



Citizens Environmental Commission (CEC)
Meeting Minutes
January 24, 2024
Virtual Meeting (Recorded)

Members in Attendance: Sally Hornor, Jesse Iliff, Steve Miller, Carmera Thomas, Caroline Baier-Anderson, Scott Eden, Judy Billage, James Lyons, and Ashleigh Diaz
County Liaison: Erik Michelsen

Members Absent: Kirvin Bonner and Ammar Hanif

Members of the public in attendance included: Lacey Pasco, Lloyd Lewis, Suzanne Leveille, Al Tucker, Mike Lofton, Paul Christensen, and Jeffrey Short

Call to Order and Introductory Remarks: Chairperson Hornor called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. No member offered changes to the draft meeting agenda.

Meeting Minutes: The Chair made a motion to accept the minutes she had prepared from the November 29, 2023 meeting. They were accepted unanimously by the members with several edits offered by the Chair and Commissioner Miller. Miller said he would put the approved minutes on CEC letterhead.

Agenda Topics: The following topics were discussed during the meeting:

a. Update on the new Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Resilience Authority by Director Matt Fleming. Before his current job, Matt spent twenty-five years with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, mostly as the Critical Zone Director, and finished up as the Assistant Secretary “for all things water.” He spoke about key findings from the Mid-Atlantic Climate Assessment Project done by Penn State which predicted more days of higher temperatures above 95 degrees and vulnerability of employment centers to sea level rise. He also referenced the fifth National Climate Assessment Report that said despite the number of climate adaptation strategies being worked, they can’t keep up with the rate of change. The Resilience Authority provides a structure for local governments to identify and prioritize resilient infrastructure projects and how to fund them. A study done by the World Bank found that for every dollar spent on resiliency investment, there was about a four-dollar return. The Resilience Authority (RA) has a Board of Directors, it established its own procurement policies and other standard operating procedures, and it can draw upon a diverse array of funding options. After examining many existing plans and meeting with many stakeholders, they identified priority projects that could be “shovel ready” in the next 24-months and got \$25M from the federal and state governments. There is \$52M in additional projects they would like funding for. Most of the immediate projects are

ones that the Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration had in their stormwater restoration projects pipeline. Another focus area is the County's renewable energy projects. Ultimately, the RA wants to make sure projects are interconnected so we get the biggest bang for the buck.

Commissioner Baier-Anderson asked if the RA was looking at septic tanks and sea level rise. Yes, a study has been done on the subject in the South County area. Commissioner Lyons: Are you looking at how green infrastructure can be used to offset some sea level rise issues? Yes, Fleming is a proponent of this. Working on ideas with Erik Michelsen and Mike Stringer (OPZ), Green Infrastructure Plan.

b. Bay Restoration Fund for Septic Systems in Anne Arundel County. Al Herb, Deputy Director Environmental Health, AAC Health Department. He has been in the Department for 22 years. He began by describing the "flush tax" and what is funded by the fees collected from homeowners on public sewer or those owners who have septic systems. About \$28M is collected annually statewide and about \$17M is earmarked for septic system upgrades, mostly nitrogen reducing treatment units which can provide cleaner water to the septic drain field. He went through a list of criteria that's used to determine who might get funding. Failed systems in the critical area are at the top of the list. Nitrogen reducing septic systems are not required outside the critical area. The size of the grants available for converting systems is income dependent. He spent some time discussing some of the different types of septic units and describing the effectiveness of each one in reducing nitrogen.

Commissioner Eden: How do you establish that it's a failed septic system? Someone from the Health Department will go on site and make a determination (basically there's a backup of the system). May take a contractor's assessment. Chair Hornor said the CEC sees the failing systems as a water quality issue and would like to become more involved with the Health Department in reaching out to people to encourage them to convert, particularly those in the critical area. Citizens can obtain more information about the septic program at the website aahealth.org.

c. Septic Subcommittee. Commissioner Baier-Anderson offered to give her report at another time to allow other agenda topics to be discussed in the remaining meeting time. Chair Hornor commented that Baier-Anderson had sent her a list of some very good ideas.

d. Chair Update. The Up Zoning letter that Commissioner Miller drafted was approved by the CEC and sent to the County Executive (CE). A copy is attached. He acknowledged the letter and the fact that he was meeting the next day to discuss the subject, and Erik Michelsen said it was timely and helpful. OPZ has done a deep dive on the issue for Regions 2 and 7 and Erik is looking at the results. Erik has also spoken about the CEC's habitat protection concerns with Kelly Krinetz (OPZ). They are going to meet again, but the County is going to undertake an effort in the next six months to rewrite the code on the critical area and would like to include habitat protection in that effort. Hornor asked about habitat protection areas outside of the critical area. Erik thought that it would be addressed in the code rewrite.

e. Legislative Update. Commissioner Iliff provided the CEC members with some notes about environment-related legislative efforts at the state level before the meeting via email. It included Vernal Pools, Whole Watershed, Critical Areas, Plastics, Oysters and Pollinators. See attached document. Some of the legislation is still being

drafted. He said that if any of the members wanted more information, they should reach out to him. Horner reminded everyone that they could sign up with the League of Women Voters to get weekly updates on legislative actions. It's also possible to submit testimony electronically.

f. New Business. Commissioner Miller discussed the two documents and a link to an I&P Blue Notice <https://www.aacounty.org/inspections-and-permits/blue-notices/ip-23-03> he had emailed to all members before the meeting. All three of the stormwater-related topics seemed to be ones that would be of interest to the CEC. He also spoke about a current initiative by Inspections and Permits to create checklists for pre-construction meetings and "as built" submission requirements involving I&P, DPW and developers, as well as a letter from the president of Crofton Colony to the local newspaper about runoff-related concerns from a new development. There are many stormwater management issues involving a diversity of people both inside and outside of the county government. There is no group right now where you have, cross sectional a representation across the public or within the county, to address some of these issues. Miller recommended writing a letter similar to the one on Up Zoning, encouraging the County Executive to resurrect the Stormwater Work group. Commissioner Lyons said he supported the idea. Miller agreed to write a draft letter.

Before closing the meeting, Erik mentioned having solar array siting as an agenda topic and inviting Kathy Gramp, with the Friends of Herring Bay down in South County, come talk to the group. Erik said he would also try to have someone from OPZ come as well and talk about what they are doing on the issue. The next meeting dates will be on March 27th as a hybrid meeting followed by a meeting on May 29th.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.