



**2019 CEQ ANNUAL REPORT TO THE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND  
BALTIMORE COUNTY COUNCIL**

July 31, 2021

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The Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ) which was established by legislation in 2003, met eight times during the 2019 calendar year. Commission chair, Lois Jacobs, set the agendas and presided at the meetings. CEQ Secretary, Andy Miller, took minutes at the meetings.

The CEQ 2019 Annual Report to the Baltimore County Executive and Baltimore County Council fulfills the requirement specified in the Baltimore County Code subsection 3-3-2006 and provides a summary of CEQ activities and actions in 2019.

## CEQ MEMBERSHIP

The Commission saw active and purposeful participation by its members throughout 2019. The 2019 CEQ membership included the following commissioners and County liaisons:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Appointed By</b>
Brian Bernstein	County Executive at Large
Linda Davis	County Executive at Large
Brian Fath, PhD	County Executive at Large
S. Glenn Elseroad	County Executive Agricultural Representative
Andy Miller, PhD	County Executive Educator and Scientist
Joan Plisko, PhD	County Executive Environmental Organizations Representative (as of May 2019)
Rex Wright, PE	County Executive Business Community
Valerie Androutsopoulos	Council District 1
Lois Jacobs, Chair	Council District 2
Chris Overcash	Council District 3
Linda Eisenberg	Council District 4
Carol Newill, MD, PhD	Council District 5
Avery Harden	Council District 6 (as of September, 2019)
Karen Wynn	Council District 7
Brian Lindley	County Government Liaison, EPS
Kui Zhao	County Government Liaison, Planning
Sheldon Epstein	County Government Liaison, DPW (as of September 2019)

## CEQ MISSION STATEMENT

CEQ activities in 2019 furthered the mandates established for the Commission.

The purpose of the CEQ, through its duties and responsibilities as described in the Baltimore County Code, subsection 2-2-21, is to encourage protection and preservation of the natural environment in Baltimore County and its waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay, by educating the community to make environmentally sustainable decisions and by enlightening, advising, and initiating dialogue with County officials. It facilitates communication between the County government and its residents on environmental needs, programs, and legislation.

As a group of dedicated volunteers for environmental integrity, the members understand the need for following and monitoring environmental plans.

## WORK ITEMS / REPORTS / PRESENTATIONS

### Transition Activities and Reports

- Roundtable with County Executive

In early January, incoming County Executive Olszewski invited Environmental groups to meet with him and discuss their concerns. There was a good representation from CEQ (about 6 people) including our chair. In addition, 3 of our Commissioners – Davis, Newill and Wynn, are also part of a Steering Committee for a County-wide Alliance of Environmental Groups. They produced a document for the transition team that ranked policies on Transportation, Infrastructure and Sustainability.

- Town Hall Meetings

These were scheduled for each district and started with a presentation by County Executive Olszewski and remarks by the Councilman for that district. Each meeting was attended by at least one CEQ member, who brought back information and updates to the Commission. A large number of citizens attended each meeting; participants had 2 minutes to present their issues and could also provide written comments. Many Community concerns were expressed. Our CEQ attendees were impressed with the attitude of respect, commitment to listening, and response to Community concerns. Follow-up is reported to be ongoing.

- Transition Report

The incoming Administration's transition report included discussion of issues important to CEQ such as recycling and solid waste, and there is evidence of cross department communication. According to Dave Lykens, Acting Director of EPS (who was a guest at our February meeting), there is overlap between EPS, Planning, and DPW as sustainability efforts are relevant to all three. The report suggests creating an Office of Sustainability within the Executive Office to ensure initiatives are coordinated and carried out across agencies – a policy that CEQ has long desired. It was suggested that once this office was created, there would be an opportunity for CEQ to get involved in communication about key issues. The report also supports efforts to ban plastic bags and polystyrene – issues CEQ has advocated for many years.

