



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Final Environmental Performance Standards Committee

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

5:00 PM

Virtual

1. Call To Order

Deirdre Longacher Smeltzer called the meeting to order.

Members in attendance: Jeff Heie, Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh, Donna Armstrong, Doug Hendren, Brian Nixon, Deirdre Longacher Smeltzer, Andy Kohen (School Board Representative), Laura Dent (Council Representative).

Staff in attendance: Tom Hartman, Thanh Dang, Keith Thomas, Kelly Adams, Trina Mastran.

2. Review and Approval of Meeting Summary

Deidre asked for a motion for approval of meeting summary for the January 27th EPSAC meeting. Andy Kohen made the first motion and Doug Hendren seconded it. EPSAC members approved meeting summary unanimously.

Present 8 - Doug Hendren, Jeffrey Heie, Deidre Smeltzer, Mikeala Schmitt-Harsh, Andrew Kohen, Brian Nixon, Donna Armstrong, and Laura Dent

Absent 6 - Bradley Striebig, Tom Benevento, Leons Kabongo, MuAwai Dames, Marc Lemmond, and Joy Loving

3. New Business

a. Presentation on Moving Forward from Phase 1 to Phase 2 & 3

Trina gave a 30-minute presentation on how EPSAC and Staff move forward with the Environmental Action Plan from Phase I to Phase II & III. She referenced the Phase I document and when it was completed and that it is considered the guiding document. She reviewed the types of tasks and the responsible parties and acknowledged how tasks vary in level of effort. Trina went on to

describe the different phases to accomplish the EAP goals in Phase I. She explained that setting targets and having those targets adopted by the City Council is needed before action can occur. She admitted that tasks in some cases overlap.

Trina reviewed the Focus Areas (FAs) and the fact that she has added the City's Division Managers as Leads in these areas on the FA Group Assignment List as they are the subject area experts. She emphasized that the EPSAC members and School Staff and others are part of the team.

Trina then introduced Microsoft TEAMS as a platform to work through the next phases of the EAP. She explained the onboarding of Staff and that she wanted to train Staff and subsequently the EPSAC members on the Teams Platform once populated. Next steps would be to set guidelines for use and develop a website and develop additional tools. In addition, she explained that a strategy for monitoring and managing targets and outcomes had to be developed. Finally, she provided a schedule.

(0:21:10) Andy Kohen stated that Andrew Ansoorian is no longer employed with Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS), and he should be removed from the FA Group Assignment List.

Dierdre asked about the Staff person who is no longer with the City. Trina stated it was Adam Wright who left. Adam was the City's Facilities Manager and had previously managed the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory Consultant. Tom Hartman added that the City is in the process of hiring a Facilities Manager and described the areas of his/her responsibility. In addition, he stated that this person would be responsible for creating the City's Internal Energy Team (IET) which is important to track the City's energy usage data.

Councilwoman Dent made positive comments on Trina's work.

(0:25:40) Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh asked about the progress that has been made in the last year and half, for example regional food systems. She wanted to know if we were talking about the progress in this meeting and noted that given the timeline, she was worried that the EAP Phase I document would remain static. She inquired if changes and revisions would be allowed. Trina stated that she was going to talk about the 215 tasks in the EAP and that she wanted the Division Managers to provide their input as far as what in the plan is done. Trina stated that she did not see the EAP Phase I as static. She understood the urgency to act even at a worldwide level regarding reducing greenhouse gases, but she stated that the basis for the EAP is the GHG Inventory. Once the GHG Inventory is done EPSAC will see action take place. She further explained that the GHG Inventory lays the path forward for which actions the City would take to reduce GHG.

