



Environmental Policy Commission

Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report

SEPTEMBER 2009

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 2009 (FY09), which were primarily focused on the development of the *Environmental Action Plan 2030*. 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, one member with experience in Federal or state environmental statutes/regulations, and one student attending high school in the City of Alexandria. The student position was vacant during FY09. 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 FY09.

Danielle Fidler (<i>Chair</i>)	Joy Pochatila (<i>Vice Chair</i>)
Peter Pennington (<i>Earth Day Chair</i>)	Jennifer Hovis (<i>Secretary</i>)
Scott Barstow ²	Keith Freihofer
David Boxer	Patrick Hagan
Carol Braegelmann ¹	Ernie Lehmann ^{1,2}
Jessica Bayliss Brown ²	Laura Medhurst ²
David Evans ¹	Kurt Moser
	Phil Vorhees ²

¹Membership expired during FY2009.

²Membership began during FY2009.

3. Eco-City Alexandria

The primary focus of the EPC during this fiscal year was the development of the Eco-City *Environmental Action Plan 2030*, which outlines the goals and activities that will help the City and its residents achieve the vision outlined in the Eco-City Charter.

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 was complete in 2007 with 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. The next key step in the effort was the development of an Eco-City Charter, which was unanimously adopted by City Council in June 2008. The charter, which was the first of its kind in the region, outlines the City's guiding principles and vision for a sustainable Alexandria.

Phase I 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 order to initiate the development of the Environmental Action Plan (EAP), the EPC maintained the subgroups that were created during the research and drafting of the charter. Each subgroup included 3-4 EPC members and was assigned to one of the following principles outlined in the charter:

- Land Use & Open Space
- Water Resources
- Air Quality
- Transportation
- Energy
- Green Building
- Solid Waste
- Environment & Health
- Emerging Threats¹
- Implementation

In the early stage of development, the EAP was split into two phases. Phase I included goals and action steps that are either underway, or can be implemented in the short term (2009-2011). This would be followed by a Phase II Action Plan, which addresses mid- and long-term goals and actions (2012-2030).

Each subgroup worked with Virginia Tech graduate students to review the lengthy list of goals and actions suggested by the public during the development of the charter. The subgroups then met extensively with City staff to discuss activities currently underway or planned for the short term that could be included in the Phase I EAP. The draft Phase I EAP was released for

¹ This principle was subsequently renamed "Global Climate Change and Other Emerging Threats" in response to citizen requests for additional emphasis on climate change.

public comment in the fall of 2008, followed by an Open House in November at the Lee Center. The event allowed the public to discuss the proposed short-term goals and actions with EPC members and City staff, and provide feedback on priorities and potential gaps. After analyzing and incorporating the public's comments, EPC developed a final Phase I plan that consisted of 38 goals and 123 action steps to guide sustainability efforts through FY11. City Council approved the Phase I Environmental Action Plan in January 2009.

Phase II Environmental Action Plan

Upon approval of the Phase I EAP, the EPC immediately began the development of the Phase II plan that would include a comprehensive list of long term goals and actions. An Eco-City Café was held in March 2009, which provided citizens an opportunity to share their long-term vision for a sustainable Alexandria. The EPC worked closely with City staff to review the ideas generated during the café then held a weekend retreat in April in order to develop the final draft Phase II EAP. The draft Phase II EAP was the result of public comments received since the start of the Eco-City effort, as well as extensive discussions between the EPC, City departments and staff, and VA Tech. The draft Phase II plan was released to the public at the City's annual Earth Day event, on April 25, 2009.

Finally, in May 2009, the EPC convened a second Open House at the new Charles Houston Recreation Center. Unlike other events, this open house served as a "call to action" as more than 50 participants offered suggestions on how they as individuals and businesses could advance the EAP and Eco-City agenda.

The Phase II goals and actions were incorporated into the Phase I EAP; together these plans are referred to as the *Environmental Action Plan 2030*. The final EAP 2030 was unanimously approved by City Council in June 2009. The comprehensive plan contains 48 goals, 50 preliminary targets and 353 actions spread across the ten principles initially identified in the charter.

