

Environmental Policy Commission Minutes  
June 20, 2011 Meeting

**EPC Members in Attendance**

✓	Jennifer Hovis (Chair)	✓	Danielle Fidler	✓	Kurt Moser
✓	Jessica Bayliss Brown	✓	Patrick Hagan	✓	Peter Pennington
X	Heather Schaefer	✓	Scott Barstow	✓	Phil Voorhees
✓	Bobby Croghan	✓	Laura Medhurst	X	Geoffrey Goode
				✓	Rebecca Jablon

[✓ = In attendance X= Absent]

**City Staff**

Bill Skrabak, Khoa Tran, Bill Eger

**Begin 7:35 PM**

**Welcome and Introductions**

- Jennifer announced that Heather Schaefer has joined the EPC. Unfortunately, Heather could not make it to the meeting tonight, but we look forward to having her on the Commission.

**Public Comment**

- None

**Real Estate Tax Incentives for Solar Power Installation, Michael Gaw**

- The real estate tax incentive for solar power installation has been in the Alexandria City Code since 1978. Michael was the first person to use the credit and offered four suggestions/points of discussion:
  - o The code states: *This exemption shall be effective beginning in the next succeeding tax year, and shall be permitted for a term of not less than five years.* The City has determined that they will grant the tax exemption for a limit of five years. Michael sought to determine how that limit was determined, and feels that capping the exemption at five years limits the incentive.
    - Bill E. stated that 21 jurisdictions within Virginia have codified a solar power tax incentive ordinance; and that most, if not all, impose a five-year limit.
    - In addition, solar panel systems, like all mechanical systems, deteriorate over time. It is difficult to ensure that the home (and by extension the City) is getting the same environmental benefit over time.
    - Danielle offered to touch base with Bill E. and to give the Assistant City Attorney a call on this issue.
  - o The solar power system should be included in the real estate assessment for the property.
    - Bill E. stated that the assessment and appraisal community are still trying to catch up with the technology, and that they are looking to create a more robust dataset.
    - The current method of showing the tax abatement in the City's real estate rolls can give a false image by understating the value of the property.
  - o Clarification should be given as to whether the abatement conveys to a new owner of the property, if within the five-year limit.
    - Bill S. stated that the City will look into this issue.

- Can or should the City do more? The incentive, as is, is not enough to make solar panel installation economically feasible. Perhaps, the City could increase the number of years the exemption is permitted, or increase the amount of the exemption.
  - Khoa stated that changes are not at the discretion of the City, but at the discretion of City Council.
  - Maryland, Pennsylvania, DC and New Jersey have standard ways to incentivize solar systems. Utilities in these states and city are allowed to buy renewable energy credits (RECs).
    - Virginia does not yet have such a system in place.
- The City is in the midst of developing an incentives report that will be ready to share with the EPC in the coming months.
- The EPC will continue to look into this issue and will work with the City to do more research to develop a strategy going forward.
- The EPC thanked Michael for meeting with the EPC and offering his invaluable insight.

### **Outreach**

- The Alexandria birthday celebration is July 9<sup>th</sup>. Jennifer filled out all necessary forms. Peter announced that setup is at 3 pm and breakdown is at 6 pm. Scott volunteered to help Peter man the table.
  - Jennifer will have the table and 2 chairs for the event.
- Bobby announced that July 7<sup>th</sup> is the next First Thursday at Del Ray. Bobby will confirm the new location, which could be in front of Evening Star. Bobby and Peter will arrange further logistics.
- Scott is developing eCAP outreach presentation to neighborhood groups. He shared the draft outline with a few people within the EPC and received comments back from Pat.
  - Once the presentation is finalized, the plan will be to send out emails to the neighborhood groups to see if the EPC can get on their next meeting agenda.
  - Bill S. added that a blurb on e-news could help get the word out for these presentations.
- The City is focusing on the approximately 6 remaining green building workshops.
- Bobby attended the Green Drinks for Arlington event last week, where he spread the word as to what Alexandria is up to.
- Bobby is working with a group of EPC members on the Green Business Recognition Program as sponsored by ACVA and will be ready to discuss at the next meeting.

### **EPC Elections for FY2012**

- Elections were held for the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Earth Day Chair and EPC reps on other groups. The results are as follows:
  - Chair: Peter Pennington
  - Vice Chair: Patrick Hagan
  - Secretary: Rebecca Jablon
  - Earth Day Chair: Jennifer Hovis
  - Potomac Yard Metro Implementation Work Group: Jennifer Hovis (and Phil Voorhees as stand-in, if needed)
  - 4 Mile Run Joint Task Force: Kurt Moser
- Jennifer was thanked by the EPC for her great work as Chair this past year.

### **Administrative Items**

- The July meeting will be held July 18<sup>th</sup>.
- The August picnic will be held on a Sunday. Jennifer will reserve space at Fort Worth Park. The date will be finalized at the next meeting.

- The date of the September retreat will be finalized at the next meeting.
  - o Peter suggested a change of format for the September retreat. Further discussion of the format of the retreat was tabled until the next meeting.
- The minutes from the May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting and the June 6<sup>th</sup> work session were approved.

**Adjourn 9:35 PM**