



Environmental Policy Commission

Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report

Eco-CITY ALEXANDRIA
environment | economy | community



DECEMBER 2008

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 2008 (FY08). This report also includes descriptive information on the EPC.

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, 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), Office of Environmental Quality.

The table below identifies the Alexandrians who served on the EPC during FY08.

Danielle Fidler (<i>Chair</i>)	Jerry Casagrande ¹ (<i>Vice-Chair</i>)
Carol Braegelmann	Patrick Hagan
Joy Pochatila (<i>Earth Day Chair</i>)	Lucy Shapiro ^{1,2}
Sarah Sturtevant ¹ (<i>Secretary</i>)	Peter Pennington ²
Christopher Osburn ^{1,2}	Jennifer Hovis ²
David Evans ²	David Boxer ²
Kurt Moser ²	Keith Freihofer ²

¹Membership expired during FY2008.

²Membership began during FY2008.

3. EPC Priorities for FY08

The primary focus of the EPC during this fiscal year was the development of the *Eco-City Charter* for the City. The Eco-City initiative was born in a memo from Councilman Krupicka and Vice Mayor Pepper to the City Manager in September, 2006. The Eco-City effort is a partnership between the City and the Virginia Tech Urban Affairs and Planning Program.

The initial phase of the Eco-City effort included the development of a "Greenventory" of existing City programs and policies that impact or address environmental sustainability, as well as a compendium of model practices from around the world. Each of these products were finalized in the fall of 2007, and helped direct EPC efforts on the development of the Eco-City Charter.

Eco-City Charter

In order to initiate the development of the charter, monthly work sessions through the latter part of 2007 were dedicated to focused discussion of select subject areas to be addressed in the final document. EPC members were assigned to various subgroups to tackle each of the following topics:

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

Each subgroup worked with Virginia Tech graduate students and appropriate City staff to review the Greenventory, best practices, and other resources to draft principles of environmental sustainability for their specific subject area. The draft Eco-City Charter was released for public comment at the City's annual Earth Day event on April 26, 2008.

The public submitted comments on the charter at EPC monthly meetings and the Eco-City Summit. After reviewing, analyzing, and incorporating the public's comments, the City Council approved the final Charter, the first of its kind in the region, at a public hearing on June 14, 2008. The final charter outlines the City's guiding principles and vision for a sustainable Alexandria.

Eco-City Café & Summit

In FY08, EPC, the City, and Virginia Tech hosted two highly successful community events in order to obtain input and feedback on environmental issues facing Alexandria. On March 8, 2008, the first-ever *Eco-City Café* was held at George Washington Middle School. This half day event included a series of roundtable discussions among diverse community stakeholders. The ideas and suggestions developed during the Café helped shaped the draft Eco-City Charter.

Following release of the draft charter, an *Eco-City Summit* was held at T.C. Williams High School (May 10, 2008). This daylong event included similar roundtable discussions, with a focus on providing direct feedback on the draft charter. Innovative polling technology allowed summit sponsors to provide instantaneous analysis of the participants' feedback on environmental priorities and the principles contained in the draft charter. The keynote speaker for the event was Mayor Bob Harvey of Waitakere, New Zealand.

Each event attracted more than 120 citizens, members of City Council, and City staff who displayed and distributed information on key City programs. In addition to the assistance provided by VA Tech, several staff from the design firm EDAW volunteered at these events.

Although the EPC was impressed by the number of people who attended the Eco City Summit and the enthusiasm and knowledge they displayed, the Commission was disappointed it did not attract a more diverse audience. More than three-quarters of participants classified themselves as White/Caucasian and 92% had a college or graduate degree. EPC recognizes this problem and members have begun to study this issue in order to develop a more comprehensive outreach plan for all Eco-City efforts.

Environmental Action Plan

The Environmental Action Plan serves as the road map for City leaders, staff, and citizens to implement the Eco-City Charter. The Action Plan 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.

In FY08, the EPC initiated work on the development of Phase I of the Action Plan, which will include goals and action steps that are either underway, or can be implemented in the short term (FY2009-FY2011). This will be followed by a Phase II Action Plan, which will address long term actions. The EPC will continue to work with City staff and Virginia Tech in FY09 to complete all phases of the Environmental Action Plan.

4. Other Issues

City Staff provided continuous updates to the EPC on other developments in the City, such as the revised operating permits for the Mirant and Virginia Paving facilities and the expansion of the Alexandria Sewage Authority treatment plant. During FY08, 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.

The EPC was formally represented on the following City commissions and working groups:

- Open Space Advisory Group
- Mirant Community Monitoring Group
- Urban Forestry Steering Committee
- Earth Day Planning Committee
- Waterfront Committee
- Transportation Commission

The Office of Environmental Quality's annual Environmental Progress Report for FY 2008 providing an update on water quality, air quality, and contaminated land/brownfields is also included as an attachment to this report.

5. Earth Day

Alexandria Earth Day 2008 was celebrated at Ben Brenman Park on April 26th. This year's theme was "What's YOUR Footprint?" and more than 1,300 people attended! Attendees

enjoyed live musical performances and a puppet show; and the City Arborist's tree sale more than doubled the number of trees sold last year (225 trees sold). City departments provided educational displays, while local businesses and non-profit organizations participated in the first "Green Home Fair". 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 EPC's Joy Pochatila served as Chair of the 2008 Earth Day Committee.