

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIROMENT MINUTES
Room 14 * Potomac Building
Minutes of September 10, 2008

COE Members present were Barne Wheeler, Chairman; Marta Kelsey, Troy Hansen, Susan Blake, Bill Shreve, Caroline Miller, and Larry Hartwick. Sandy Neville, Frank Allen, and Daryl Calvano were absent excused. Others present were Sue Veith, Bill Bartlett, Dudley Lindsley, and Margarita Rochow.

- I) **Call to Order:** Mr. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
- II) **Discussion & Approval of July & August Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of July 2, 2008 as amended. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of August 6, 2008 as amended.
- III) **Continuing Business:**
- a. **Discussion of Menhaden Project:** Mr. Wheeler asked how the school would approach this project. Ms. Rochow stated she has contacted two teachers regarding this project. Ms. Rochow stated one teacher is from the Career and Technology Center here in Leonardtown and the other is a local high school teacher who is very active and willing to undertake the project. Ms. Rochow stated next Friday she would present the project to all the Science and Biology teachers at the high school level during the Professional Development Day.

Ms. Rochow stated this project could potentially be split into pieces and passed along to each school for completion. Ms. Rochow stated she is looking into several different possibilities for this project. Mr. Wheeler stated he would be willing to come and speak about the project if needed. Mr. Bartlett offered his services, if needed, to Ms. Rochow and Mr. Wheeler.

Mr. Bartlett informed the Commission of a House Bill that was presented to reduce the amount of Menhaden that can be caught and kept. Mr. Bartlett stated unfortunately this Bill will not make it to vote as its two presenters are now retiring.

Mr. Wheeler stated the second phase of the project would be to decide how we help the students present their findings to persons who would be interested in this issue. Ms. Rochow stated right now she is focusing on how to get the project implemented. Ms. Rochow stated she would keep the Commission informed of the progress.

1. **Update on Gray Water Issues & WPTF Involvement:** Mr. Wheeler stated several months ago there was no code regarding gray water that allowed the County to take advantage of gray water systems. The COE wrote a letter to the Plumbing and Fuel Gas Board asking that gray water codes be approved in the County. Subsequently the plumbing board approved gray water systems for adoption into the code. Mr. Wheeler stated he does not believe the actual wording for gray water has been inserted into the code yet. The new wording would permit gray water systems installed by MetCom, as well as public & privately run systems.

However, treated sewage effluent to wash your cars or water your lawn without some significant setback issues is still not permitted. Mr. Wheeler stated when the new nitrogen removal designs are installed in sewerage treatment plants the water will be pure enough for someone to drink. It would seem therefore that the next proactive move for the COE is to make the case that persons should be able to wash cars and water lawns with this treated sewerage water. State approval

would be required for this. Mr. Wheeler suggested that this would be an excellent study for the Water Policy Task Force to undertake.

- b. Review of Goals & Objectives and Integration of Forum Data:** Mr. Hartwick stated there were a number of goals that needed to be moved around according to their importance. The Commission reviewed the "Major Goals" and made further recommendations. Mr. Hartwick stated he would make the proposed changes and forward them to Mr. Wheeler to be placed on the website. A motion was made and seconded to this matter. The motion passed unanimously.
- c. Better Educating the Public & Raising Awareness**
- 1. Discussion of Draft Letter Soliciting Environmental Concerns:** Ms. Blake stated the draft letter states who we are, what we want to do and contains a bulleted list of goals. Ms. Blake stated the letter also requests that organizations fill out the attached survey. Ms. Blake stated once survey's are received items will be categorized to gauge the willingness of organizations to participate in the 2009 summit.