Deirdre referenced the last meeting discussion regarding the sense of urgency and that time should not be wasted making changes in the EAP; it was a matter of timing perhaps. Tom H. added he thought it also was a matter of what EPSAC and Staff wanted to change in the EAP. He stated he did not think changing a FA or Guiding Goal would be an easy change but that task level items would be easier to amend. This will happen as we get more information. Thanh Dang believed that we could add or change tasks if we are meeting the over arching goals and strategies. She did not believe that an amendment would be necessary. **(00:32:50)** Jeff Heie asked if a Facilities Manager must be hired to do a GHG Inventory. Trina responded that the City the GHG Inventory is underway and an update will be presented. Tom H. added that the

GHG Inventory will be completed before the Facilities Manager is hired. Trina has read these goals, strategies, and task numerous times and this has caused her to really think about the intent of them. She encouraged the EPSAC members to read the EAP again thoroughly and gain an understanding of how these goals can be achieved. She stated we are at a pivotal point in getting the GHG Inventory completed, reviewed, and setting targets. She stated she would want to get the targets set and adopted before the plan was revised.

(00:34:41) Councilwoman Dent discussed how the FA1 (Buildings and Energy) Group had proposed amendments to this FA in the EAP and stated that Trina and Tom pointed out that those changes already existed in the EAP and that was helpful. However, she thought the Renewable Energy Resolution was somewhat of a seismic change and that Staff could not make those changes. She continued that at some point we need to address the Renewable Energy aspect of the EAP which is not there now, and it would take a larger City-wide collaboration. She followed that Staff recognized another piece that is outside of staff's purview as the gathering of stakeholders and the alliance with other entities around the state and the nation. (Note: Staff can provide outreach to stakeholders in the Community, professionally and as allowed by City policy and required by their position). Councilwoman Dent stated she has been participating in the National League of Cities' Energy and Environment Advisory Committee where members are advising national policy from the perspective of local leaders. Those are things she is doing as a local leader and believes there are things EPSAC members can do that are outside the scope of what Staff are doing. The EPSAC members ultimately recognized that EAP Phase I is done and decided to move on and consider these items as EPSAC and Staff move on into Phase II & III.

(00:36:50) Trina and Deirdre mentioned Brad's question regarding the regular review of the EAP Phase I. Deirdre stated we touched on this at the last meeting. Trina stated that Thanh had used the update of the City's Comprehensive Plan as an example during that discussion and believed that that is a guideline. Tom H. stated that like the Comprehensive Plan, the EAP can be reviewed every 5 years but if revisions need to be made beforehand, we can do that when they are justified.

(00:38:11) Donna Armstrong commented that she thought there is an all or nothing kind of thinking about this, and was not sure that is flexible, which is what the EPSAC members are looking for. She added she was new to EPSAC and has worked a lot in her professional career in public health and regional food security; she stated she was an urban farmer and found the regional food section (FA3) to be very underdeveloped even though it is well written; it is not very actionable. She did not think it captured some of the key points and actions that could reinforce some of the GHG initiative and effort. Donna inquired whether Trina received her (public) comment. And Trina stated when she received it, she was unsure if it was a public comment or a comment intended for staff. Trina stated that knowing now that it was intended to be shared with EPSAC, she will forward the information to Committee members and will put it on the new Teams Platform when that is set up.

Trina added that she is a Utilities Engineer and thought FA6, Water Resources, was underdeveloped but after getting more familiar with the EAP she realized that in the Water Resources FA there were a lot of sustainable initiatives that were already in place. Trina stated that she believed the FA3, Regional Food Systems, of the

EAP may be underdeveloped because we may not have had folks with much experience to assist with that section. Donna stated she could see that the EAP was a big effort to get off the ground and could see that it lifted off in some sections but not quite as well in others. Deirdre wondered if this could be a test case for modifications or additions to the action items. Donna replied she thought that to be true and wanted to know there could be some “reset-tivity” and appreciated that the GHG inventory is the real effort. She just wanted to see the ability to grow the Regional Food Systems FA of the EAP. Donna wanted to see some process in place for considering suggestions for the EAP and added that she believed there are things in the Food section that supported other initiatives. Trina stated that the Focus Area discussions are a good time to talk about these subject area topics. Thanh suggested that before we leave the meeting that we talk about the procedures for Public Comment. Tom H. added that he appreciated Donna’s comments but wanted to state that there should be a process. He stated it is important to understand what amendments would do to the process and that ultimately it would slow the (work) process down due to staff time dedicated to working on amendments to the EAP rather than implementation of Phase II & III. The FA Groups should weigh the benefit of any amendment against possible delaying of the work prior to recommending a change to EPSAC. Tom H. also noted that the FA Groups work independently of each other; if one is delayed other FAs keep moving forward.

