



**Minutes**

**EPC ANNUAL RETREAT**

**April 27, 2024**

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

**Zoom Meeting Recording, [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)**

**8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Attendance**

<b>EPC Members (13)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Kishla Askins	P	Felipe Ip, T&ES
Dan Beattie	P	Melissa Atwood, T&ES
Eldon Boes	A	Adriana Castañeda, T&ES
Alexander Clark	P	Ryan Freed, Climate Action
Benjamin Cuddy	P	
Jennifer Debias	P	<b>Guest Speakers</b>
Kathie Hoekstra, Chair	P	Blair St. Ledger Olson
Anna Marino	P	Bettina Bergoo (virtual)
Philip Mobilia	P	
Marta Schantz, Vice-Chair	P	<b>Guests</b>
Julia Slayden	P	Councilman Aguirre
James Vandeputte	P	Ajashu Thomas
		Yohanes Endeshaw
		Stephen Koenig
		Praveen Kathpal

**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 update from Virginia Energy. Public attendees were provided a chance to provide public comments throughout retreat, as they were present.

**2. Successes and Challenges in FY24**

Chair Kathie Hoekstra led EPC in a review of FY24 Successes and Challenges.

- Successes include the currently ongoing update to the Green Building Policy, developing the EPC’s Budget letter, and Legislative Asks letter.
- Challenges include discussion on how to be more impactful with Council and initiating engagement of EPC with schools.

- Chair Hoekstra is working with Ms. Adriana Castañeda, who is initiating annual planning of TES updates with the EPC. Ms. Castañeda is working with P&Z to see if they will adopt a similar idea. After that, possibly RPCA.

Initiated discussions on where EPC wants to spend their energy next year and metrics that would accompany each area.

### **3. Bettina Bergoo, Virginia Energy - Update from Virginia Energy on point-of-sale rebates anticipated in Jan 2025**

Presentation by Bettina Bergoo, Associate Director for Energy Efficiency and Financing at Virginia Department of Energy.

- In 2021/2022 – the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act passed. Discussion included:
  - o What these laws mean to the State Energy Office, especially related to energy efficiency and financing.
  - o The various rebate programs and grant programs for residential and commercial entities with anticipated launch dates through 2024 and early 2025.
  - o Question from EPC on how Virginia Energy may work on disseminating information with the City. Discussed encouraging new OCA staff member Yulia Fernandez Marcos to engage in the Virginia Energy working group on communicating marketing/education/outreach for consumers and contractors.
  - o New IRA funded home energy rebate programs for which Virginia Energy is getting almost \$200 million dollars for supporting residential energy efficiency upgrades.
  - o HOMES Program and HEAR Program home energy rebate program overview provided.

### **4. Blair St. Ledger Olson, Climate Cabinet lobbyist during 2024 General Assembly – Update from Richmond – what worked/ what didn't & suggested strategy for next session**

Presentation by Blair St. Ledger-Olson, Director of Advocacy and Campaigns for the Virginia League of Conservation Voters. Provided insight on how the legislative session went for energy and climate, what the dynamics were, and provided recommendations on how to move forward with new legislature. These discussions included:

- All the changes or “new,” including the environmental community, legislature, and leadership. New delegate members can become champions for environmental laws, but it will take time and education.

- How environmental community took a position on more bills this year than in 2020. Bills covered water, land conservation, land use and transportation, and energy.
- Brief overview of how a bill becomes a law.
- Overview of session dynamics, including discussion about labor partners (if labor was against your bill, the bill generally didn't make it this session), conflicting priorities to bills, data centers and SMR. Find ways to marry labor and the environment to get bills passed. Emphasized the importance of getting back in RGGI, in the budget, not as a bargaining chip.

**5. Ryan Freed - Update from OCA – specifics on rest of FY24 and action items for FY25**

Ryan Freed, Climate Action Officer, provided an update on what the Office of Climate Action accomplished the last year and what they hope to accomplish in 2025. Some initiatives/information was focused on:

- Principles of how OCA operates.
- Identifying accomplishments, including the Green Business Recognition Program, launching the Green Building Advisory Group to update the Green Building Policy, organizing Eco-City Festival
- FY 2025 initiatives, including education and outreach such as after-school sustainability programs and Eco-City pop-ups; developing and expanding and measuring recognition programs and solar initiatives; equity and environmental justice; and city demonstrations. Programs focused on equity and environmental justice, including sustainability incentives, Eco-City Academy, and Workforce trades-training grant exploration.

Reviewed the EAP2024 update and provided a reminder that the Office of Climate Action is intending to review and update the EAP in FY26. Chair Hoekstra mentioned how EPC should include a recommendation to update EAP in their FY26 budget letter.

Discussed how EPC and Office of Climate Action can continue collaborating and work to expand the Green Business Recognition program to include lawn and garden and/or landscaping recognition.

Raised the point that metrics to measure Office of Climate Action and Eco-City actions could connect/align with the ECCAP metrics.