The Commission members reviewed and discussed changes to the letter and made a motion to allow Ms. Blake to make the recommended changes, email to each organization and send to Mr. Wheeler for distribution to environmental activities and for posting on the website. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Ms. Kelsey would consolidate the list of environmental organizations and activities and forward this list to Mr. Wheeler so that a forwarding email can be sent out.
 - 2. Actions Needed After Replies Received:** No discussion.
- d. Solid Waste Advisory Committee Issues:** Mr. Wheeler stated that he had provided Mr. Keenon James and Mr. Paul Waxman information about Calvert Trash's "recycle for cash" initiative now in place by its solid waste partner, AAA, in Northern Virginia. This concept permits a homeowner to have recycled trash picked-up, weighed and credited to your account. Periodically, these credits are returned to the homeowner in the form of a credit card that's accepted by a number of retailers in the area. Mr. Wheeler asked Mr. James & Waxman to let the COE know if SWAC is still having quorum issues. Mr. Wheeler also recognized Mr. Michael Wayman, member of the WPTF, for his work in identifying the new Calvert Trash initiative.
- e. Reporting Zoning Violations:** Mr. Wheeler stated the County requires all persons reporting to give their name. Mr. Wheeler stated the issue has been raised that if the County did not require a name to be given there would be more reports of illegal activities. Mr. Wheeler stated he spoke with someone at LUGM about having a website to check to see if someone received a permit to complete projects, etc. Ms. Veith stated LUGM has been directed to not investigate any reports of violations for which a formal inquiry has not been filed with the name of the person inquiring. Mr. Wheeler asked if this is a written policy. Ms. Veith stated she does not believe it is written however the direction exists.

Mr. Wheeler asked if an organization could collect these complaints, record that made the inquiry and then file the query in the name of the organization. Ms. Veith stated as far as she knows that would be fine however it would probably have to be one person from the organization. Mr. Hansen stated that he believed that having an organization do the reporting was a subterfuge and that a person had a right to know who his accuser was. Ms. Miller stated that, while she recognized this right, the net effect would be to reduce the number of complaints because people did not want to upset their neighborhood

relationships. Mr. Shreve stated his impression is that St. Mary's County is pretty strict on persons who have violations, i.e. making them tear down piers, houses, sheds, etc. Ms. Veith stated that she believed everyone could access permits issued by address on the county website. Mr. Wheeler stated he would see if he could do this. If it can be accomplished, the question of whether someone has a permit or not would be mostly solved.

- f. **LUGM Critical Area Update:** Ms. Veith stated staff is still working their way through all the revisions. A January date is more likely now what with the revision of the Comprehensive Plan taking priority.
- g. **Rapid Transit for the County:** Continued to next meeting.
- h. **Green Building Institute:** Continued to a future meeting date. Ms. Veith stated the Green Building Institute will be holding six meetings for several different topics like rain gardens, green 101, energy conservation, etc.

IV) **New Business**

- a. **Climate Change:** Mr. Wheeler stated the group should discuss how they feel about climate change and what our stance should be. Mr. Wheeler stated Kevin Selner would like to come and give us a presentation on climate change and the Chesapeake Bay at our next meeting.

Ms. Blake stated she doesn't necessarily believe what all the models which say will happen with climate change are accurate. Mr. Hartwick stated the majority of scientists do believe damaging change is occurring and that the COE's job is to get information out to the public. Mr. Hansen stated that he believes that the dangers are being over hyped and that people have had to and are adapting to natural disasters (earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.) all the time. Ms. Kelsey stated while you can't necessarily accurately predict what's going to happen, there's no harm in taking prudent steps to protect against the possibility. Ms. Miller stated even if you don't believe in climate change you can still conserve and behave in an environmentally sensible manner. Mr. Shreve stated he believes the natural cycle has been upset and now it's causing more severe weather patterns.

After further discussion it was decided to invite Mr. Selner for a presentation after the New Year. It was decided to keep this topic as informational only rather than taking a side, letting the COE's role be primarily an educational and public informational one.

- b. **Mission for WPTF:** No discussion.
- c. **Web Page Improvements:** No discussion

V) **Announcements:** None

VI) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.