



## **Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report**

**July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013**



**ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 7, 2013**

## 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, when appropriate, to the Planning Commission and City Manager.” This report provides a summary of EPC activities during Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13).

## 2. Who We Are

The Alexandria City Council established the EPC in 1970 to advise and make recommendations to the City Council and, where appropriate, to the Planning Commission and City Manager, 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; and
- 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 member with experience in Federal or state environmental statues/regulations, and one representative from the Alexandria business community. The EPC may work with other organizations furthering the environmental aims of the City.

The table below identifies the Alexandrians who served on the EPC during FY13.

Scott Barstow ( <i>Chair</i> )	Kurt Moser
James Kapsis ( <i>Vice Chair</i> ) <sup>2</sup>	Peter Pennington <sup>1</sup>
Patrick Holman ( <i>Secretary</i> ) <sup>2</sup>	Josh Sawislak
Chinling Chen <sup>1</sup>	Ryan Sloan
Danielle Fidler <sup>1</sup>	Monica Starnes <sup>2</sup>
Samuel Gaugush <sup>2</sup>	Steve Walz
Geoffrey Goode	Ryan Wojtanowski <sup>2</sup>
Rebecca Jablon	

<sup>1</sup>Membership expired during FY13.

<sup>2</sup>Membership began during FY13.

The EPC is very grateful for the help and assistance given by past members, including Jennifer Hovis who once again chaired the FY13 Earth Day festival.

The EPC meets twice a month, a working meeting and a business meeting. Other meetings may be called by the Chair as necessary. All meetings are open to the public and notification of

meetings is given in due time through the normal City routines. Minutes of these meetings may be found on the EPC City website: <http://alexandriava.gov/EnvironmentalPolicyCommission>

Throughout the year, the EPC has been well served by the staff of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Office of Environmental Quality. The EPC wishes to express its gratitude for the time, expertise and devotion to duty shown by T&ES leadership and staff.

### **3. FY13 EPC Priorities**

On September 8, 2012, the EPC held its annual retreat to review past progress and set goals for the coming twelve months. It was agreed that the EPC would:

- Encourage the City Council to establish and fund a sustainability coordinator/public education and outreach position, as described in the Environmental Action Plan 2030 (EAP), as adopted by Council on June 23, 2009, and the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan (eCAP).
- Promote aggressive business support of the Eco-City Alexandria concept with the business community as a way to increase leisure and business visitors to the city, including advancing the Green Business Recognition Program.
- Continue to work with the City to produce an educational Earth Day festival with a primary objective of educating children.
- Explore and support actions and concepts that drive individual citizens to reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas generation, including investigating Opower and similar initiatives.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure
- Remain available at any time to advise the City Council on environmental issues, and attend public functions and address groupings (such as business and area associations) to advise on environmental issues.
- Improve its modes of communication so as to achieve the above.

The EPC's annual retreat to review recent progress and discuss priorities for FY14 was held on September 7, 2013.

### **4. FY13 EPC Activities**

City staff provided continuous updates to the EPC and sought EPC input on other developments in the City, such as:

- Progress reports on storm water and combined sanitary sewer management;
- Progress reports on the implementation of the EAP and Eco-City concept;
- Climate change adaption actions;
- Annual Green Building Report;
- Urban Forestry Master Plan;
- Beauregard Small Area Plan;
- Waterfront Small Area Plan;
- LOCAL MOTION Commuter Challenge;
- Bikeshare developments;
- Drinking water supply;

- Recycling; and
- Rapid transit.

The EPC met with the newly elected City Council and local State Representative to discuss Alexandria’s environmental progress and goals moving forward.

The EPC welcomed the public to attend meetings and present issues of concern to the commission.

The EPC wrote to the City Council, or to other City commissions, on a number of issues, including:

- FY14 City Budget;
- Public Health Advisory Commission Action Plan on Respiratory Health;
- Public versus Private Use of Wales Alley;
- Support of Opower for Encouraging Citizen-Driven Energy Efficiency; and
- Dyke Marsh Remediation Plan.

During FY13, 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:

- Beauregard Re-Zoning Advisory Committee
- Mirant Community Monitoring Group (recast as the Potomac River Generating Station Monitoring Group in December 2012);
- Earth Day Planning Committee;
- Waterfront Commission;
- Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group;
- Transportation Commission;
- Four Mile Run Joint Task Force; and
- Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group.

In addition, EPC members attended planning meetings, Alexandria City Public School meetings and other commission meetings, such as the Affordable Housing Advisory Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission, in an informal capacity.

#### Site Visits

The EPC toured, and discussed future plans with, Alexandria Renew Enterprises (AlexRenew), including Virginia’s State-of-the-Art Nitrogen Upgrade Program (SANUP) and how AlexRenew is meeting SANUP’s requirements and mandates.

