

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

Committee meeting called to order at 7:15pm in the Department of Land Use and Growth Management Conference Room of the Patuxent Building on March 4, 2015 by COE president, Thomas Brewer.

In Attendance:

Mike Thompson  
Gordon Smith, COE  
Thomas Brewer, COE  
Brad Newkirk  
Helen Dorsey, COE  
Paul Waxman  
Mark Burroughs, COE  
Sue Veith, St. Mary's Environmental Planner  
Bill Hunt, DLUGM Deputy Director

1. Membership

Brad Newkirk's submission for membership is in work.

We discussed Diane Gleissner's clarification email on questions about how many members should be a part of COE. Diane plans to suggest to the County Commissioners that the number of COE members remain at 7 members. Thomas will tell Diane that this suggestion is supported by the COE.

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. At this time over 24 people have signed up for the workshop, and roughly 30 are expected to attend. No help is needed from COE members for setting up chairs. Thomas will assist by picking up lunch.

3. Lexington Park Solid Waste Goal

Bill Hunt provided proposed language for the Lexington Park Solid Waste Goal. The language proposed was approved with minor changes, and discussed recycling.

4. COE Website Updates

The COE website still needs to be updated. Sue mentioned Diane Gleissner can make some updates and that Jada Stuckert from Sue's office can help. Diane will post the COE annual report. The purpose of the COE will be revised based on discussions at previous COE meetings, and Sue will provide Diane a collection of information from last year to post also. It was agreed that minutes should be posted also.

5. Plastic Bag Fees and Pay As You Throw Fees (PAYT)

The COE discussed plastic bag fees and PAYT again in preparation for the 6:30pm 10 March presentation by Thomas to the County Commissions. Other COE members are encouraged to attend.

Thomas is concerned about our County debt related to our landfill compared to neighboring counties. Charles County has a Tag-A-Bag program that is volume based while Calvert County has a weight based fee structure. These neighboring counties bring in \$10M from their programs. Thomas plans to watch an hour long webinar to learn more.

Thomas reported that plastic bags used by many to collect recyclables (such as glass and plastic) are not recycled. The COE debated the merits of a plastic bag fee vice a ban. How such fees would be collected at stores and turned into the County was discussed. Helen questioned whether bag fees could be used to support charities. The overall goal of the COE is to reduce the environmental impact of these plastic bags. Thomas will collect everyone's inputs and send out a draft of his planned presentation for review before the 10 March meeting with the County Commissioners.

Mark will research how plastic bag fees are collected, whether places other than grocery stores collect fees, and language by the Maryland legislature about a plastic bag ban.

6. Earth Day

Earth Day will be April 19<sup>th</sup> and the COE plans to have two tables for a display. Helen will fill out the forms to have our display near the old PNC building. Thomas plans to attend most of the day, Mark and Helen will be there for the first shift (11am to 2pm), while other COE members will volunteer also. The COE displays are ready and the major focus is on recycling. Thomas asked again if a plant or seed handout could be done, along with a focus on native plants. It was also asked if info about plastic bags not being recycled could be added to the display.

7. Sustainable Maryland Municipality

The Sustainable Maryland Municipality program was discussed again. Thomas plans to attend the Leonardtown Council public meeting on 20 March to discuss this topic. Municipalities could receive funding through incentives and grants.

8. Composting Initiative

Thomas spoke to the Board of Education about the COE hopes to start a composting project at Duke Elementary. The proposal seemed to be received well. Deputy Superintendent Brad Clements told Thomas he would follow up with a meeting to determine feasibility. A key focus of the COE for this initiative is composting food waste given the large amount of food that is thrown away at schools.

9. Composting Toilets

Helen brought up the new topic of composting toilets. There are good examples of how such toilets can be implemented, including the Clyburn Center in Baltimore. Greywater systems are possible too. These systems collect wastewater with the exception of wastewater from toilets. A Bill Gates initiative was also discussed that breaks waste into water and fuels.

10. Incinerators vs Digesters

COE members are still interested in seeing the County's digester but agreed that we should wait for better weather. Mike Thompson will assist in setting up this visit.

11. Everglades

Mike mentioned a recent trip to the Everglades. He learned that cattails can be an indication of a high level of nitrogen. Also discussed was a 20-30 year project to restore the Everglades.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Notes respectfully submitted by Mark Burroughs.

**The next COE meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at 7pm in the Department of Land Use and Growth Management Conference Room of the Patuxent Building.**