

St. Mary's County
Commission on the Environment (COE)
Meeting Notes for April 1, 2015

Committee meeting called to order at 7:10pm in the Department of Land Use and Growth Management section of the Patuxent Building on April 1, 2015 by COE president, Thomas Brewer.

In Attendance:

Gordon Smith, COE

Thomas Brewer, COE

Brad Newkirk, COE

Mark Burroughs, COE

Sue Veith, St. Mary's Environmental Planner

1. Woods in Your Backyard Workshop

The Woods in Your Backyard Workshop was held 7 March just north of Leonardtown. Over 60 people attended. The workshop was well liked and many attendees stated they know others who would like to attend. Sue will ask the presenter if he would like to do another workshop in 6 months to a year.

2. COE Website Updates

Sue provided information to Diane Gleissner and Jada Stuckert, including minutes from past COE meetings. Thomas will follow up by emailing Diane as it would be good to have the website updated by Earth Day.

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

The COE has been discussing PAYT fees as we are 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.

Since the previous COE meeting, the St. Mary's County Department of Public Works and Transportation proposed an increase to the County Commissioners that would raise yearly solid waste fees from \$60 to \$84 for property owners. Thomas will call Nick Zurkan to discuss working with Public Works and Transportation on possible environmentally conscious ways (such as plastic bag fees mentioned below) which could help offset this proposed increase in solid waste fees. Our organizations have worked together previously.

Plastic Bag Fees were also discussed. Typically a plastic bag ban is not well liked. For places where 5 cents is collected, 1 cent goes to the store for costs of managing fee collection. It was mentioned that a plastic bag fee could be implemented for grocery stores, department stores, and service stations as our overall goal is to reduce the number of plastic bags impacting the environment. Mark will look at the Montgomery County example to understand what infrastructure would have to be added to St. Mary's County to handle a plastic bag fee program.

4. Earth Day

Earth Day will be April 19th and the COE plans to have two tables for a display. Helen filled out the forms to have our display near the old PNC building, and has collected the materials. Info about plastic bags not being recycled will be added to the display as many people do not know about this issue, nor that plastic bags can be turned in at grocery stores. Thomas plans to

attend most of the day, Mark and Helen will be there to set up and for the first shift (1030am to 1pm), while other COE members will volunteer also.

5. Sustainable Maryland Municipality

The Sustainable Maryland Municipality program was discussed again. Thomas has found a college student who has started an action plan in support of getting Leonardtown certified. The COE thinks that Leonardtown may already qualify and that the final step would be to have the college student document Leonardtown's progress.

6. Composting Initiative

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. Thomas spoke at the County Commissioner Public Forum and interest was expressed in learning more about this COE effort. Thomas will work on a presentation for review by the COE in support of a one-on-one meeting with the Commissioners in the future, especially if the Board of Education meeting (see below) goes well.

Thomas also contacted the Board of Education and a meeting on composting is scheduled for 10 April. Paul Waxman provided Thomas within the last month very good questions to consider before meeting with the Board. Other questions that came up tonight include (1) how much food waste is generated, (2) can paper be recycled, and (3) whether student curriculum would support this initiative.

7. Composting Toilets

The COE has not been able to research this topic more. Assistance was requested from COE members.

8. 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.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36pm.

Notes respectfully submitted by Mark Burroughs.

The next COE meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 6, 2015 at 7pm in the Department of Land Use and Growth Management Conference Room of the Patuxent Building.