

New Recorder needed

-Stacy recently moved to Calvert County and because her COE term expired last month, Dianne Gleissner determined that her appointment could not be renewed. I greatly appreciated her work recording the meeting minutes and she will be missed, but hopefully she will join Calvert's Commission and keep in touch. In her absence, we will need a new recorder. If anybody would like to volunteer, that would be great and we will discuss this further at the meeting. When she sent me the minutes for last month, she also mentioned that the COE website has not been updated and that since we have a new mission statement, we may want to include that when we update the website.

Updates...We are still in need of a recorder. I went to the website that is on our Annual Report (<http://www.co.saint-marys.md.us/voluntr/environment.asp>), to which I believe Stacy was referring. Paul or Bill, have either of you found out if/how we can edit the page? It would be great if we could update the purpose, annual report, and minutes. It seems that the Bylaws, according to the last line, can only be amended by the Commissioners.

Annual Report

-Stacy also sent out the updated Annual Report, which I forwarded along with last month's minutes. Let's go over the Report one last time before turning it into the County Commissioners this month.

Updates...I submitted the Annual Report after receiving a quorum via email.

Plastic Bag Fees

-Paul sent out an article regarding plastic bag fees being proposed again in Prince George's County. As these are rarely recycled, I support the fees. As the first article points out, retail vendors that buy the plastic bags calculate the cost into the pricing of their retail products, so even if you use a reusable bag, you are being charged at the counter for the plastic bags, so it only makes sense that we should relay that cost to the individuals that do not use reusable bags instead of charging everyone. However, I further support the outright ban on plastic bags like California, which is described in the other article that Paul attached. The American Progressive Bag Alliance has already come out opposing the law and plans to take it to the ballot. The industry that makes these bags has sold them without doing the research to see if their bags can be recycled and their irresponsible business model should not be protected in my opinion. What can we do to support action like this in our state? Can anything be done at the county level?

Updates...As stated in last month's meeting, I plan to meet with the Commissioners and this will be one of the topics I will address.

Earth Day

-How do we go about getting a table and space for Earth Day? We discussed our interest last meeting and there are resources and games from previous years that we can dig up and reuse this year. We should try to work on a plan soon, so let's discuss during this meeting.

Updates...Has anyone determined the date that Leonardtown will be having their Earth Day event? Earth Day is a Wednesday this year, so we figured in the last meeting that the event would probably be

on either the Sunday of the 19th or the 26th. Does anyone know the process for reserving two tables and some chairs? In the last meeting, our estimate for this was about \$50.

Maryland Zero Waste Plan Forum

-The meeting was very informative and the plan can be found online at http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/Documents/Zero_Waste_Plan_Draft_12.15.14.pdf

-I read through the plan and some things were of particular interest/concern to me. First, Marylanders generate significantly more MSW (municipal solid waste) per person than the US per person average. At the meeting, this was blamed upon our economy. It has been shown that those with the most money tend to purchase the most and thus produce the most waste. As one of the wealthiest states in the country, it should be our responsibility to set a good example for other states and right now, we are failing to do so. There is a plethora of information in the document regarding the waste stream in Maryland and the plan to reduce that stream as much as possible. From waste water reuse to recycling to composting, they cover pretty much everything that you would want to know about waste in Maryland. There is considerable emphasis placed on composting, and since food waste makes up a large portion of the MSW and currently has the least efforts in place to decrease the amount going into landfills, there is good reason to push for more initiatives.

-One other thing that really jumped out to me was our county's outstanding landfill-related debt. Our neighbors, Charles and Calvert, have significantly lower levels of debt compared to our own. Charles has absolutely no debt and Calvert is \$241,528 in the hole, but this pales in comparison to our debt of \$7,479,819! I am very curious as to why our county, one of the wealthiest in the nation, cannot pay its trash bill. We closed our county's landfill in 2001, whereas our neighbors still have functioning landfills, but we have had 14 years to figure out how to deal with hauling fees and I'm wondering why we've failed so miserably to do so. The last topic from the Plan that I wanted to discuss regards PAYT (Pay As You Throw) fees, for which we currently do not charge in the county. Our neighbors do charge and the financial result speaks for itself. In 2014, Calvert and Charles each brought in over \$10 million in revenue from waste fees; we only brought in \$2,773,000. Perhaps we should enact a similar PAYT fee system as our neighbors to help balance out the debt we owe for outstanding landfill-related fees.

-At the meeting, someone brought up Sustainable Maryland (www.sustainablemaryland.com), which is a new initiative at the Environmental Finance Center at the University of MD. This initiative provides funding for certified sustainable municipalities in MD. I would like to look into this more and see if we have a municipality in our county that could qualify for sustainability funding.

-I also learned about Veteran's Compost, which is a company in the DC/Bmore/Annapolis area that regularly picks up residential and commercial food waste and composts it at their site. I have gone on their website (<http://www.veterancompost.com/>), but plan to contact someone and learn more about their operation, as it seems very impressive.

Updates...I researched the registration process for certification as a Sustainable Maryland municipality (http://www.sustainablemaryland.com/Sample_Resolution.pdf). As Leonardtown is the only incorporated municipality in the county, it would seem ideal for our composting project that we seek certification for Leonardtown. Certified municipalities get expert advice on how to become more sustainable and save money, but also how to get money through priority notification of, and access to, incentives and grants. Certification requires achieving 150 points by taking graded actions listed on their website. Not only is this certification achievable, but the actions that they list are ones that we should try to achieve regardless. Their website also had a link to the Sustainable Community Development

mini-course (http://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/SCD/class_scd_intro1.php) that was brought up in the last meeting by Gordon, who said he would try to complete it before tomorrow's meeting. I will also try to complete it tomorrow before the meeting if I have time. When I meet with the Commissioners, I will tell them about Sustainable Maryland and that I would gladly act as the representative in charge of achieving certification. I think this is an important project that our commission should try to complete.

The topic of enterprise funds was brought up in the last meeting, but I could not remember exactly what it regarded. I believe that it was in regards to PAYT programs and setting up an enterprise fund for our county to help with the hauling fee debt our county currently has.

Composting initiative updates

-I recently contacted Larry Hartwick in regards to our composting initiative idea for Duke Elementary School, which is currently being built with Larry as the building supervisor. I have also reached out to Kim Howe, the Capital Planning and Green Schools Coordinator for the county's public schools. I hope to meet with both of them to discuss the idea further. At the Zero Waste Forum, I spoke with Calvert County's Recycling Coordinator and he informed me that he had access to in-vessel composting equipment like we had discussed using at the school, so I will contact him and see if we might be able to partner up and use that equipment at a lower cost than purchasing it brand new.

Updates...At last month's meeting, we discussed how the public school system/Board of Ed has a contract with a solid waste hauling company that may not provide the economic advantage we originally thought would motivate Commissioners to support our composting pilot project. The Board of Ed, according to their website, meets openly at 9am on the second Wednesday of the month and at 5:30pm on the last Wednesday of the month, so I will try to attend one of those meetings in February in an attempt to learn more about the present situation and feasibility for change. Following this meeting, I will try to attend the next Commissioners meeting, where I will update them on our concerns, projects, and goals.