(00:46:33) Deirdre followed up with three summary questions: 1) What is the process for changes in the EAP which may not be full amendment level changes that are believed to assist in achieving the EAP Goals? 2) When and how is the entire EAP document revised? 3) How can the energy and expertise of the EPSAC Members and the FA Group Members be harnessed and utilized?

Deirdre wanted to flag these questions and stated there is work that EPSAC Members could do in between meetings.

[Click here to enter the action/summary \(insert the summary from the memo here\)](#)

b. Green House Gas (GHG) Inventory Update

Trina explained there were two inventories: the Community and Municipal level inventories for baseline year 2016 and then 2019. She explained that Dr. Sean McGinnis is working on the Municipal GHG Inventory and that it is 90% Complete. She also mentioned that ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, which the City is a member, is the organization that guides local and governments in this process. It is their ClearPath software that is used for the GHG Inventory. Trina provided a summary of the data that is gathered. She explained that this software models actions taken and results in reductions. Trina emphasized that having the GHG Inventory and a model assists with making decisions as to where to focus efforts for the greatest GHG reductions.

(00:53:00) Councilwoman Dent asked about the Municipal GHG Inventory schedule. Trina stated she expects it to be completed in a month and would like to have it reviewed prior to the next EPSAC meeting in July. Tom H. explained that it is an expectation that Dr. McGinnis would review the GHG Inventory and how it was done. Dr. McGinnis would either be at the next meeting or there would be a separate meeting depending upon his availability. Deirdre stated it would be valuable to have Dr. McGinnis to walk through the findings. Trina stated that there is a process once the Municipal GHG Inventory is completed. She commented that there are other stakeholders who should be involved moving forward when setting targets. Trina emphasized Equity and Sustainability as we moved forward.

[Click here to enter the action/summary \(insert the summary from the memo here\)](#)

c. Status of Goals, Strategies and Tasks

Trina reviewed the EAP Progress Update with respect to the 215 goals, strategies, and tasks in the EAP. She acknowledged that she was not sure if some items were or were not done. She stated that in reviewing the tasks and goals that the chart represents what she thought was in progress, completed or not started and that in many cases she simply did not know. She also stated that this is where the Public Works Division Managers who manage much of the work in the FAs, can provide more accurate input as far as the status of the goals and tasks. In addition, Trina challenged the members of EPSAC to really look at each goal and task and decide of the status of each. Trina mentioned that she had developed an Excel spreadsheet as a tool to assist with this process to determine what phase each task was in, whether the task was qualitative or quantitative in nature and what the status was. She intends on sending the spreadsheet to each member for them to go through this very exercise.

(0:59:38) Mikalea responded that she agreed and found that a lot of the language in the Phase I document was a bit ambiguous. She recalled that it was purposefully ambiguous because maybe the City wasn't ready to commit to certain strategies at some point. Tom H. said that was true as Staff and the EPSAC members didn't know what they didn't know. Mikaela further stated that in looking at Guiding Goal 3, *"Continue to Grow and Deepen Local Partnerships in Order to Further the Implementation of the Environmental Action Plan"*, that all the tasks are to continue to leverage and or deepen partnerships; not so sure how one could measure their progress. Trina responded that some of these tasks also are the responsibility of Council Members and asked how information gathered to update the status of these tasks. She also mentioned that there were "Initiatives" in the EAP and that Public Utilities is an example in FA6, Water Resources, where a lot of sustainable and resilience work has already been in process and or