### Office of Information Technologies (OIT) policies affecting CEQ

Posted Minutes are kept 4 to 5 years and then archived. "Archive" actually means that minutes older than 4 years cannot be accessed. CEQ Chair Lois Jacobs has therefore searched old records and retrieved past minutes and related documents; we should maintain digital and/or hard copies for future reference, as our minutes contain valuable information, dates, references and details of presentations our Commissioners might wish to access. Dave Lykens said he would look into this and try to make sure OIT policy allows for retrieval of important documents.

At our March 27th CEQ meeting, EPS Liaison Brian Lindley said OIT was working on creating a website to store CEQ Minutes and are in discussions with EPS on resolving this issue.

Presentation: SharePoint Program Overview - Brian Lindley.

At our October meeting, EPS Liaison Brian Lindley outlined the SharePoint program which serves as a library for documents and platform for collaboration in producing reports. CEQ would be “guinea pigs” for this program which would allow us to keep our minutes and documents indefinitely – and access things said or written from original source material. Brian will let us know when details have been worked out with OIT. By the end of 2019, we still have heard nothing more about this possible solution.

### Tightening Maryland Forest Conservation Laws

Based on a 2/22 article by this name written by Dick Williams and Bernadette Roche in the Sun paper, our February meeting featured a lively discussion between our Commissioners and Acting EPS Director Dave Lykens, who was our guest. He noted that three forest conservation laws are working their way through the State Legislature this year. A fee in lieu means a developer needs to find tree planting space elsewhere – one can plant trees or buy twice as much existing forest and place it in Conservation Easement. The County prefers the developer should be responsible for tree planting. If trees are cut down, then they should be replaced – just preserving other trees is not enough and results in a net loss. There is also an effort to tighten rules so there is no canopy credit without different layers and other natural forest features. Under the existing plan 75% of the trees must survive three years before developers get their money back. Portions of the security are given back each year at 75% survival, and the remainder at the end of the 3 year period. The County inspects on schedule and there are fill-in replantings as needed. At some point, the trees must survive on their own. Developers are required to put easements around planted areas and EPS does periodic checks to ensure ongoing protections.

### Climate Change Actions, Presentations and Reports

Adaption and resilience to Climate Change was the major focus for CEQ throughout 2019. At our January meeting discussions began on how to best help our County cope with changes and how best to frame issues and identify what is important. We should consider connections to number of people affected, sea level rise, pumping stations, wells, salt water intrusion, effects on agriculture, canopy and forest changes, storm water and waste water, and sea walls, among other factors. A worse case scenario could be a 6 to 9 foot sea level rise by 2100.

- In February our meeting focused on a Commission Brainstorming Session led by Rex Wright. Both the County Executive and Councilman Marks have asked for input. Rex went back to the Sustainability Report from 10 years ago that had 121 prioritized recommendations with backing documents still available. There was much information on energy and emissions but almost no discussion of stormwater issues. We need to reorganize and update past information and factor and reframe evolving changes. People will need to understand it will cost more later if investments are not made now.
- In March we discussed best practices and resources for who is dealing with resilience in the face of climate change. The impact of big events make planning and responsiveness more difficult. It was agreed to form a sub-committee to outline an approach to a CEQ Report. Commissioner Newill agreed to host and be the lead on this issue. The sub-committee met within 2 weeks and reported back to the Commission at the April Meeting; the draft outline included resources available from other jurisdictions and some forwarded by Commissioner Overcash based on reports his company did for local governments. Our goal is to prioritize guidance and focus for adaptation planning – including critical services that would be affected by rising sea levels. Some issues relate to progressive/chronic conditions, others to potential catastrophic events that become more serious in time.

As follow-up Commissioner Newill drafted a one-page letter and a short report focused on the need to plan strategies for resilience to climate change and were sent to the County Executive and the County Council in advance of the Council's vote on the County Executive's budget – which contained funding for a Sustainability Coordinator. Four Commissioners testified in favor of this position. At the final budget vote, the Sustainability Coordinator position was retained and funded. Our Commission was happy that this needed step forward had finally happened.