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 Mirant Potomac River Generating Station, the Norfolk Southern ethanol transloading facility, and the issuance of the final Urban Forestry Master Plan. During FY09, 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:

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

- ACPS Environmental Stewardship Group
- Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group Transportation Subcommittee
- Green Building Working Group
- Four Mile Run Joint Task Force

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

- Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group
- BRAC Advisory Group
- Wayfinding Stakeholders Advisory Group
- Alexandria Transit Company (DASH) public meetings
- Braddock East Advisory Group
- Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor plan
- Flu Advisory Group
- Eisenhower West Industrial Land Use Study
- Alexandria Commission for Employment
- Environmental Coordination Group
- Energy Conservation Group
- Environmental Health Working Group/Partnership for a Healthy Alexandria

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 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 Elizabeth Chimento and Poul Hertel as the first recipients of the new award. Ms. Chimento and Mr. Hertel, residents of the Old Town section of Alexandria, fought tirelessly to improve air quality within the city. Aside from donating much of their time, they have also spent their own money to ensure that the City and State governments had hard technical data to support their concerns relating to emissions emanating from the Mirant Potomac River Generating Station. Their work has been the catalyst that raised the awareness of this issue to City Council and eventually led the City to achieve a \$34 million dollar settlement with Mirant aimed at installing improved stack and fugitive PM2.5 controls at this plant, in addition to the \$35 million dollars Mirant recently spent on a stack merge project. A tree was planted in honor of the award recipients during Alexandria Earth Day 2009.

Eco-City Blog

In FY09, the EPC entered the blogosphere in order to promote the Eco-City effort. With the help of VA Tech graduate students, the Eco-City Alexandria blog was created at <<http://ecocityalexandria.wordpress.com/>>. The blog has provided a new method of announcing important events and sharing key products with the public. This tool is also being

used to start a dialogue with individuals near and far about the small steps everyone can take to further common sustainability efforts.

In April 2009, [Washingtonian Magazine](#) highlighted the Eco-City Alexandria blog as one of the Best Blogs in Washington. Not only does the blog promote Eco-City Alexandria, with greater support it could be the genesis of a burgeoning green network in the region.

The EPC plans to utilize the blog more frequently in the future as implementation of the EAP moves forward. The blog will be used to announce community events and to solicit volunteers for the many action steps identified in the EAP.

Additional Outreach Activities

In addition to the blog, the EPC has participated in several other events in order to conduct outreach on the Eco-City Alexandria effort. Within the City of Alexandria, EPC members have given presentations to citizen associations, met with church leaders, and participated in special events such as the Home Ownership Fair. At the Regional level, the EPC participated in the World Water Monitoring Day event held at Haines Point, in Washington, DC and staffed a table at an Earth Day celebration at the federal Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Adopt-a-Block

In FY09, the EPC reaffirmed its commitment to the City's Adopt-a-Block program. In March 2009, the commission conducted an extensive cleanup of King Street (Route 7) between Interstate 395 and Quaker Lane. Additional cleanups have continued in FY10 and will continue to be scheduled quarterly.

Tours of Local Facilities

This year the EPC had the opportunity to tour several industrial facilities in the City, in an effort to understand operations and discuss sustainability issues. This effort began in August 2008 with a tour of the Virginia Paving facility and continued into spring with tours of the Covanta energy-from-waste facility, the ASA treatment plant, and Mirant.

5. Alexandria Earth Day

Alexandria Earth Day 2009 was celebrated at Ben Brenman Park on April 25th. This year's theme was "Take the Green Route" and more than 2,100 people attended! Attendees enjoyed live music and a puppet show, while the City Arborist held another successful tree sale. 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.

In support of this year's theme, the planning committee conducted extensive outreach on the many alternative modes of transportation available to event attendees. DASH bus provided fare refunds to riders, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) provided a free bike valet, and event sponsor VPSI, Inc. provided free shuttle service from the King Street Metro station. The exhibit area also included a variety of displays promoting fuel efficient vehicles and local biking/pedestrian amenities. The EPC's Peter Pennington served as Chair of the 2009 Earth Day Committee.