

St. Mary's County
Commission on the Environment (COE)
Meeting Notes for February 4, 2015

Committee meeting called to order at 7pm in Room 14 of the Potomac Building on February 4, 2015 by COE president, Thomas Brewer.

In Attendance:

Mike Thompson
Gordon Smith, COE
Thomas Brewer, COE
Brad Newkirk
Mary Fearn, COE
Paul Waxman
Mark Burroughs, COE
Sue Veith, St. Mary's Environmental Planner

1. Membership

Mary Ferns has joined the COE. Brad Newkirk's submission for membership is in work.

2. Woods in Your Backyard Workshop

The Woods in Your Backyard Workshop will be held 7 March at Suite C (Soil Conservation) on Radio Station Way just north of Leonardtown. The University of Maryland Extension Service will handle registration for the workshop. Sue will start advertising and further coordination tomorrow.

Gordon mentioned Howard County has a tree canopy program with the goal to increase tree canopy at residences with less than 40% tree canopy. The homeowner selects trees from a county provided list and the county contracts to have the trees planted. The homeowner is then responsible for taking care of the trees. Gordon asked if similar programs should be started in St. Mary's County.

It was noted that the St. Mary's Forest Conservation Act limits disturbance of trees for new houses. Also, Sue mentioned a book called *The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession*, which may be of interest to COE members.

3. Recorder

Thomas asked for someone to volunteer as the new COE recorder given Stacy Maffei leaving the COE. Mark Burroughs volunteered.

4. COE Website Updates

The COE website needs to be updated. Sue mentioned Diane Gleissner can make some updates and that a person from Sue's office can help. Diane will post the COE annual report. It was agreed that minutes should be posted also to allow the community to see what the COE discusses, and to encourage new membership.

5. Plastic Bag Fees

Thomas discussed plastic bag fees and the ban on plastic bags in California. The COE wondered whether there are restrictions on plastic bags at other stores in California. Thomas plans to discuss with the County Commissions a possible ban on plastic bags at grocery stores in St. Mary's given their effect on the environment.

6. Earth Day

Earth Day will be April 19th and the COE plans to have two tables for a display. Thomas plans to attend most of the day, while Gordon and Mike will volunteer also. The COE already has a display to use but Thomas asked that the Top 10 Reasons for having a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Building list be provided also. See below for this list. A recycling game will be used during Earth Day to educate the public on the types of items that can be recycled. A plant or seed handout was also discussed. Further discussion is planned at the next meeting.

Top 10 Reasons for a LEED Building

1. Enhanced property value and higher appraised building value
2. Healthier indoor environments through use of non-toxic materials
3. Energy and water savings to protect the environment
4. Reduced electricity, gas, and water bills to save you money
5. Third-party inspected, tested and performance-verified
6. Thoughtful home designs to eliminate uncomfortable rooms
7. Uses construction materials more efficiently
8. Durable structures that are meant to last
9. Shows you are environmentally and socially responsible
10. Possible insurance discounts

7. Sustainable Maryland Municipality

The Sustainable Maryland Municipality program was discussed in more detail. Leonardtown is the only municipality in St. Mary's County. Thomas plans to attend a meeting in Chesapeake Beach to discuss the program, and Sue provided Pat Haddon as a good point of contact also. Municipalities could receive funding through incentives and grants. Mike emailed the mayor of Leonardtown to ask about the program but has not gotten feedback yet. It was also noted that since Duke Elementary is planned to be LEED Gold rated, and is in the Leonardtown School District, this may help with Leonardtown becoming a Sustainable Maryland Municipality. Further discussion is needed.

8. Solar Energy

Solar parking lots were discussed which involve solar panels that generate electricity and shade vehicles. It was mentioned FedEx Field has solar parking lots. Sue also mentioned solar roadways (www.solarroadways.com) which generate enough electricity to keep snow and ice off the roads. Mike supposed that solar panels mounted and pointed in a southerly direction would generate more electricity than a solar roadway design. Mike's also mentioned that only 1% of county power needs are met by solar but that this percentage is increasing even with lower federal subsidies for solar.

9. Pay As You Go (PAYG) Fees

Thomas mentioned how St. Mary's County has very high land-fill related debt compared to Charles and Calvert Counties. It was supposed that Charles and Calvert having PAYG fees to dispose of trash may be a reason for their lower land-fill related debt. Mark asked if imposing PAYG fees would cause more littering but Mike recalls studies that show this concern is not valid. Thomas will research PAYG fees more before talking to the County Commissioners. Also, Thomas plans to discuss a composting pilot project for St. Mary's County.

10. Incinerators vs Digesters

Gordon mentioned how some municipalities are transitioning from waste digesters to incinerators as the incinerators generate electricity to defer some of the cost. COE members wondered if the incinerators hurt the environment due to the burning of waste. Sue mentioned the county has a digester. COE members are interested in seeing this digester and asked Mike Thompson, new member of METCOM, to arrange a visit.

The meeting adjourned at 9pm.

Notes respectfully submitted by Mark Burroughs.

The next COE meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4, 2014 at 7pm in Room 14 of the Potomac Building.