attendance when meeting commenced. Introductions were delayed but completed after review of last year’s successes and challenges.

City Manager, Jim Paragon, thanked the EPC for all the valuable work and effort this commission has provided to the City. Welcomed Ryan Freed, Climate Action Officer, to the City and briefly described his experience. Budget maintains all potential funding, and last year’s funding, for the Office of Climate Action. Acknowledged all the helpful recommendations EPC provides to the City.

## 2. Review of this Past Year's Successes and Challenges

Chair Kathie Hoekstra led EPC in a review of FY23 Successes and Challenges. Discussed stormwater credits (positive and negative numbers) per pollutant, Green Building Policy and state energy requirements.

- Discussed collaborative work with Planning Commission and status of Green Building Policy update with respect to what EPC can do to help in this process.

Status of Zebra articles written in response to request at last EPC meeting. EPC articles didn't make it in current Zebra addition. Working with contacts to find out why.

- Other possibilities: EPC could create a newsletter, give an award (other than Ellen Pickering), or go to Zebra competitors to submit writeups.
- Mr. Eldon Boes knows a new writer at the Zebra that could be a contact.

## 3. Guest Speaker – John Morrill, Acting Director of Fairfax County Office of Environment and Energy Coordination

John Morrill, Fairfax County Office of Environment and Energy Coordination, presented on the County's energy and climate goals, implementation efforts, and addressing EPC ask of reducing GHG in new and existing buildings, reducing VMT community-wide, and legislative asks.

- Focused on three areas to reduce energy/emissions: Building and energy efficiency, Transportation (electrify), greening the electric supply.
- Energy and climate goals: (1) Charge-Up Fairfax; (2) Climate Champions; (3) Green Business Partners; (4) Solar Group Purchasing Programs; (5) HomeWise; (6) Green Bank.
- Reducing GHG in new and existing buildings: new construction is a small fraction of the buildings. Having building codes is important. Enforcement (ensuring it is done) is a possible missing link.
- Reducing VMT: long-term project. Look at bus routes, bike/ped improvements, etc.
- Legislative Asks: small asks. Playing defense.
- Hoping "peer-pressure" and positive attention helps get the community interested in reducing energy use/GHG.

## 4. Ryan Freed, Alexandria's Office of Climate Action FY24 Programs & Priorities

Ryan Freed, Climate Action Officer, reviewed programs and priorities being discussed for FY24.

- Increase engagement with community, related to actions in EAP and ECCAP (e.g., heat) in various communities.
- Big ideas cost more in the beginning but are low cost to maintain over the years.

- Eco-City Academy: tell ambassadors about programs available through the City. Empower residents to engage their neighborhoods. Hoping to have grant money by Summer 2024.
- Incentives: City needs to have clear authority to provide incentives, which we don't currently have for these focus areas.
  - o Energy focused – with community engagement/partnerships in various, diverse sectors in Alexandria. Offer training classes on “how to use...”
  - o Environmental Justice – Energy Burden Solar Fund (solar on affordable housing). Fleet Farming with ALIVE (give up yard to garden, volunteers grow food, harvest it, and provide to food banks),
  - o Education, Capacity Building & Outreach: train 1<sup>st</sup> responders on EV fires; ACPS sustainability competition; Meet the OCA;
    - a. Recognizing businesses that participate in sustainability. What about adding a residential component? During permitting process, similar to how signs are out saying “this company is doing the work,” maybe we can provide them a sign that says “we are building our house with the most energy efficient (item).”
  - o Grant Funding
- Updates on Green Building Policy. EPC mentioned the hope to include GBP requirements into smaller projects, or by-right facilities, versus just the large projects, like PRGS.
- OCA is requesting feedback on (1) things that may be missing in initiatives and (2) positive ideas presented as initiatives.

Announcement by Chair Hoekstra: May and June meetings will be virtual only, as allowed by the Commission rules that allow 25% to be virtual. This FY, EPC has only had one virtual meeting.

Melissa Atwood reminded EPC members and City staff to please copy her, as City staff liaison, on email communications between EPC and City staff to help facilitate where possible.

## **5. Guest speaker - Mike Town from VA League of Conservation Voters**

Mike Town provided the EPC with legislative strategies and the “inside baseball” look at challenges and outcomes from past General Assembly bills and suggested focus areas for 2024. In this job, Mike’s role in community is to make sure the door stays open for people. Work to elect a conservation majority in House and Senate.

In 2019, had conservation majority for the first time and made the most of it. Passed over 150 pieces of legislative that affect Alexandria today. Legislative wins included:

- Clean Economy Act (passed 2020): added a 100% carbon-free electricity goal by 2050; mandatory (versus voluntary) renewable (wind & solar) energy roadmap; workforce development provisions, and other provisions to tackle climate change from energy sector.
- VA joins the Regional Greenhouse Gas Commission: Northeast cap and trade program. Cap amount of carbon that can be emitted in your state. Slowly ratchet it down to lower values. As energy companies meet standards, get renewable energy credits that can be shared/sold. State brings their allotment and retires them, generating money for the state, which is split between energy efficiency programs for low-income and flood prevention.
- Advanced Clean Car Standard (2021): Each state has two options for meeting fuel economy standards – electrification or EPA fuel economy standard. Not about how many cars are on the road, but how many cars sold are electric.

During other years, play defense to keep laws from going backwards in protecting the environment.

Everything has impact. If we want to be just and equitable in how we build out, we need to recognize that it impacts somebody, somewhere.

