



City of Harrisonburg Stormwater Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2020 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Members in attendance: Daniel Michael, Rob Alexander, Richard Baugh, Dale Chestnut, William Strosnider

Staff in attendance: Tom Hartman, Rebecca Stimson, Keith Thomas, Dan Rublee

Others in attendance: None

Review and Adopt Minutes

Daniel Michael called for a motion to adopt the December 2019 SWAC meeting minutes. The motion was made, seconded, and passed. Rebecca noted the newest member to the SWAC, William Strosnider. Introductions of each staff member and SWAC member were made. Tom Hartman gave a brief background of the SWAC.

Public Comment

There were no public comments received via email. There were also no call-ins.

HCAP Updates

Rebecca Stimson gave an update on the status of three approved HCAP projects, noting that one project, a green roof, was completed. Rebecca also pointed out that there has been some media attention for the first completed project which she hopes will help to spread the word about the program.

There are two approved projects on the same property, a permeable pavement and bioretention, that are still under construction. Staff became aware of concerns from neighbors and as a result we will be changing our process to include more outreach to neighbors so they are aware of the program and that a project will be installed.

Rebecca mentioned that there is one pending application for a permeable pavement project.

Rebecca advised that the Shenandoah Valley Soil & Water Conservation District has conducted 11 site visits since beginning of the new year. She noted the Conservation District staff use these site visits as an opportunity to educate residents about stormwater issues. Dale noted that the District staff often visit residents experiencing flooding issues which the program is not meant to deal with. Rebecca said in these cases the District staff will provide information about the Drainage Improvement Program. She mentioned that three of our Drainage Improvement applications came from HCAP visits. Rob asked if there was a target goal for HCAP applications per year. Rebecca stated that in the first year we were more concerned with getting the program established and seeing the interest out there. She also noted that she did not do a lot of advertisement of the program this past year, but, with the addition of a new outreach/media employee at Public Works, we should have more ability to get the word out this year.

Drainage Improvement Program

Ongoing Updates: Country Club

Rebecca advised that staff had a meeting in January with the landowners. Additionally, staff dropped off a letter at one of the businesses. Rebecca has also sent numerous emails and made several phone calls with the landowners to get the signatures on the easement donation letters. To-date, staff have received two out of the three letters.

Ongoing Updates: Newman Ave

Rebecca updated the Committee, noting that staff had posted door hangers with information about the public meeting. She advised that the door hangers proved to be a very effective tool at reaching the landowners. Staff conducted an in-person meeting in early March and were able to get most of the easement donation letters signed. Rebecca then dropped off easement donation letters to the landowners who did not attend the meeting as well as mailed additional letters to landowners who had not responded. Currently, we are waiting on one signature to continue.

Ongoing Updates: Woodland Dr

Rebecca noted that staff had also posted door hangers with information about the meeting date, then staff posted additional door hangers to note that the meeting was cancelled due to COVID 19. Staff then mailed letters with information about the program and proposed project as well as the easement donation letters to all the landowners. Rebecca has gotten several returned and noted that she got the signed easement donation letter from Sunchase Apartments today.

Rebecca also mentioned that as part of the application, the landowners complained of mosquito issues with the Reservoir BMP. Since then, staff have begun treating for mosquitos in that area and have had some success. Rebecca stated she has heard good comments back from the neighbors about addressing this issue.

Harmony Heights Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Harmony Heights Application Review & Next Steps

Rebecca advised that as the Drainage Improvement Program policy is currently written, only projects being considered for approval are required to be brought to the Committee. However, she mentioned that staff would present all applications to SWAC, even the ones not being recommended to move forward, to ensure everyone is informed of the decisions.

Staff received an application from landowners in the Harmony Heights neighborhood regarding erosion around the edge of the lake and the edges of the inlet ditch as well as issues with algae.

Rebecca noted that she has informed the property owners that staff are not recommending the application to go forward. Rebecca advised that she will contact the property owners to review the application and the reasons it was being denied. The property owners did not attend the meeting.

Rebecca explained that staff are not recommending the application to move forward because their main complaint is not with flooding issues impacting any homes or infrastructure but was with issues regarding maintenance items on their stormwater pond. She noted that staff did not find any public benefit to providing public funding towards projects of this type.

