

Chesapeake Environmental Improvement Council
Meeting Minutes – June 24, 2020, 12 pm
Video Conference Meeting

An electronic meeting is being held pursuant and in compliance with the Amended Ordinance adopted by Chesapeake City Council on April 28, 2020 to effectuate temporary changes in certain deadlines and to modify public meeting and public hearing practices and procedures to address continuity of operations associated with pandemic disaster.

Attendees: Rogard Ross-Chair, Becky Greenwald, Vice-Chair, Lauren Ragsac-Secretary

- Council Members: Vikki Barnette, Denise Cordeiro-Bennett, Lacy Kuller, Sandy Madison, Calib Miller, Bobby Nance, Mike Perry, Bruce Weckworth. A quorum was present.
- Parks, Recreation & Tourism Staff (PRT): Josh Fisher, Ana Elezovic, Megan Hale
- Guests: Heather Barlow, Bill Gregory, Amy Weber

- I. Welcome and Introductions: Rogard opened the meeting at 12:00 and welcomed members and guests. Rogard informed members of the remote electronic meeting practices and procedures ordinance. He noted that audio for the meeting is being recorded. If applicable, any public comments from citizens will be received during the citizen comments section of the meeting. Voting will be taken by a roll call, to be conducted by the Secretary.
- II. Environmental Tip: Denise recommended buying as many items in bulk as possible and choosing items with minimal packaging whenever possible. Josh reported that he heard that some stores have been banning reusable bags. Some stores are concerned about the potential of reusable bags to carry pathogens, so they are not allowing the cashiers to handle the bags. Members offered the alternative of asking that items be loaded back into your cart then you can pack your own bags after checking out. Even using paper bags that are recyclable is an option, as some stores still offer paper bags.
- III. Environmental Group Spotlight: Lacy highlighted the Healthy Chesapeake Families program and the farmer's market. Calib noted that Healthy Chesapeake is working on expanding the number of pickup sites for their online farmer's market where community members can get fresh food items. Heather mentioned that the DAR chapter she participates in is still doing a Clean the Bay day at their site. Calib mentioned that the Chesapeake Master Gardeners continue their Plant-A-Row program as well.
- IV. Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the May 27 meeting were sent by email. Becky made a motion to approve the minutes. Lacy seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.
- V. Position Vacancies and Nominations

Rogard asked newly appointed CEIC member Bobby Nance to introduce himself. Bobby is a board-certified master arborist who is especially interested in trees and wetlands. Rogard noted that there is still one vacancy on the CEIC; he would like to see a concerted effort in future nominations to increase the CEIC's racial diversity. Rogard asked current members to think of candidates to invite to join the CEIC to better address this need for greater diversity. Bobby Nance and Lacy Kuller each have individuals in mind who could be approached and encouraged to apply to the CEIC.

VI. Updates

A. Conservation Landscaping/License Plate Committees -Becky reported that the committee's main efforts in the past month have been at the Indian River Library. All of the plantings in the main circle and the breezeway area have been completed, and the breezeway area will be mulched by volunteers this Thursday (6/25). The main challenge the committee is facing is weeds in the circle planting. Committee members have been coordinating efforts informally, as there have been no in-person formal meetings of the committee. Becky needs additional volunteers to pitch in with maintenance until a formal arrangement can be made for a dedicated group to adopt the spot. The refurbished heron for the site is still pending. Megan will follow up with Myke Irving to see when the heron will be completed. A business group has sponsored the restoration of the heron, so Megan will ensure proper signage is completed to note their sponsorship. Rogard suggested that going forward long term for these Conservation Landscaping projects on municipal properties, we make sure we define a maintenance plan as part of the planning and implementation. If the City is not able to maintain these sites, we need to make sure we identify groups to adopt the spot. Becky reported that there is still some space to install plants in front of the breezeway area, so the plan is to move some ornamental grasses that have outgrown their space in the planting bed in front of the PRT building. Megan noted that Denise has offered to help with the Indian River Library maintenance.

The Central Library entrance re-planting plan is pending. Mike Perry has been in contact with the contractor selected to move the millstone. The excavation of soil in the planting bed is also pending.