completed and is in the monitoring Phase. Trina summarized that she really wanted the Staff and EPSAC members to think about the status of these tasks and the meaning of the tasks prior to making any amendments. Can more clarity be provided for these items which are seemingly ambiguous? When outreach efforts begin there are some real tangible things, we can show visually such as the mapping of the City's tree canopy. The GHG Inventory will be huge and that will parlay into other sub activities and projects. **(1:02:48)** Thanh stated that she liked the progress chart as it gives a quick snapshot of what was completed, what is in progress and what has not started. She went on to say that she looked at one of the continued statements and that staff will need to establish the baselines in these cases and the target to make these types of tasks more objective and measurable. It may be possible to look at these more ambiguous statements and make them more quantifiable. Trina agreed and stated that the EAP document should be lived a little to absorb it.

(1:04:40) Mikaela asked how EPSAC can help City Staff transition a task from not started to in progress. Trina responded that the plan assigns almost everything to non-EPSAC members. Trina stated that this is a conversation to have with the City Division Managers, whom are Team Leads in the FAs. Thanh agreed that that would be an appropriate forum to have that discussion; it would help prioritize the tasks. Trina acknowledged that not everything can be in progress as there were not enough Staff. The challenge is how can the expertise of the EPSAC members be utilized. She added that she felt dividing and conquering into FAs would be a good place to do that. She reiterated that the Teams Platform should be a way to share information and to have an open dialog. Deirdre commented that she liked the idea of the members working in the FA groups with the assigned manager (and Team Lead) to offer their expertise in smaller pieces. **(1:08:05)** Donna pointed out that when she reads through the FA3, Regional Food

Systems, she struggled with its vagueness and that is what the concern is. She gave an example of the verbiage “work on this” and pointed out that that task has no outcome. Thus, perhaps the tasks need to be “clarified” rather than “amended”. We need specific tasks where some of these strategies and tasks are not measurable. Trina responded that it is vague because we lacked the experience in that area when the EAP was written. There are a lot of people from the school system on that FA3 Group and it would be nice when there is further engagement with them in a team meeting. Donna agreed that she does not know the other members in FA3 except Deirdre, Brian and Leons but would welcome working with groups that are really trying to apply regional food systems efforts and thinking. Trina followed up with the fact we have different managers in this area; Trina would like the opportunity to engage others in FA3 to see what their level of experience is and seeing if they are interested in being on that team.

(1:11:34) Andy stated that there is a divide and conquer strategy which allocates to the individual FA Groups some decision making about priorities that he thought was the province of the EPSAC Members and wondered if he was misunderstanding that. Trina responded that the EPSAC is advisory and that their leading charge is making recommendations for targets to Council which is a big charge and to assist with getting to that point. She further stated that the managers and their Staff are involved in so many projects that relate to this plan that they can inform everyone as to work progress and workload. She did not think staff would receive it well if they were told by others what their priorities would or should be when their boss has assigned them work priorities. Andy responded that he had thought it was the province of the entire EPSAC to at least discuss the priority of dealing with various components. He further questioned where the decision-making takes place and how does EPSAC give advice where

they think the priorities should be. **(1:13:43)** Deirdre followed that we could think about it in that the entire group has been subdivided into smaller units that are still serving that function and perhaps a regular part of the EPSAC quarterly meeting could include some reporting back from the FA groups on key points of discussion and recommendations. Trina agreed and assumed that because EPSAC members are in these FAs that their advice would come through these FA Groups. This is not to exclude other members; and everything cannot be done at once. Andy agreed and asked how do staff and EPSAC balance priorities across FAs and not just within them. Trina responded that that may just bear itself out in the FA Group meetings. The GHG Inventory is a number one priority by its nature. Councilwoman Dent stated she imagined a matrix or spreadsheet like the City's Capital Improvement Plan and that there could be a numeric priority and one could see all the tasks and priorities with justification such as "it is mandated" or "is a safety measure". Trina followed with the fact that the Teams Platform has a ranking tool for priority for each task that can be utilized as well; that can be part of the ongoing conversation.