Have been addressing electricity and transportation/transit – and now build environment is next big thing. Getting to Dillon Rule and creating opportunities for localities to determine how they want their environment to look in a more environmentally friendly way.

## 6. Budget FY25 & Legislative Asks

Office of Climate Action (OCA) is focusing on priorities for FY24 budget that will be shared with the EPC by July 1, 2023. OCA initiatives were discussed during presentation, but dollar amounts associated with each is not yet finalized. EPC will see how OCA initiatives and budget align to determine where EPC wants to go with FY25 budget.

September meeting: First order of business is determining legislative asks. EPC will spend time in May and June discussing this topic, to include what EPC did last year, what Mike Town discussed, and what EPC wants to consider for upcoming year depending on House and Senate majority.

EPC discussed pending response to EPC-PC joint letter requesting amendment of GBP be put into work plan.

EPC budget letter from last year: Reiterated use of \$1.85 million split and asked City to look at possibility of using a state statute that allows tax incentives if Alexandria requires a building code to be 30% more energy efficient than code.

Consider how FY25 budget can optimize benefits of current energy code. Doing spot checks of buildings. EAP2040 doesn't include code/code enforcement.

Invite guest speakers from: (1) Code enforcement & Permitting; (2) Ryan – provide updates on EAP2040.

Climate lens: Reviewing budget, housing reform (and reducing energy burden) with the climate lens.

Equity Index Map – tree canopy overlays added in ECCAP, but would like to see climate, energy, environmental overlays to this. Heat maps, walkability available. ESRI has data. Can it be combined for use with Equity Index Map.

- Note: Urban Forest updated response to tree planting requests last year.

Metrics for Alexandria programs (e.g., Solarize, weatherization program). Are they being used like we hope? Are people aware of them? Are there gaps?

Measuring/evaluating programs – understanding how they are going.

- Office of Climate Action provided ideas/initiatives. Next step is to get the money for initiatives. Then look at metrics for initiatives.
- Several programs were around awareness (e.g., ambassadors, awareness, recognition awards for being sustainable). Possible survey associated with programs to determine why people/companies made different decisions.
  - o Creating effective surveys is very difficult. Consider what the return on investment is to put the time into this.

ECCAP status – going to City Council May 2023.

Status of \$1.85 million budget. All budget remains except FTE salary for Climate Action Officer.

Article on what causes individuals to change their behavior. Education least effective, then feedback, commitment, appeals, financial incentives, and most effective, social comparisons.

- Can EPC give people in Alexandria an award for doing something sustainable? Think of ideas for recognizing businesses or residents. Recognition can be for little things (no plastic straws, having reusable cups in the restaurant) – and restaurant gets a sticker.
- Reaching out to civic associations, visit ALEX group, other business groups to thoughtfully encourage businesses to be more environmentally friendly.
- Shout-outs to businesses that are doing great things.
- Fun social media messages (like TES Flood messaging and Parks)

Green Banks addressed by Fairfax County – being a regional initiative. Do we want to consider joining that? Pros and Cons. Let Fairfax get through planning/implementation stage. Maybe add this to next year's ideas.

Helping residents/businesses plan for replacements/updates if something breaks. Getting information when you buy the home. Consider renters. Not as much a renter can do.

## 7. Focus areas and Educational needs/requests

### Educational program:

- with the Department of Health and Code Enforcement and Permitting
- Chair Hoekstra will share article on what causes individuals to change behavior to build on current discussions (noted above).
- What types of communication are effective?
  - o Possibly create an EPC newsletter. Need to determine tone and other elements for how newsletter would look.
- Health Department: Environmental Health, specifically indoor air quality. Also updates on EAP2040 for Environmental Health section (delayed during COVID).
- Chair Hoekstra will send Mr. Eldon Boes the Zebra articles, to share with new Zebra editor. Or consider sharing with other newspapers.
- Community Housing Partners: implements weatherization for communities; focusing on environmental justice.
- Invite restaurant owners, building owners, and landlords to see what they are doing for sustainable measures, obstacles/challenges in their way of being more environmentally friendly, what do they need, etc.

### Focus Themes:

- Communications with community
- Link: new building side of the GBP, 4 areas in the letter, and existing building enforcement/volunteer benchmarking
- Climate lens: equity, CIP budget

## 8. Adjourn

**Motion to Adjourn:** Ms. Marta Schantz; **Second:** Mr. Mike Olex; **Vote:** unanimous approval from voting members.

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

**FY2023 Attendance**

Member	Sep 19, 2022	Oct 17, 2022	Nov 21, 2022	Dec 19, 2022	Jan 10, 2023	Jan 23, 2023	Jan 30, 2023	Feb 27, 2023	March 20, 2023	Apr 17, 2023	May 06, 2023	TOTALS
Eldon Boes	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	100.0%
Kathie Hoekstra	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	100.0%
Marta Schantz	P	P	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	81.8%
Jennifer Debias	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	90.9%
Benjamin Cuddy	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	E	P	P	P	72.7%
Michael Olex	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	90.9%
Cynthia Elliott	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	A	P	P	81.8%
Oleksandr Faryga	P	P	A	P	P	P	E	E	P	P	P	72.7%
Dan Beattie	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	90.9%
Theresa Romanosky			P	P	E	P	P	P	A	P	P	77.8%
Alexander Clark	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	90.9%
James Vandeputte									P	P	P	100.0%
Anna Marino										P	P	100.0%

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