

Chesapeake Environmental Improvement Council
Meeting Minutes – May 27, 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, Mike Perry, David Sackett, Adrienne Sawyer, Bruce Weckworth
- Parks, Recreation & Tourism Staff (PRT): Josh Fisher, Ana Elezovic, Megan Hale, Mike Barber
- Associate Members/ Guest: Heather Barlow, Amy Weber , Robert Nance

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. Megan briefly explained how to use various functions in Zoom.

Rogard offered an Environmental Tip on how the recent emphasis on telework during the pandemic has resulted in less traffic congestion and travel in general and had a positive effect on the environment. For the Environmental Group Spotlight, Rogard pointed out how Lynnhaven River Now and Elizabeth River Project have been doing outreach online. Amy Weber mentioned that the Master Gardeners are also posting more educational items on their FB page. Mike Barber shared his appreciation for the individual efforts of CEIC members during the pandemic.

Bobby Nance introduced himself; he is a certified master arborist and is considering applying to serve on the CEIC. Rogard asked members for additional nominations for open spots on the CEIC.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the February 26 meeting were sent by email. Becky made a motion to approve the minutes. Vikki seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

I. Updates

- Position Vacancies - Two new CEIC members have joined the group. Lacy Kuller is the Executive Director of the Chesapeake Humane Society (CHS). CHS has worked with the Elizabeth River Project to incorporate environmental aspects into its building and property. Lacy works with Megan and Josh on the Bark in the Park event. She also coordinates Green Drinks, which is a monthly meeting which has speakers present on various environmental topics. Calib Miller is the Food Connection Program Manager for Healthy Chesapeake, a local 501c3 working in partnership with the City. His job is to increase food access in the City. The Food Connection Program now has 13 community gardens throughout Chesapeake and working toward a new total of 18 gardens. He also participates in the Green Drinks group.
- Conservation Landscaping/License Plate Committees – 1) Approval of new funding memo: Becky provided members with an update. Rob Beaton’s departure from the CEIC has left the conservation landscaping subcommittee with a vacancy, so CEIC members are encouraged to fill the vacancy. In February, the CEIC had approved up to \$30,000 of expenditures from the

License Plate Fund for landscaping projects, thinking that the Central Library, the Indian River Library, and Georgetown Boulevard projects would fall under that funding authorization. However the library projects are being funded directly by the City, not the License Plate Fund. The Georgetown Boulevard project has one bid, which PRT staff are evaluating now. It is currently the only project on the books that needs the License Plate Funds. Mike Barber noted that the bid came in at a bit over \$15,000, so he would like to get approval for a revised amount of \$17,500 to cover possible additional costs. He also recommended approving \$1,000 for moving the historic millstone to the landscaping project Central Library entrance. Becky described to members what the millstone is and how it is to fit into the Central Library circle landscaping project. She and Mike Perry met with a potential contractor who agreed to move the millstone and build a pedestal for it for \$1000. The City supports the relocation of the millstone. Amy Weber asked for clarification on how the original authorization (\$30,000) are being allocated for various projects. Mike Barber explained that PRT landscaping funds will be used for the library projects License Plate Funds are only needed as just described. Becky asked for a motion to approve a revised total of \$19,000 of the License Plate Fund for PRT to use for the Georgetown project and millstone placement. Members unanimously approved the motion, with Bruce Weckworth abstaining, Sandy Madison voting Present.

2) License Plate Fund Process: the committee has been working on formalizing application procedures. A draft application form has been created. The CEIC will evaluate and prioritize any projects submitted through this formal process. The deadline for submitting applications is to be set at March 31 of each year. This would give six months for details of each project to be worked out (planting design, soil tests, demolition, etc.) Becky believes that most of the projects submitted will likely be fairly small—median strips, entrances to neighborhoods, walkway enhancements, etc. Mike Barber noted that, in the grant process, with each project being unique the amount of funds granted will vary, but the committee doesn't necessarily have to fund every project 100 percent. Vikki asked if the CEIC will grant funds up front or reimburse afterwards. Mike Barber suggested building in flexibility in the granting process; in some cases the CEIC may opt to become involved in the bidding process to complete projects. Rogard had provided some input offline and asked that the committee present a draft of the process to the CEIC at the June meeting.

3) Project status –

- the Indian River Library circle is fully planted and mulched. Several volunteers were involved in the planting; the refurbished heron sculpture is not yet completed or ready for placement, however. Little Joe's Auto Sales is sponsoring the heron refurbishment. The base of the sculpture will be planted out with grasses once it is placed. An additional planting area next to the entrance is being bid out.
- At Central Library the refurbished heron sculpture was placed in front of the building windows. The bed into which it was placed has been planted with low maintenance native ornamental grass. The excavation of the traffic circle bed is awaiting the contractor to commence work. Once the soil is amended and the millstone placed into the bed, the plants will be ordered and planted. An additional walkway area between the library building and the main parking lot is also slated for planting, to prevent patrons from walking over the median.
- Tree Board – This past February the CEIC drafted a job description for an Urban Forester and sent it to Mike Barber for feedback. Mike noted that each City department has a mission and goals for the overall work it does. It all boils down to resources; if PRT does not have the resources to carry out the directives of an Urban Forester, it makes the position largely