Click here to enter the action/summary (insert the summary from the memo here)

d. Follow-up Discussion of Resolution for Renewable Energy

Tom H. reviewed that after the EPSAC January meeting that he, Thanh and Trina sat down with the City Attorney regarding what the Resolution means, what the intended use would be, how it relates to Virginia's Clean Economy Act, and what those relationships are. Subsequently, the City Manager and City Attorney needed more clarification from Council to help give staff the direction they needed to share with EPSAC how the resolution was going to move forward in relationship to the EAP and EPSAC. At last night's Council meeting the City Attorney shared that Staff needed more information on the Resolution framework. Council agreed they needed to bring this up

again and the plan forward is for Staff to work with the City Attorney to formulate talking points for the City Attorney to bring back to Council in May for a more engaged discussion regarding the intent of the resolution. Tom H. stated a summary of that discussion and next steps would be provided to EPSAC members prior to the next EPSAC meeting. Councilwoman Dent stated she had asked Council to postpone this agenda item until June due to budget discussions; probably the first meeting in June. (Note: As of this writing this item will not be on the first meeting in June but may be put on the Council Meeting agenda for subsequent meetings in June or July.). Tom H. summarized that he understood the time the budget process takes in May and at this time staff cannot provide much discussion because more guidance and direction from the City Manager is required.

(1:22:37) Doug responded he was glad that staff recognized the discussion and appreciated the awkwardness of the sudden appearance of the Resolution for City Staff and that it is important to not have awkwardness. Doug stated that it seems the potential for elevating the conversation by EPSAC members to create opportunities to sit at the table and have conversations among different stakeholders in our friendly City is a great opportunity not to waste. He followed that part of what EPSAC is to do relates to the EAP and some (charge) goes beyond the EAP. The issues expressed in the resolution are de facto issues of concern. No matter what conclusion these are automatically somewhere in EPSAC's wheelhouse. The real potential for EPSAC is to provide a platform that allows it to sit at the table and have frank discussions and that opportunity should be taken seriously. **(1:26:09)** Councilwoman Dent stated she had a zoom interview with WHSVA and that they wanted to know if there would be opportunity for public input and she stated yes and recited part (#3) of the Resolution, "Proclaim its commitment to equity, affordability and access for all people through public participation of diverse stakeholders as the City pursues a just transition...". She

followed with that is right there in the Resolution and as Doug says it also is there in the EPSAC Bylaws, “the issues of interest of the community”. She summarized by stating the stakeholder review process should very well be under the EPSAC purview even aside from the EAP, which is more of the purview of the City Staff. Doug agreed and stated that Tom, Thanh and Trina acknowledged that they couldn’t participate in some changes absent changes in the City Code nor items with implied changes to HEC. (Note: Staff have stated that they do not have the authority to expend dollars for capital projects or amend City policies and procedures etc. without approval from the City Manager and as appropriated by City Council.) Additionally, Doug stated City Council will or will not do things to change that. Doug inquired in taking the Resolution as part of what EPSAC is responding to is there some way to be able to use the Teams Platform when rolled out to have a channel where some of these things can be furthered discussed even if they cannot fit into the EAP. Tom H. followed that is what we are doing is trying to find out the intent of the Resolution in the context of the EAP. Councilwoman Dent acknowledged there needed to be more input from Council but discussions on this matter do not need to be delayed. Doug followed that Richard Baugh thought that these issues could end up in the EAP and indicated that sooner or later they were going to end up in the EAP.

[Click here to enter the action/summary \(insert the summary from the memo here\)](#)

4. Next Steps

2021 Meeting Dates

July 28, 2021

October 27, 2021

5. Adjournment

The next regular meeting will be on Wednesday, July 28, 2021