- At the May meeting we also discussed working on mitigation efforts (e.g. carbon emissions reduction) along with adaptation strategies. Energy conservation and clean energy alternatives should be part of the planning process. We also agreed we should ask EPS not to grant waiver exceptions that allow construction in wetlands – this negates other environmental and resiliency goals of both EPS and CEQ; it is likely to be a long-term issue.

- Planning Liaison, Kui Zhao, shared an article on Extreme Heat and Urban Equity which discussed unequal impacts on disadvantaged populations (including pedestrians) and lack of bus shelters and/or tree cover. Kui pointed out that the article did not discuss situations in people's homes, or the difficulty of counting rural populations without economic resources. There are a range of Environmental Justice issues that could be considered. Commissioner Plisko suggested that we should include an equity lens in our efforts going forwards.

- Climate Ready DC – Plan to Adapt to a Changing Climate.

This excellent Plan Report deals with heat equity, heat islands, and what types of mitigation/adaptation efforts are possible to support local populations exposed to increasingly extreme conditions. Our Chair suggested this report could be used as a template and/or resource for a similar plan for Baltimore County.

- CEQ also welcomed May meeting guest Pete Gutwald, the new Director of Planning; he gave an overview of his 30 years of Planning experience (Harford County) and floodplain management (Annapolis), focusing on wetlands, sea level rise, flooding and impacts on infrastructure. He also dealt with forest and Urban Canopy issues. He has not yet started climate change discussions with the Baltimore County Planning Department.

- When CEQ reconvened after the summer break, our September guest was the new (and first) Director/Coordinator for Sustainability, Steve Lafferty. With input from CEQ members, Carol Newill prepared an outline of topics and questions for Mr. Lafferty, which was distributed in advance (see attachment). Carol introduced Director Lafferty and summarized his job description, experience and work on Sustainability issues (see Minutes of 9-25-19 for complete list). He was asked to address what he sees as his chief priorities and major challenges. We began our conversation with his concept of Sustainability as a broad umbrella term and something that needs to penetrate all operations of County Government and all its agencies. Obvious areas of concern are sea level rise, stormwater management, increased summer heat and its effects on agriculture, Community well-being and public health. The built environment has to be considered – the County is very concerned about the vulnerability of its infrastructure and assets. We have to work on energy reduction and move towards renewables; we are looking at best practices anywhere they could be helpful. There are also many untapped resources – federal, state, foundation and philanthropic opportunities. Historically, there have not been good relationships with other jurisdictions, but the County Executive wants to foster regionalism. Conversations are ongoing with the City and other counties. We also need to partner with faith

communities and other NGOs. One of our challenges is to better understand the challenge of low-income communities and provide adequate resources. This is one of the reasons the County Executive hired a diversity officer – to create a different culture within the County government.

Although Climate Change is not a stated required element of the next Master Plan, we should not overlook the need to address these issues even if they are not mandated.

- Conversation with DPW Director Steve Walsh and DPW Bureau of Solid Waste Management Head Charlie Reighart – October 2019.

At our CEQ meeting on 10/23 we examined climate change impacts affecting Public Works and the difficulty of improving drainage in older communities without turning them upside-down. Infrastructure built under old development practices cannot be easily changed, even if budgets allowed for this. They have \$4 million over two years, and most goes to system preservation and pipes that fail. For new development, homes can be elevated to accommodate sea level rise. We need a County flood plain layer to cover areas where FEMA does not go. Sometimes the County has to buy out property owners and balance cost of remediation vs removing people from risk. The County does not have complete maps for locating storm drains. Short term plans are to work with the budgets we are given and recommend projects and try to fund them. There is also an ongoing study on how to protect sewage pump stations in the coastal plain.