ineffective. PRT is tasked with landscaping of municipal grounds, athletic fields, and City parks. Public Works handles other public spaces, such as medians and other sites that do not fall under PRT. Mike suggested that initially this position involves significant planning aspects and may be more appropriate for the Planning Department. If the position gets into PRT it would focus more on parks and municipal grounds. If the position becomes part of Planning, then that department can dictate to other City agencies to adhere to set policies and ordinances. Mike suggested that with the new Comprehensive Plan coming up, this could be an opportunity to incorporate an Urban Forester position. The current Comprehensive Plan does call for the adoption of an Urban Forestry Plan, but the plan was never approved by the City Council. Denise asked if the CEIC sees this position as being more focused on new developments or in enforcement of existing tree canopy ordinances. Rogard noted that Development and Permits will be involved with new developments, but compliance enforcement at existing developments and properties is mostly driven by citizen complaints. There was general agreement that the next steps should be a meeting with the City Manager to discuss where this position fits best. Mike Barber recommended that the discussion should include the Planning Department and Public Works. He also recommended that we meet before the current Public Works Director Eric Martin retires later this summer. Rogard will coordinate with the Tree Board and Mike Barber to set up this meeting.

- Use of Calendar Funds – Megan reported that the 2019/20 calendar generated \$867 in donations. This money is to be used for environmental projects in the community. She asked members to make suggestions as to how to use the funds. It had been suggested previously that the funds be used to offset the cost of the Conservation Conference. Rogard asked about using the funds for various student projects. The funds do not have to be used this fiscal year. Rogard asked members to come up with ideas to bring to the next (June) meeting.
- Recycling Budget Status – Jason updated members on the status of the recycling program. A resolution was approved unanimously by the City Council allowing the City Manager to sign a contract with TFC to continue the curbside recycling program as it currently stands in Chesapeake. The resolution extends the current recycling program through October 2024. There is more than a 50% increase in the cost of the program to the City; the cost works out to \$4.95/household/month. The City retains the option to cancel the contract at any time with 30 days' notice, giving the City options if conditions change in the future.
- Clean and Green Poster Contest –The poster contest is open to all K-12 students in Chesapeake. The deadline has been extended to June 1 and there is a drop off location for submissions. Megan asked for volunteers to be judges. The PRT FB page posts the winning posters.
- Chesapeake Conservation Conference/Luncheon Feedback – Megan will meet with the Conference Center this Friday for a feedback session to discuss how logistics went. Over 230 people were in attendance at the luncheon, which is more than have ever attended in the past. Megan suggested members email her if they have specific comments or recommendations for next year's conference.

II. New Business

- Nominating Committee – The terms of officers expire in June, so a nominating committee needs to form. Three people are needed. Rogard will participate, as well as Dave Sackett and Vikki Barnette. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary positions need to be filled.
- Fix-It Fairs – Megan described these events as ones where people who are good at fixing things are recruited and paired up with citizens who need things repaired that would otherwise be destined for the landfill. Western Branch may be the first area where such a fair would be organized. Megan will keep members updated on what this program may look like

and how much of a budget would be needed. Mike Barber suggested that PRT would handle logistics, but does not want to become involved in any liability issues, so they will look for groups to partner with. It was suggested that Elizabeth River Project might be a good candidate for partnership, to help with waivers and liabilities.

- Cigarette Litter Prevention Campaign – PRT has applied for a grant through Keep Virginia Beautiful to purchase eight cigarette litter receptacles for various locations around the City. Megan suggested the CEIC get involved in the public education part of the campaign. The cigarette butts would be sent to TerraCycle for recycling.
- PRT Facebook/Virtual Activities – Megan noted that PRT has been posting videos and other virtual activities to keep the public engaged and requested input on possible topics and content.
- Notable Yards Contest – Megan described the program for new members. The contest this year will be pushed back to a fall event. Advertisement of the contest will be open from July 1 to September 1 of this year. Winners would be announced in October. White’s Nursery has not committed to providing gift certificates.
- Business Beautification Contest – This year the timeline has not been adjusted for this contest. Aug 1 starts the nomination period. The judging committee from last year is looking at making some revisions to the judging process.

III. Seeking Volunteers

- Chesapeake Green Blog Contribution – Megan sent members an email describing this program and encouraged CEIC members to contribute.
- Clean and Green Poster Contest Judging – Megan reminded members to consider participating in the judging process.

IV. Additional Comments

Dave Sackett asked about the status of citywide recycling events. Jason said the next event is scheduled for September 19 in Western Branch. Jason will send members an email once he has the date confirmed. Becky asked Jason about the status of the Adopt-a-Spot program. Jason said Public Works audited their Adopt-a-Highway program and found well over 100 contracted adoptions of roadways in Chesapeake. The audit gave the adoptees more than 60 days to respond. Some 80% of these contracted adoptions were no longer active, for a variety of reasons. The updated list allowed Public Works to have the existing adoption signs removed, so a large number of areas are now open once again for adoption. The groups that remain active signed new contracts. The contracts are for one year, after which the adoptees need to renew if they are still able to maintain the site. The Adopt-a- Garden program is much smaller (24 groups), but it was not yet audited. Public Works will be focusing on that program next to determine how many adoptees are still actively maintaining their sites.

Ana Elezovic noted there is a “Zero Waste” Refill Market in Norfolk that offers bulk refills on various products. It’s called Less Than, on Shirley Avenue.

The meeting adjourned at 1:31 p.m. The next videoconference regular monthly meeting of the CEIC will take place on June 24, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lauren Ragsac, Secretary