Tom noted that this was an HOA coming forward with maintenance items for their privately owned stormwater facility.

Dan mentioned that the stormwater facility was designed to convey water from the entire neighborhood that has been developed around it and explained that was evident by the fact that the landowners did not bring up any concerns or problems with the stormwater facility serving its designed function or having storage capacity issues. Dan also noted that algae might be an issue of stagnation and not enough turn over in the lake. As far as the erosion around the riprap channels, he stated it may be an improperly constructed riprap channel that is forcing the water to one side or it may be a maintenance issue.

Stormwater Program Updates

Rebecca noted that in May staff submitted our local Smith Creek TMDL Action Plan in accordance with the timeline requirements in our permit. Staff have not received any comments back from DEQ. Rebecca advised that staff may have to go back and revise the action plan based on expected new guidance to be released for calculating reductions.

Rebecca noted that staff have been working on our Annual Report for our MS4 permit. Rebecca mentioned that some of our permit requirements are not in-compliance due to COVID-19, particularly our education and public participation events, such as our rain barrel workshop and our annual Blacks Run Clean Up Day. She informed the Committee that DEQ is aware of these and has indicated they are expecting these issues from many localities. DEQ staff advised us to note our attempts and any impacts of COVID-19 in our Annual Report.

William asked how COVID-19 would impact our ability to meet our next pollution reduction goals. Rebecca mentioned that as long as the revenue stream for stormwater projects was not impacted, then we should have minimal impacts. Tom then pointed out that our stormwater projects are more insulated from the impacts of COVID-19 at this moment due to having a dedicated, enterprise fund that is independent of the General Fund.

Rebecca noted that staff have completed our first Stormwater Utility program re-application process. Staff spent considerable time reaching out to landowners to get as many as possible to renew. Additionally, staff have worked to streamline the re-application process and even created an online re-application form. Rebecca mentioned that out of the 160 applications needing to be renewed, all but 40 re-applied. She also noted that this will be something we will have to do every year going forward.

Rebecca informed the Committee that the Mountain View Drive Stream Restoration project had been delayed because it took longer to get the deed language finalized as a result of COVID-19 requiring the City Attorney to spend considerable time on that issue instead. She noted that we have the deed language finalized now and staff have begun setting up landowner meetings. Rebecca mentioned that we expect to have the project ready to go to bid by spring with construction starting by the summer.

Rebecca mentioned that while she has not officially heard back from DEQ regarding our SLAF applications, she advised that DEQ had reached out to staff for additional information regarding the VMRC project and the Northend Greenway.

Tom gave an update about new staff in Public Works that has expanded our capacity to serve our community. He noted the addition of Jeremy Harold, Greenspace Manager, who previously worked in the Parks and Recreation Department. Tom mentioned that with Jeremy in Public Works he has been able to expand his efforts citywide of installing pollinator spaces and the utilizing the trees removed in our parks as part of the urban wood program. Tom also mentioned the addition of Mike Hott, Landscape Supervisor, who also came from the Parks and Recreation Department. Mike spent this spring growing and planting over 4000 pollinator plants. Through Mike's ability to grow many of the plants from seed or small plugs, he was able to maximize the budget and bring in more plants.

Tom mentioned that staff have also created a pollinator habitat GIS storymap to highlight the hard work Mike and Jeremy put in to establish these areas this past spring. Rebecca informed the Committee that she would share the link to the storymap with the SWAC.

Rob asked about the collaboration with Jeremy and the community food forest. Tom noted that we had received a proposal from a group, but after reviewing the proposal noted there were some issues regarding liability. Tom advised staff sent back the issues they found and how the group might address them so they could consider making changes and bringing a revised proposal back.

Rob expressed that he would like to see the city leverage stormwater projects to address multiple issues facing our community. He also expressed that he liked that we were in a community where citizens can come up with an idea, bring it to the City. and the City listens. Rob also said he would like to see us team up with neighborhood groups and social media sites to help spread the word about our programs and outreach material like the pollinator storymap.

Next Meeting Dates

2020 Dates

- November 4, 2020