

**MINUTES FOR THE MARYLAND MULTI-CITY ENVIRONMENTAL
BOARDS AND COMMITTEES/ GREENBELT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MEETING**

Tuesday, October 25, 2011
Greenbelt Community Center, Room 201, Greenbelt, MD

Attendants: Jeanna Beard and Rachel Rachfal from Annapolis; Gary Allen and John Allender from Bowie; Stephen Jascourt from College Park; Doug Wolf and Dyan Elizabeth Backe from Gaithersburg; Jim Groves from Hyattsville; Brent Bolin, Bill Updike, and Krista Schlyer from Mt. Rainier; Margaret Morgan-Hubbard from Eco City Farms; Dave Feldman from Bethesda Green; Lore Rosenthal and Jane Young from Greenbelt.

Members present from Green ACES: Matt Berres, Maggie Cahalan, Matt Dirksen, Eva Fallon, Michael Hartman, Megan Hughes, John Lippert, Jamie Phillips, and Herb Reed.

Excused absences from Green ACES: Konrad Herling.

Staff liaison to Green ACES: Luisa Robles.

The meeting was preceded by dinner/meet and greet at the New Deal Café.

Call to order: 7:30 pm

1. *Introductions.* John Lippert, Chair of Green ACES, welcomed everyone to the City of Greenbelt and introduced all Green ACES' members. He gave a presentation on current projects: the Sustainability Framework, Labor Day Festival recycling and greening efforts, Kill-a-Watt meter and thermal leak detector loan programs, Green Neighborhood Challenge with Clean Currents, etc.

Rachel Rachfal from Annapolis distributed the 2010 annual report from Annapolis Environmental Commission (AEC) along with their newsletter and brochure. She mentioned that amongst their accomplishments, the Commission created three subcommittees: Market House Eco-Niche, Stormwater Runoff, and Grant Writing. They are developing proposals and writing grants while collaborating with other local environmental organizations. They are an all volunteer organization whose members get approved by Council. They do not have a dedicated budget. Their staff liaison is Jeanna Beard; she works in Department of Neighborhood & Environmental Programs.

Gary Allen from Bowie talked about their Environmental Infrastructure Action Strategy: Next 10 Steps towards a Green Bowie. They have a budget of a few thousand dollars they use mainly for outreach. They have organized the Green Expo and an urban greening program by which they encourage private people to plant trees on as much of the land that is suitable for plantings if privately owned. They are currently working on a tree ordinance to facilitate such plantings. Bowie has lost thousands of trees in the last three years as the electric company has cut them for liability purposes. Bowie is also expanding their recycling program by giving away rolling carts to every resident (it will take 2 years to accomplish this). Recycling has increased by 28%, the program will pay for itself in a few years. Bowie is the second largest municipality territory-wise; it is a sprawling community and this poses special challenges.

Stephen Jascourt from College Park is the chair for the Committee for a Better Environment. They have a budget from the City and are run by volunteers appointed by Council. College Park has signed up to be a part of Sustainable Maryland Certified. The green team will consist of new members with possibly a few of the current Better Environment members. They participate on College Park Day which includes recycling games, and conduct plantings, rain barrel workshops, etc. throughout the year. They have finished the ICLEI inventory for City buildings and are now working on the community assessment (they are having trouble getting the information from some of the utilities).

Doug Wolf from Gaithersburg participates in the Environmental Affairs Committee (EAC) whose members are volunteers appointed by Council. They are members of Sustainable Maryland Certified. EAC is in the process of producing a Green Guide to Gaithersburg. They hold a Gaithersburg Day in Old Town where they conduct outreach and education (with water pollution games). They also organize a Green Week around Earth Day with a film screening, clean ups, removal of invasive species, media exposure, and workshops.

Jim Groves from Hyattsville is a member of their environmental committee, run by volunteers appointed by Council. Their environmental initiatives are usually sponsored by their Public Works Department. They have made a recommendation to retrofit one of their streets as a green street like the one in Edmonston. They went to once-a-week trash and recycling pickup using big monster rolling carts and trash cans. People want larger recycling containers as they are recycling more. They are a part of Tree City USA; they used to have Bradford pear trees that are starting to die out and want to plant with something more appropriate and native. Planting more trees helps with storm runoff. At the moment a study is being performed to establish the drainage patterns. Hyattsville has one municipal building that is undergoing a facility assessment; it is time to change the HVAC and they are looking into something more efficient. They are also working on the removal of invasive exotic species and looking at getting rid of flares that the police use and instead replacing them with LED flashing flare lights. The residue from the burnt flares and the smoke itself are very harmful to the environment. The flare residue gets washed down the street and into the local waterways, which is very bad for the water as it is very poisonous and only takes a small amount to harm a large body of water.

