

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT (COE) MINUTES
Potomac Building
Minutes of July 6, 2011

COE Members present were Barne Wheeler, Chairman; Daryl Calvano, Caroline King, Mike Thompson and Paul DiBenedetto. Memebers absent were Marta Kelsey, Larry Hartwick, and Lawrence Langley. Others present were Paul Waxman and Jenn Ballard.

- I) **Call to Order:** Mr. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
- II) **Discussion & Approval of March Meeting Minutes:** The June meeting minutes were not available, so were not approved.
- III) **Continuing Business:**
- a. **COE Aquifer & Conservation Presentation:** Mr. Wheeler informed the group that the presentation would take place on August 2.
- b. **COE Charter Revision:** Mr. Wheeler passed out a paper outlining the various Charter (Resolution & Bylaws) revisions (see enclosure) since the Solid Waste(SWAC)/COE merger along with a copy of the COE's suggested changes. He stated the new Resolution & Bylaws were in effect and that the COE's membership was now 7 vs. the previous 11. None of the COE suggestions were incorporated. He asked the group if they felt that a message was being sent clearly limiting the COE's scope & authority. The group's consensus was that while the specific wording had narrowed, nothing prevented the Commission from acting exactly as it had in the past. The following topics were discussed and approved:
1. **Elections.** Would be held at the August meeting, as greater participation was necessary. Mike Thompson volunteered to gather member candidate suggestions and prepare a slate for Chairman, Vice-Chair and Recording Secretary.
 2. **Health Department.** The group voted to include the Health Department (HD) as a regular member of the Commission, even though this was a COE suggestion, which had been ignored. The group further voted to have the HD be a voting member.
 3. **COE Mission Statement.** The group agreed to continue to operate under the same scope present when the SWAC/COE merger took place. This means that the COE will feel free to look into any area within the County that favorably or unfavorable affects the quality of life in the county. The COE motto will be, until told otherwise, do what feels right.
 4. **Quorum Issues:** The group acknowledged that some of the problem with quorums has been internal. The group agreed that we should embrace the alternate candidate roster, and invite them to attend all meetings. The group also agreed that we should contact potential candidates, before their appointment, and invite them to come to our meetings. That way we will be able to find out their degree of interest, assess their dedication to making meetings and thereby be in a better position to provide our assessment of the candidates Ms. Cannavo and hence the Commissioners.
 5. **Land Use & Growth Management (LUGM).** The group was unanimous in its feeling that attendance by a representative from LUGM was essential, as they were in a position to provide background which otherwise would be absent. The group was also receptive to having the LUGM representative be a voting member of the Commission.
- c. **Board of Appeals (BOA) Investigation:**
1. **After the Fact Variances:** Mr Wheeler stated that an investigation of 'after the fact' variances revealed that there had been only 18 cases from 2006 to the present. He suggested that 3 variances per year did not appear to indicate that this type of variance request was out of control. The group agreed that further investigation would not be warranted at this time.
 2. **Administrative Variances:** The group agreed to defer discussion until the August meeting.
- d. **Waterways Implementation Plan, Phase II:** The development of this plan embraces all of the steps the County (and other localities in the entire Bay Watershed) will have to take to comply with EPA nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment limits designed to clean up the Bay. This plan has potentially profound impacts on the County as it

affects the entire County, not just the Critical Area and Buffer. Each of the steps being developed has the potential to cost both individual homeowners and the County significant amounts of money.

- e. **Whither Goest the COE:** The group agreed that, since the Environmental Concerns report had been delivered to the Commissioners, the COE, with the exception of the BOA investigation, had been languishing. The following are some of the observations made by members of the group:
 1. There are so many environmental organizations, each with their own agenda that the COE appears at times to be superfluous. The group agreed that this seemed at times to be the case. The issue of whether the COE represents the Commissioners or County citizens was discussed. The general consensus was that we were appointed by the Commissioners to advise them on environmental matters, even when the particular issue may not be one they might wish to hear.
 2. The COE could invite a succession of environmental organizations to present their concerns to the COE. In this way, we would be more conversant with outstanding issues. The method of orchestrating this was not discussed. The need to make the COE meetings more interesting to the general public was mentioned, but how to do this was not discussed in detail.
 3. The COE could resurrect the Environmental Concerns sent to the Commissioners and select one or more of those to investigate further. Participation of other groups & individuals would be required as the COE has only 7 members and many of those work.
 4. The COE could attempt to make its web page more dynamic. However, it was mentioned that we had great hopes for both our web and our facebook page to generate public interest and, so far, it has not turned out that way.
 5. Further study into the Waterway Implementation Plan might serve to educate the public and point out major issues.
 6. It was agreed to continue this discussion at the August meeting.
- f. **Setting a Date for Beginning Planning the Next Expo:** No discussion.
- g. **Facebook Use Continuing Discussion:** No discussion.

IV) New Business: None

V) Announcements: None

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