**6. The City's progress, EPC's role, how to better use EPC resources to make progress, how can we better address challenges (Active discussion by all – Chair Kathie Hoekstra facilitates)**

- Building and Transportation are the main concepts to focus on next year. New Buildings: Looking at how the new Green Building Policy can address this. Discussion on how EPC can promote the approval of this update with City Council by showing support at the City Council meeting and/or getting other people to support the Green Building Policy via letter with signatures or by attending City Council meetings.

- Discussion on approval process for Green Building Policy and whether EPC should consider meeting over the summer to discuss, provide comments, write a letter of support. Expected to be in public comment period in July or August.
- Brainstormed ways for EPC to become more engaged in City-wide efforts. Determined it may be more effective to enhance advisory roles versus tabling or attending events. EPC can enhance advisory roles by evaluating and assigning EPC members to different Small Area Plans and other disciplines. Determine how to align resources for topics of interest (budget, legislative, land development, special and development projects) and how the EPC can get some time with experts in these areas.
  - Known Timelines: Legislative asks (early Fall), budget letter (end of October/early November)
  - Special Projects/Development Projects are not as consistent for timeline (e.g. Eco-City Homes recognition program development, Updated Green Building Policy effort, feedback on developments in queue with P&Z).
  - Upcoming: Eisenhower West SAP changes – EPC was encouraged to consider attending meetings and getting involved.
  - Ongoing: Regular City updates from offices across the City that touch Eco-City efforts such as T&ES, DGS, OCA, P&Z, etc.
- Create a long-range calendar of EPC tasks, events, etc to help with forward planning.

**7. How can EPC have more interaction /influence with the Mayor and Council as well as other Directorates/NOVA organizations + fellow Commissions (Active discussion by all – Vice Chair Marta Schantz facilitates)**

EPC discussed the following ideas:

- Strengthen ties to Council:
  - Invite Council members to various EPC meetings.
  - Consider matching specific EPC members as a “liaison” to City Council members for a 1-1 person for outreach, questions, etc.
  - Encourage Council to ask staff “what did EPC have to say about this?” for relevant docket items
- Use the Eco-City Alexandria Environmental Action Plan Steering Committee platform. Committee includes two City Council members and was established to help implement the EAP when first approved. Possibly use this idea/committee to meet bi-annually and discuss environmental policy.
  - Precedent is set. There are several committees like this.
  - Steering Committee meetings, such as this, will be summarized as oral reports that are provided as readouts to City Council.
  - Letters of Support/Recommendation written by EPC are useful and taken seriously by City Council when considering the topic at hand.

- Collaborating with other Commissions. If you get a request to collaborate, bring it to the meetings to discuss as a full EPC commission.
  - o Considered the idea of a list-serve of Commission Chairs to better communicate/coordinate across groups, share ideas, rally support, organize budget letters, legislative asks, etc.
- EPC can consider changes to the ordinance and EPC charter that include:
  - o Adding climate change in both (currently not in the ordinance)
  - o Adding information about how other Commissions (e.g., Waterfront, Transportation, Planning Commission) would reach out to EPC when they hear of plans that include an environmental component.
- Ms. Jennifer Debias will look into whether other Commissions have social media accounts that the EPC can use as a tie-in to collaboration.
- Consider asking Sarah Taylor to come back during June meetings to provide an update on what happened since legislative asks were provided in November.
- Other groups the EPC should be engaged with:
  - o Learn from other Cities/Counties
  - o Coalitions that are focused on environmental efforts.

## **8. Focus areas, Future Discussion Topics & Educational Needs/Requests**

### Educational programs & Joint Meetings:

- Discussion with ARHA
- More information about the City's Recycling Program & where different recycled materials go.
- Joint meeting with Transportation Commission
- Joint meeting with Planning Commission

### Possible discussions at future meetings:

- Equity team to come talk about integration of DEI across different programs with environmental justice.
- Department of IT to come talk about a new "city services app" for transportation, health services, Wi-Fi, etc.

## **9. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

## FY24 Attendance

Member	Sept 18, 2023	Oct 16, 2023	Nov 11, 2023	Dec 11, 2023	Jan 22, 2024 <small>(virtual only)</small>	Feb 26, 2024 <small>(virtual only)</small>	Mar 18, 2024	Apr 15, 2024	Apr 27, 2024 <small>(Retreat)</small>	May 20, 2024	Jun 17, 2024	TOTALS
Kishla Askins						P	P	P	P			100%
Dan Beattie	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			100%
Eldon Boes	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			100%
Alexander Clark	P	P	P	P	E	P	A	P	P			89%
Benjamin Cuddy	P	P	P	E	P	P	E	P	P			100%
Jennifer Debias	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			100%
Cynthia Elliott	P											
Oleksandr Faryga	A	E										
Kathie Hoekstra	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			100%
Anna Marino	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P			89%
Philip Mobilia		P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			100%
Michael Olex	P	E	P	P	P							100%
Theresa Romanosky	P	P	E	P	P	P	E					100%
Marta Schantz	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P			100%
Julia Slayden					P	P	P	P	P			100%
James Vandeputte	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			100%

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