Brent Bolin from Mount Rainier shared that a Green ordinance was approved in February of this year and they are working on the implementation plan. They have a rain garden program at their nature center. They are purchasing 100% wind power credits and have installed a solar array at City Hall. They are also members of Sustainable Maryland Certified; have planted 250 trees in the last four years; and are pursuing a City-wide composting program. They will share their Green Plan by putting it up on the MMC website. They are working on an ordinance to ban coal tar as it produces really dirty runoff that contaminates local streams. DC, Austin, and Portland have already banned this practice, and the Maryland General Assembly is also considering a ban. PEPCO has been cutting trees; can they be asked to re-plant? Apparently they offer rebates as a voluntary measure for people to re-plant, but there is no requirement to mitigate. They might ask the State Council to start mandating that.

2. Jim Groves presented some useful Web sites he has set up for easier communication of the group. We need to be copying good ideas from one another and not re-create the wheel. He used Google to set up the sites. We can all upload documents to share and look in the directory for members contact information. There is also a list serve we can use to more easily communicate. An example of sharing is the Recycling website he created that Greenbelt has already modified to fit their needs. Jim's phone number is 202-255-7593; feel free to call if you have any questions.

<https://sites.google.com/site/mmcenvironmental/>
<http://groups.google.com/group/mmcenvironment>
<https://sites.google.com/site/recyclehyattsville/>
<https://sites.google.com/site/isitrecyclableingreenbelt/>

3. Margaret Morgan-Hubbard talked about Eco City Farms – an urban organic farming project. Margaret lives in Hyattsville and participates in the Bladensburg and Edmonston Committees (the Port Towns). The Eco City Farms project started because of our broken industrial food system. Do people think about where their food comes from? Prince George's County is full of Food Deserts. That is a neighborhood that does not have a supply of fresh food within walking distance. There might be fast food establishments, but no grocery stores with fresh produce and no farmers markets. The available food is high in fat, sugars and processed grains, made with pre-ripened food. This is the cause of the obesity epidemic and health issues we are having now. This project is providing participatory urban agriculture. Located in Edmonston, African American and Latino communities participate in the planting and harvesting. The Farm is part of Port Towns Community Development Corporation, whose mission is to lead and engage in strategic partnerships and collaborative economic development for the Port Towns. Eco City Farm workers were trained at Growing Power Farm in Minneapolis. The Farm operates year round. Composting and vermiculture form the foundation of the Farm. (San Francisco does curbside collection for compostables; we should do the same in this region.) The one-acre farm takes organics from restaurants and businesses. Vegetables are grown organically. The produce is sold at the farmers market. They also raise bees for honey and chickens for eggs. It was hard to get a permit from Prince George's County, and the County only allows a limited number of chickens, which makes the operation uneconomic. New York City, San Francisco, Chicago and other cities all allow chickens; why does Prince George's County have a problem with this? The Farm is an educational one and the chickens help tie in the cycle of nutrients. The Cross Roads Market accepts federal nutrition benefits and fresh checks. They have trained new immigrant farmers and some people have started farms of their own. Bladensburg High School offers a certificate in urban agriculture and it is taught twice a year. The Farm is totally off-grid, powered solely by solar energy and geothermal energy. There are no locks on the farm; everything is open. They want this to be a real community enterprise. They are building a pavilion and an outdoor classroom. They are looking into aquaponics for the future and into expanding this model to other farms in the region. Already in Upper Marlboro there are some that are following the model. They have a winter CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). This is a revitalized food system that includes the growing, processing, marketing and consumption of the products. They were just recently added to the agenda of Park and Planning; and unveiled a mural which is a vision of the future.

4. The discussion continued with the topic of renewable energy alternatives for municipalities - Wind Power – John Lippert from Greenbelt mentioned that the City and GHI (Greenbelt Homes Incorporated) have contracted with Clean Currents to obtain 100% wind credits for the electricity they use. Thanks to an initiative started by GCAN headed by Lore Rosenthal there are now 240 Greenbelt residents signed up for the wind credits. Mount Rainier, Hyattsville and College Park also have 100% wind credits.

