



Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission



Report for Fiscal Year 2007 –
(July , 2006 – June 30, 2007)

1. Introduction

The Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) was established under Chapter 4, Article M, of the City Code to “advise and make recommendations to the City Council and, where appropriate, to the Planning Commission and City Manager.” This report provides a summary of EPC’s activities during Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07). This report also includes descriptive information on the EPC.

2. Who We Are

In April 1970, millions of Americans participated in the first Earth Day. The outpouring of support for the idea of preserving and improving the natural environment led directly to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and many local environmental agencies.

The Alexandria City Council established the EPC in 1970 to advise and make recommendations to the City Council and City Manager, where appropriate, on matters relating to the following:

- Clean air
- Land use
- Noise pollution and abatement
- Pesticides, herbicides and contaminants
- Solid waste
- Water quality and supply
- Other matters referred to the EPC by the City and citizens
- Other topics relating to the conservation and protection of Alexandria’s environment

The EPC consists of 13 members, including five members from the field of environmental sciences, five citizen-at-large members, one member from the field of urban planning, one student attending high school in the City of Alexandria and one member with experience in Federal or state environmental statutes, regulations, and procedures. The Commission is supported by the City of Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Division of Environmental Quality.

3. EPC Priorities for FY07

The primary focus of the EPC during the 2007 fiscal year was the launch of work on an “Eco-City Charter” and “Environmental Action Plan” for the City. These initiatives were born in a memo from Council Members Krupicka and Pepper to the City Manager on September 7, 2006. See Section Five below for more detail.

Other priorities included staying informed on the City’s relationships with the Mirant Power Facility and the Virginia Paving Company; creating a well-attended and successful Earth Day; and, supporting the City’s Environmental Health Assessment.

4. Membership, Leadership, and Interaction with other Commissions

After a year of considerable transition in 2006, the EPC found some consistent membership and leadership in 2007. Danielle Fidler continued on as Chair of the Commission throughout the fiscal year.

During FY07, the EPC worked with other city commissions and groups to address water quality, energy, air quality, green building, transportation and open space issues facing the City, and to increase the visibility and importance of environmental issues to city residents. The EPC was represented on the following city commissions and working groups:

- Open Space Committee: Sarah Sturtevant
- Mirant Community Monitoring Group: Jane Casteline and Danielle Fidler
- Urban Forestry Steering Committee: Patrick Hagan
- Earth Day Committee: Joy Pochatila, Chair

5. Environmental Action Plan

In February, 2007, EPC work on the City's Environmental Action Plan began in earnest. The EPC divided itself into several two person subcommittees, each designated to explore a particular environmental issue facing the city. Assignments included:

- Solid Waste Management
- Energy
- Green Building
- Air Quality
- Transportation
- Water Quality
- Land Use/Open Space
- Climate Change (later included under Cross Cutting Issues)
- Health (later included under Cross Cutting Issues)
- Regional Cooperation (later included under Cross Cutting Issues)

In subsequent months, each subcommittee met with students from Virginia Tech who performed nuts and bolts research on the City's current Environmental Practices and on Best Environmental Practices around the country and world. EPC finished the year with plans for further refining their understanding of the issues and drafting environmental goals and proposals in FY 2008.

6. Air Quality Issues

Throughout the year, the EPC kept close watch on the events unfolding between the City and the Mirant Power Facility and between the City and the Virginia Paving Company.

Mirant:

City staff provided frequent updates on activities related to the Mirant power plant. Jane Casteline and Danielle Fidler represented EPC on the Mirant Community Monitoring Group. Of particular concern was the fact that by January 2007, Particulate analysis was showing that high levels of fine particulate matter were found in the air near Mirant and, a month later, the first monitored SO₂ exceedance of federal air quality standards (NAAQS) had occurred while Mirant was running under Department of Energy emergency order. Since June 1, 2007, Mirant PRGS operates under a SO₂ state operating permit that limits its SO₂ emissions to 3,813 tpy and that stipulates a three-boiler operation at this facility in order to protect the NAAQS. EPC will continue to hear city staff updates on the Mirant situation and take appropriate action when deemed necessary.

Virginia Paving:

IN FY 2007, EPC was also briefed on the status of the Virginia Paving application for a new special use permit and residents' concerns regarding the permit. A new permit was approved by City Council near the end of calendar 2006.

7. Alexandria Community Environmental Health Assessment

On April 16, the EPC heard a report from Bob Custard, the City's Division Chief of Environmental Health. The Community Environmental Health Assessment reported on the primary environmental health issues facing the city's residents, chief among them indoor air quality. EPC supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Assessment.

In a memo to Dr. Konigsberg, head of the Alexandria Health Department, the EPC agreed with "the Assessment's general ranking of environmental health issues of concern, especially with regard to the pressing needs associated with indoor and outdoor air quality." Furthermore, the EPC strongly recommended "the establishment of an environmental health educator as outlined in Goal #1 [of the Community Health Assessment], and recommends that this person work on all environmental health issues in the city and provide coordination between the various city agencies working on environmental health issues." The EPC felt that this was perhaps the most important goal of the Assessment.

The EPC also agreed "that an action plan along the lines of that recommended in the Assessment be developed and recommends that an annual environmental health report for the City be developed that will measure progress towards reaching the goals to be set forth in the action plan." In the memo, EPC also pointed out the components of the Health Assessment action plan that would likely be covered in the EPC's upcoming Environmental Action Plan – namely portions of the sections on the Built Environment/Healthy Lifestyles, Chemicals & Toxics, Outdoor Air Quality, Solid Waste, and Surface Water Quality. EPC suggested that "Council create an environmental health action plan that will not be duplicative of these efforts."

8. Earth Day

Alexandria Earth Day 2007 was celebrated at Ben Brenman Park on April 21st from 9 AM to 12 PM. Nearly 400 people attended the celebration, including Congressman Jim Moran, Mayor Euille, and City Council Members Rob Krupicka, Tim Lovain, Andrew MacDonald, Del Pepper, and Paul Smedberg. Two dozen exhibitors hosted various educational activities including composting demonstrations, an insect safari, and "know your watershed" exercises. Other events included an industrial paper shredding machine, a watershed clean-up of Holmes Run and Cameron Run, a performance by Blue Sky Puppets, and a live band. Alexandria Arbor Day was also celebrated in conjunction with Earth Day and the City Arborist Office sponsored the first annual tree sale. The Earth Day Committee suggests the following changes for the 2008 event: 1) extend end time from 12 PM to 2 or 3 PM; 2) plan and promote a zero-waste Earth Day event; and 3) provide more food vendor choices.

9. FY 2007 Environmental Policy Commission Membership

Danielle Fidler (Chair)	<u>Thomas Hewson¹ (Vice-Chair)</u>
<u>Carol Braegelmann, beginning 2/15/2007</u>	Jerry Casagrande, beginning 6/26/2007
<u>Jane Casteline¹</u>	<u>Joshua Dickinson¹</u>
<u>Lisa Edouard¹</u>	Patrick Hagan
Joy Pochatila	Lucy Shapiro
Sarah Sturtevant	

¹Membership expired during FY2007.