



ALEXANDRIA

Environmental Policy Commission

Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Report



Alexandria Earth Day 2011 – Trash to Fashion Show

OCTOBER 2011

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 2011 (FY11), which were primarily focused on implementation of the *Environmental Action Plan 2030* and the development of the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan (ECAP). This report also describes EPC activities outside of the Eco-City effort, including service on several additional commissions and hosting the City’s annual Earth Day festival.

2. Who We Are

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, and one member with experience in Federal or state environmental statutes/regulations. This year, the additional position previously held by a high school student was converted to a position to be held by a representative from the Alexandria business community. The Commission is supported by the City of Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Office of Environmental Quality.

The table below identifies the Alexandrians who served on the EPC during FY11.

Jennifer Hovis (<i>Chair</i>)	Danielle Fidler
Jessica Bayliss Brown ¹ (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Geoffrey Goode ²
Rebecca Jablon (<i>Secretary</i>)	Patrick Hagan
Peter Pennington (<i>Earth Day Chair</i>)	Laura Medhurst
Scott Barstow	Kurt Moser
Patrick Brennan ¹	Matt Voorhees ¹
Kristopher Croghan	Phil Voorhees

¹Membership expired during FY2011.

²Membership began during FY2011.

3. Eco-City Alexandria

The EPC maintained focus on outreach and implementation of the Eco-City *Environmental Action Plan 2030* (EAP) in FY11. The EAP was formally adopted by City Council in June 2009, and it outlines the goals and activities that will help the City and its residents achieve the vision outlined in the Eco-City Charter. The charter, which was the first of its kind in the region, outlines the City's guiding principles and vision for a sustainable Alexandria.

The EAP establishes general policy goals, identifies specific action steps, sets tentative timelines and develops measures of success. These goals serve as the bridge between the Charter's sustainability vision/principles and the specific actions (e.g., policies, programs and projects) that may be undertaken by the City, EPC, and the community in the coming years. The plan contains 48 goals, 50 preliminary targets and 353 actions spread across the ten principles initially identified in the charter.

- Land Use & Open Space
- Water Resources
- Air Quality
- Transportation
- Global Climate Change and other Emerging Threats
- Building Green
- Solid Waste
- Environment & Health
- Energy
- Implementation

While the EPC conducted a broad range of activities in support of all ten Charter principles in FY11, the highest priority was the development of the *Energy and Climate Change Action Plan*.

Energy & Climate Change Action Plan

City staff initiated development of the *Energy and Climate Change Action Plan* (ECAP) in early FY11, building upon commitments in the *Eco-City Charter* and *Environmental Action Plan 2030*, as well as important findings in the City's 2009 emissions inventory. The ECAP builds on the EAP by identifying discrete actions that will help Alexandria lead the growth of a new green economy, address the challenges of climate change, and maintain our high quality of life while decreasing the city's carbon and ecological footprints. The ECAP also proposes key steps in adaptation planning to limit the damages we face from climate change and reduce the long-term costs of responding to climate-related impacts.

The City's 2009 baseline emissions inventory clearly demonstrate that 97% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the city are the result of individual and community actions, rather than City government operations. Therefore, the EPC felt it was vital to reach out to the community directly to educate citizens on the basics of climate change science and engage them in the development of the ECAP. To do this, the EPC hosted two highly successful events in March 2011.

The first event was primarily educational, and included presentations by two highly regarded climate change experts. The first speaker was Mr. Larry Schweiger, the President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, who gave an impassioned speech about the negative impacts of climate change on wildlife and our natural surroundings. The second speaker was Dr. Marcus Sarofim, an environmental scientist with the United States Environmental Protection Agency,

who successfully demystified some of the complex data and models addressing projected climate change impacts. The second event was a half-day Open House, where City staff presented an overview of the ECAP and the EPC facilitated roundtable discussions about the role citizens and City government play in energy and climate change. The Open House concluded with a tour of the sustainability features of Polk Elementary School.

Participants at both events overwhelmingly voiced support for the Eco-City initiative and adoption of the ECAP. The draft plan was made available for public comment, and was adopted by City Council in its final form in May 2011.

Community Outreach Activities

The EPC has continued to participate in a variety of community events in order to conduct outreach on the Eco-City Alexandria and the potential role for citizens in carrying out the EAP. For example, EPC members staffed a table at Del Ray First Thursdays, the City's annual birthday celebration, and various farmers markets around the city. Citizens continue to express a lot of interest in bike maps and easy reference materials showing what can be recycled in the new, larger recycling bins. EPC members also helped assemble and install free lights for cyclists along the Four Mile Run trail to improve safety after Daylight Savings Time last Fall.

EPC members also participated in several City staff outreach efforts including the following:

- Rain barrels workshops and displays
- Alexandria Country Day School meetings
- Stream cleanups (Potomac River, Holmes Run)
- Stormwater quality BMP Lectures

Green Business

In FY11, a subgroup of EPC members initiated research on various green business certification programs that are already in use around the country. Over the course of the year, the EPC worked with the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association (ACVA), the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce to develop a new green business recognition program that will officially launch on September 30, 2011.