5. Solar Energy Opportunities – University Park Solar LLC has been a model on how to establish these kinds of organizations. Several jurisdictions are familiar with this model. Greenbelt LLC has used it and is installing solar panels at a church thanks to the investment of several residents. The annual Tour of Solar Homes and Buildings helps people become familiar with solar energy. Jim Groves from Hyattsville mentioned that there is a regional initiative to do a Power Purchase Agreement where a company owns and operates the panels and they give a good price on power to the owner of the roof (at no cost to them). Solar City and other solar companies are installing solar systems in the region using this model. Is there a program that would work for attached housing when a roof is shared by many (townhomes)? How does one deal with home owners associations? Are there precedents?

6. Sustainable Maryland Certification – Megan Hughes from Greenbelt (and also works with the Certification program), mentioned there are 13 communities signed up, several of those represented at this meeting. Many attended a training session. Prince George’s County is well represented. They are starting to have an impact outside of the Capitol corridor. Many communities also participate with ICLEI and are working on the greenhouse gas emissions inventories. Sustainable MD Certified provides a framework for municipalities to move forward. One of the first steps is to set a Green Team. They highly recommend that the team consists of 1/3 elected officials, 1/3 City staff, and 1/3 of other people and businesses. In College Park they have decided that the Environmental Committee will not be the Green Team although they will have some representatives on the team. They want to have more people from City staff and other stakeholders including from the business community. Bowie, in contrast, is making their Green Team the committee they have now as they feel it is not useful to have two bodies advising council on the same issues and elected officials might not have knowledge on sustainability issues and they might hinder the environmental progress and give in to development pressures. Sustainable MD Certified does emphasize a government-citizen partnership but people from other spheres can be pulled in as needed (businesses, education, etc. on an ad-hoc basis). This is so the Cities take a more active role in “owning” the programs and budget for them. Having City staff as part of the team is also important as they can add their professional expertise and are the ones likely to do most of the work.

7. David Feldman from Bethesda Green told us about his public-private partnership that serves as a catalyst for environmentally sustainable economic growth and living. Having an economic development background, David felt it was important to involve businesses, residents and government in sustainability practices. Bethesda Green used the press really well to market their workshops. Four hundred people showed up. Out of that, recycling bins were put in public spaces (thanks to advertisement and sponsorships on the bins). Montgomery County accepts the recyclable materials. They are collecting over 500 lbs of recyclables per year from 35 publicly placed bins. They have a diverse board of directors whose members include several Bethesda

companies, as the programs need their support and funding. They have several working groups including transportation, renewables, green purchasing, etc. They also have several green initiatives including a green roof, solar panels, rain barrels, etc. And they are working on testing appliances to generate a green label. They offer internships for people who want to gain experience and volunteer in green jobs, including docents. They are expanding this concept to Silver Spring, Poolesville and Wheaton. Annapolis is also using it as a model. Currently, 12-15% of their budget is government funded.

Gary Allen from Bowie talked about the Bowie Green Expo, an event that is a partnership amongst several groups, including 35 green vendors. They have different themes such as food, water, energy, etc. and there is a speaker on each topic. They have a strong outreach effort that includes recycling games, food games, etc. The food game comprises a big map and people are asked to estimate how much land it takes to produce their food: Beef? Vegetables? How much land are we taking away from wildlife to produce our food? They also have a green awards program and have also become a part of Maryland's Green Registry. They agree that businesses are part of the solution and need to be included in sustainability decisions.

8. Brent Bolin from Mount Rainier shared their thoughts on a tree ordinance in the works. Some people might want to keep dead trees as habitat but that practice is currently against the rules. Mt. Rainier is trying to incorporate the concept of wildlife habitat to allow leeway for people that want to increase native plants, decrease water runoff, etc. Natural landscaping tends to not be as manicured as traditional lawns. Bayscapes have been rejected by HOAs because of their appearance. However if people have a "certified wildlife habitat" they should be allowed. Gary Allen from Bowie mentioned that in their jurisdiction, if people are registered for wildlife habitat, the code enforcement provides flexibility to allow it.

9. Next meeting. Hyattsville has agreed to host the next Multi City Environmental Boards and Commissions meeting in April.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40