License Plate Committee: Becky reported that the application form has been refined. Using screen share, Megan walked members through the items on the draft form. She would like to finalize the form and send it on to Mike Barber for final approval within the next month. The form would be put into use for next year, as the deadline for submissions for projects is March 31 and the committee is not considering any more projects for the remaining year. Rogard and Becky asked that members take time to review the form and make any suggestions for revisions by the end of next week, so that the form can be finalized at the August meeting and ready for fall applications.

- B. Tree Board/Urban Forestry Position – Rogard reported earlier today representatives of the Tree Board met with City management via video conference to discuss the Urban Forestry Plan and Urban Forester Position. Attendees included Rogard, Becky, Mike Andruczyk-VCE Horticultural Agent, Meghan Mulroy-Goldman-VA DOF Community Forester, Carol Warren-Stormwater Committee, and Heather Barlow met with Chris Price-City Manager, Wanda Barnard-Bailey -Deputy City Manager, Mark Woodward- Comprehensive Planning Administrator, James McNamara- Assistant Director of Planning, Mike Barber-Director PRT, Earl Sorey -new Director Public Works, and Eric Martin-retiring Director Public Works. Rogard sent a copy of the CEIC’s presentation to members. The presentation went over the benefits of trees and the shortcomings of not having an urban forestry plan. The Tree Board offered to help facilitate updating the draft urban forestry plan, working with city staff. Rogard believes the meeting went well. Chris Price was very enthusiastic, said he was “all in” and saw value in Urban Forester role as coordinating efforts across City Departments; he has committed to discussing options with his staff and letting the CEIC within the next two months know how the City is going to move forward regarding the position and updating the City’s urban forestry plan. Becky agreed that Rogard’s presentation was thorough and made a persuasive case to the City Manager. Bill Gregory, as well as Bobby Nance, would like to have a copy of the presentation. Megan will send the presentation to Bill and Bobby.
- C. Use of Calendar Funds – Megan noted that the calendar sales revenues comes to \$867. These funds are set to be used for environmental projects and programs, so she is looking to CEIC members to suggest ways to use the money. Members should email Megan with any suggestions. Becky had suggested using the money to offset the costs of the past Conservation Conference. Rogard noted there are also several contests for which the money could be allocated for awards. Megan informed members that the fiscal year closes on June 30. It would be easier to designate the funds for an event prior to the FY closing. Rogard suggested pushing considerations for how to use the money to the August meeting. Josh noted that the 2020 Conference has been paid for, so it might be best to use the money for next year’s luncheon or other award incentives for the CEIC’s various contests.
- D. Clean and Green Poster Contest – Megan reported that poster submissions have been judged and winners selected. The judges were Roger Fuller, Amy Weber, and Becky Greenwald. About 400 submissions were reviewed. The winners are selected in five grade categories, with a first/second/third place for each grade level, so there is a total of 15 winners. This year the City will try to do an outdoor awards presentation. The winners will be published on the CEIC and PRT Facebook pages.
- E. Cigarette Litter Prevention Campaign – Megan reported that PRT applied for a grant from Keep Virginia Beautiful for funds to develop a campaign around preventing cigarette litter. PRT received a grant and will install eight receptacles throughout Chesapeake. One receptacle will be installed around the City Hall complex, near the Court. PRT will be delivering marketing materials. The grant

requires the project be completed by October. Members were asked to help with marketing and ideas for promoting awareness.

- F. Notable Yards Contest – Megan noted the contest timeline has been pushed to later in the summer, so the deadline this year for nominations will be September 1. Vikki has offered to be the Chair of the committee. Members are asked to let Megan or Vikki know if they are interested in participating on the committee. White’s Old Mill Nursery agreed to provide \$50 gift certificates for winners, so they are the designated sponsor of the contest. Rogard challenged each member to find at least two yards to nominate throughout the City. Members can submit an address to the committee between July 1 and September 1. To advertise the contest, PRT will send out a press release, but it will be up to the various media outlets whether to publish it. Ana will finalize the promotional video by next week so it can be posted on Facebook and the City’s website. Megan will resend the flyer and will let members know when PRT’s Facebook page is updated. Rogard reminded Megan to make sure that White’s Old Mill Nursery is noted as a sponsor.
 - G. Fix-It Fairs – Megan noted that PRT is in the process of writing a grant for funds to launch a fix-it fair. The fair is to be a partnership between Chesapeake and Suffolk. The first fair would be held at the Western Branch Community Center. These types of events are becoming increasingly popular on the West Coast. Megan would like to reach out the community colleges in Chesapeake and Suffolk for skilled people to participate in fixing items.
- VII.** Election of officers – Nominating Committee – consisting of Rogard, Vikki, and David - reported nominations for officers on the CEIC: Chair – Becky Greenwald, Vice-Chair – Denise Bennett, and Secretary – Lauren Ragsac. Rogard asked members for additional nominations for these positions but none were offered. Lacy Kuller made a motion to approve the slate. Sandy Madison seconded. Roll call was taken for the vote. The quorum of members approved the slate unanimously. Newly appointed officers will start their terms on July 1.