The subgroup also worked closely with the Alexandria Food Safety Advisory Council and the Health Department to sponsor an *Eco-Friendly Restaurant Expo* and the inaugural *Eco-Friendly Restaurant Award* in September 2010. The EPC also co-hosted a Business After Hours event with the Chamber of Commerce at the Hotel Monaco in April 2011. The event provided networking opportunities for members of the business community, with a particular focus on sustainability ideas.

4. Other Issues

City Staff provided continuous updates to the EPC on other developments in the City, such as the settlement and subsequent engineering studies for the GenOn (formerly Mirant) Potomac River Generating Station, roll out of new, larger recycling containers for City residents, Four Mile Run restoration design plans, and the revised floodplain maps. As always, the EPC welcomed the public to attend meetings and present issues of concern to the commission. In FY11, citizens presented three particular issues to the EPC: the development of a new

grassroots organization, Go Green! Alexandria, a request to revise City ordinances to allow for backyard chickens, and a request to improve incentives for residential solar power installation.

During FY11, the EPC worked with several other City commissions and groups to address water quality, energy, air quality, green building, transportation, and open space issues facing the City. Members of the EPC continued to serve in an official capacity on the following City commissions and working groups:

- Mirant Community Monitoring Group
- Earth Day Planning Committee
- Waterfront Committee
- Transportation Commission
- Stormwater Working Group
- ACPS Superintendent's Environmental Advisory Committee
- Four Mile Run Joint Task Force
- Ad Hoc Fort Ward Stakeholder Advisory Group

In addition to formal representation in the above organizations, EPC members routinely participated in meetings with respect to the following groups or City projects:

- BRAC Advisory Group
- Wayfinding Stakeholders Advisory Group
- Environmental Coordination Group
- Beauregard Small Area Plan Committee
- Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria
- Green Building Working Group

Over the course of the year, the EPC participated in City-facilitated discussions on the aging population and Quality of Life Indicators, and voiced support to City Council on a measure to post signs at bus stops and playgrounds to discourage smoking. The EPC also sent official correspondence to City Council this year with respect to budget priorities, the importance of considering sustainability in the qualifications and job description for the new City Manager, and to request support for the eCAP.

5. Alexandria Earth Day

Alexandria Earth Day 2011 was celebrated at Ben Brenman Park on April 30th. More than 2300 people participated in this year's event! City departments, local businesses and non-profit organizations provided educational displays and hands-on activities for all ages. Exhibitors were required to sign a zero-waste contract in order to participate in the event in an effort to recycle or compost all waste materials. The City Arborist also held another successful tree sale as part of this year's event.

An exciting new aspect to this year's event was Alexandria's first ever "Trashion Fashion" show. Students were invited to create outfits out of recycled materials, and then strut their stuff on the runway at Earth Day. More than 350 students from 14 schools participated in the event, by designing, constructing and/or modeling outfits made out of plastic bottles, food containers, plastic bags, newspaper and other materials. The judges awarded Lyles Crouch, James Polk,

William Ramsey and TC Williams Schools with \$100 each, which can be spent on environmental projects at the school. A few exhibitors also enjoyed participating in the fashion show.

Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award

In FY09, the EPC partnered with the Alexandria Sanitation Authority (ASA) to establish the Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award. This is the first award program in Alexandria to formally recognize outstanding citizens who have demonstrated their commitment to protecting the natural environment and promoting sustainability. In addition to citizens, an Alexandria group, club, organization or corporate neighbor were also eligible to be nominated. The award is named in honor of Frances Ellen Pickering's lifelong dedication to preservation and conservation in the City of Alexandria.

As part of the annual Earth Day celebration, the EPC and ASA announced the selection of Samantha Ahdoot, M.D. as the recipient of the third annual award. Dr. Samantha Ahdoot is a pediatrician with Pediatric Associates of Alexandria, a former member of the Environmental Policy Commission, and a current member of the Early Childhood Commission. Dr. Ahdoot's accomplishments over the last several years include creating and chairing the Green Team at Maury Elementary, creating the Maury Energy Star Program, and organizing a student presentation on this program to the Alexandria School Board in 2008. Most recently, Dr. Ahdoot initiated and is co-director of the George Washington Community Garden, which has grown into a group of approximately 25 committed Del Ray and Rosemont citizens who have created a 4,000 square foot organic fruit and vegetable garden on the grounds of George Washington Middle School. A tree was planted in honor of Dr. Ahdoot during the Alexandria Earth Day festival.

6. FY2012 EPC Priorities

The EPC held its annual retreat in September 2011 in order to review recent progress and discuss priorities for the upcoming year. This year, additional retreat participants included Mayor Euille, Vice Mayor Donley and Councilwoman Pepper, as well as the Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission. The broad participation resulted in valuable discussions of EPC priorities in light of the City's current fiscal constraints.

While the EPC is still developing a formal plan for carrying out its FY12 priorities, initial discussions focused around the following key issues:

- Clearly communicate to Council and the incoming City Manager the need for a full time sustainability coordinator on staff,
- Improve coordination with other commissions, particularly the Park and Recreation Commission and the Transportation Commission,
- Accentuate outreach efforts to the community and increase the emphasis on making Eco-City more visible to residents and visitors alike, and
- Create and refine the Alexandria Green Business recognition program mentioned above.