#### 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. The EPC continued to support the City’s Green Building Workshop program and has assisted with bicycle and pedestrian count surveys. In November 2012, the EPC gave its first neighborhood association presentation to the Lynnhaven Citizen’s Association, and plans to continue to explore opportunities to engage these community groups.

During FY13, the EPC continued to work with the Beatley Library on the development of a Film Festival, with the possibility of an Eco-City film night. There are hopes to tie in the festival with the overall Alexandria Film Festival and with future Earth Day celebrations.

EPC's public website (<http://alexandriava.gov/EnvironmentalPolicyCommission>) provides an up-to-date account of EPC's activities, including meeting agendas and minutes, annual reports, and information on Eco-City Alexandria and the city's Environmental Action Plan 2030. In addition, the EPC maintains its own web-based Eco-City forum ([www.alexpc.com](http://www.alexpc.com)) and annually publishes a report on Eco-City progress and key environmental indicators

#### Green Business Recognition Program

In FY12, a subgroup of EPC members worked with the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association (ACVA) to develop a new green business recognition program (<http://www.visitalexandriava.com/alexandriagreenbusiness/>). The program is recognized under ACVA and supported by Eco-City Alexandria. Businesses located within the city and who are certified through a third-party program can apply to the ACVA. The ACVA, with assistance from the EPC, verifies that the third-party program is legitimate. Once verified, the business will be advertised on the ACVA's website as "green". EPC continues to work with the ACVA to encourage participation in this program.

#### Alexandria Earth Day

Alexandria Earth Day 2013 was celebrated at Ben Brenman Park on April 20, 2013. The theme for the 2013 Earth Day was "Water: Every Drop Counts." Hosted by the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES), Office of Environmental Quality, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and EPC, the event included educational exhibits and demonstrations, hands-on activities for children, an annual tree sale, and the 3rd annual Trashion Fashion Show, where Alexandria City Public School students showcased 'upcycling' through fashion, art, or song. The nearly 50 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.

#### Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award

In FY09, the EPC partnered with the Alexandria Sanitation Authority (now AlexRenew) 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 AlexRenew announced the selection of Danielle Fidler as the recipient of the fifth annual award. A former chair and long-time member of the EPC, Ms. Fidler was instrumental in the development and adoption of the landmark Eco-City Alexandria Charter and Environmental Action Plan.

#### Eco-City Alexandria

The Eco-City *Environmental Action Plan 2030* (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 goals, preliminary targets and 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 and Health;
- Energy; and
- Implementation.

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 draft plan was made available for public comment, and was adopted by City Council in its final form in May 2011.

Continued outreach and focus on the EAP and eCAP has been a priority to the EPC during FY13. City staff developed key environmental indicators on Eco-City progress and a format to show how the indicators are progressing each year. The EPC worked with City staff to refine the development and presentation of these progress indicators. These indicators are enclosed as Attachment 1.

In June 2013, current and former EPC members met with Sir Robert Harvey, former Mayor of Waitakere, New Zealand and driving force behind the Eco-City concept, in a public forum hosted by Virginia Tech's Metropolitan Institute. At this forum, participants discussed progress made to-date against the goals of Eco-City Alexandria and the EAP, and highlighted the need for continued efforts to expand implementation activities and actively involve citizens. Subsequent to this event, the EPC devoted an entire working session to discussing strategies for achieving broader participation in Eco-City Alexandria in the near future.

## **5. FY14 EPC Priorities**

The EPC held its annual retreat in September 7, 2013 to determine its priorities for the new fiscal year.

## **6. Recruitment Plans**

During FY13, there were 3 member resignations and 5 new appointments. The current membership consists of 12 members with one vacant position is being advertised and expected to be filled in September 2013. Since there is a good base of environmental professionals living in the City, the commission keeps track of a list of potential members and encourages these individuals to participate in EPC meetings and activities while waiting for vacant positions.

## **7. Leadership Plans**

The commission elects leadership positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Earth Day Chair) on an annual basis and elections normally take place during the end of the fiscal year. Since environmental impacts and issues permeate every facet of our economy and society, EPC covers an unusually broad range of issues, including solid waste and wastewater management; business outreach; transportation; small area plans and neighborhood development; parks, open space, and tree cover; and energy use and the built environment. Consequently, members of EPC (aside from those in elected leadership positions) necessarily take on leadership responsibilities in covering specific issues, and serving as liaison for us with other advisory groups and organizations. EPC is also unusual among City advisory commissions in holding biweekly meetings, which fosters a strong level of familiarity and coordination between members. In short, leadership, leadership planning, and leadership discussions occur on a regular basis in EPC's work. This enables seamless, organic leadership transitions for the elected positions each year.