Citizen Comments: With meeting running near end of scheduled meeting time, Rogard asked if any of the guests or visitors had any Citizen Comments at this time. Josh expressed his appreciation for Rogard’s time as chair

VIII. New Business

- A. Recycling Perks – Megan noted that the City curbside recycling contract includes Recycling Perks as an incentive program. She plans to update members more about this at the next CEIC meeting.
- B. Other – the Norfolk Environmental Council wrote a letter to the Norfolk City Council asking them to work with sister cities to try to improve communication to citizens on recycling and develop a more unified, consistent message. Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach have very similar rules as to what can be recycled. Liz Vaughn and Jason Brown did a video on recycling recently, which

was posted on Facebook. One particularly telling comment from the public was that the video was eight minutes of what you can't recycle, and only one minute of what you can recycle. Rogard speculated that such messaging is discouraging to citizens. Megan suggested that we coordinate it through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) Recycling and Beautification Committee. Rogard asked for someone to be a liaison to take a lead on this effort. Denise offered to serve as liaison, and Lacy will also assist.

- C. 2021 Conservation Conference – Rogard asked CEIC members if we should hold another Conservation Conference in 2021. Megan asked Rogard to share with members what went into planning the conference. Rogard described that steps included deciding on the format - a panel format with 16 panelists for the 2020 conference; selecting a theme; securing funding for the conference; establishing a budget; recruiting speakers; advertising the event; preparing logistics. The second time around he feels it will be easier, because those engaged in the planning can duplicate much of what was done last year. Rogard suggested a theme of urban forestry. The panel format does not necessarily need to be repeated; could have individual speakers for sessions. Don't need to do a whole day; could do a half day event. Rogard will be serving on the CEIC until April 2021, so he will continue to be involved if the CEIC decides to have a 2021 conference. Amy suggested that with all the unknowns around COVID-19, it might be better to postpone the conference until 2022. She also felt that the panel discussion format at the first conference did not allow enough time for interaction among panelists or the audience. Lacy believes there is a lot of value in doing a conference again, but supports holding it off until 2022. She suggested partnering with Chesapeake's sister cities about rotating the conference among cities. HR Planning District Commission may get involved in expanding this conference to capture more of Hampton Roads cities and communities. Lacy pointed out that holding off until 2022 would give the various stakeholders more time to come together to coordinate a wider event among Hampton Roads communities. Rogard thinks doing a half-day event and a more focused topic on urban forestry would be more appropriate. Rogard wanted to emphasize doing the event in Chesapeake because Chesapeake is often lagging behind Norfolk and Virginia Beach in environmental initiatives. Becky would like to see the CEIC do some version of the Conservation Conference "Lite". She thinks the timing is right for a focus on urban forestry and feels there is a lot of momentum going into 2021, particularly on this topic. Josh suggested the CEIC invest in a high-profile speaker on urban forestry and use some of the calendar sales money to pay such a speaker. Megan supports Josh's suggestion of having a high quality keynote speaker for a future conference. Rogard suggested tabling discussion on the conference for now and have himself, Becky, Megan, and Josh draft options to present in August. Megan reminded members that Mike Barber needs to be kept in the loop with any proposals.

IX. Seeking Volunteers

- A. Notable Yards Committee – Megan asked subcommittee chairs to solicit members to participate in various efforts. Members of the community are welcome to participate in the planning and judging process.
- B. Business Beautification Committee - Mike Perry is looking for volunteers to help revamp the program and judging form.
- C. Conservation Landscaping/License Plate Fund – Becky is looking for volunteers to help with maintenance of newly planted sites until permanent groups are able to commit to maintaining sites.

Rogard closed the meeting with some reflections on his time as Chair of the CEIC. Bill Gregory (citizen's comments) thanked members for letting him sit in on the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:33 p.m.