- Recycling and Waste Prevention: Charlie Reighart pointed out although composting gets a lot of attention, it does not prevent waste from being created, which is most important. The Bureau is working on its 10 year plan and MDE has a source reduction or waste prevention credit plan. A County Reuse Directory is produced every two years. The Bureau does school presentations on recycling and waste prevention and emphasize this also at public events. Bicycles are being taken for reuse at the Cockeysville facility, and electronics can now be dropped off six days a week. They are also looking into mixed waste processing and possibly anaerobic digestion for organic waste products as future alternatives. A regional approach is being encouraged for some of these processes.

- Presentation on Reducing Food Waste and Threats to the Food supply due to Climate Change – Joan Plisko

At our December 4th meeting, Commissioner Plisko gave a presentation on a project and subsequent report she conducted to reduce food waste in Baltimore’s hospitality sector; WWF sponsored this project. The full report was distributed to CEQ members ahead of the meeting. The Convention Center served as the lead institution. They looked at food waste infrastructure and patterns and came up with a program to lessen impact on the environment, save money, feed hungry people, and reduce waste to landfills.

USEPA produced a food waste reduction hierarchy with source reduction at the top, feeding people, feeding animals, industrial use/energy, diversion/compost and landfill – this model was used for the program. The Convention Center reduced landfill waste by 73%, increased people fed by 83%, reduced need for composting, increased industrial use and energy, and increased food used for animals (see Report for details now on CEQ website).

We discussed possible options for the County – what agencies/departments should be involved, liability issues, and questioned whether the County should proceed alone or with regional partners and or NGOs. This should be recognized as a climate change resilience effort. 40% of US food is wasted, 70%

of biodiversity loss is due to food production, as is 70% of fresh water. We can do better. CEQ will continue to look at this issue next year.

### **Pesticides and Toxins**

County Sustainability Coordinator Steve Lafferty says use of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides is a recurring County issue. If the ultimate answer is not to use them, what are the alternatives and the cost differential? The County has decided to use up its supply of Round-up and then switch to something less toxic – but why continue to use a product proven to be dangerous and already banned by the EU and other entities? How much is still in storage? The primary County user is likely Property Management. The Board of Education is a separate user. Unlike the Agriculture Industry and others, average citizens can purchase these products without a license to use and apply them – and without knowing the risks involved; there is a huge public exposure to these products. To suggest specific alternatives, we would need to consult outside expertise. It may better to suggest a larger change in practice to reduce the need for chemicals (see minutes of 12/4/19 for alternatives used by the State and other entities). We should note that State Delegate Dana Stein is introducing a State Chlorpyrifos Bill that will be a priority this year.

### **Deer Management**

Commissioner Davis requested an update on the Deer Management Plan. EPS Liaison Lindley said there is a five-year plan Contract in discussion, with a survey next fall and a hunt a few months after that – a year from this Winter. They want to expand the hunt from beyond Cromwell Valley and Oregon Ridge to Lake Roland. There are also reports of wasting disease in Baltimore County. Commissioner Elseroad mentioned that the farming community would like some guidance on how to best manage deer and their impact on crops- this becoming a serious problem, especially for those who grow vegetables.

### **CONTACT WITH CITIZENS**

Citizen inquiries, concerns and complaints, came to CEQ via its website and/or to individual commissioners. Requests were directed to the proper County Agencies. Citizen concerns were discussed by the Commissioners, who decided if further response or action was necessary. Frequent topics focused on trash disposal, littering, recycling issues, flood damage, park related problems, stream erosion, Urban Tree destruction, and apparent lack of government transparency. Our CEQ County Liaisons helped us find the appropriate persons to deal with specific problems.

### **CONTACT WITH COUNTY**

During 2019, CEQ members:

- Communicated with Council members to update them on CEQ activities and to discuss environmental concerns and priorities in their districts and the County as a whole.
- Attended Council Work Sessions, Council meetings, Planning Board meetings, Roundtable with the County Executive, and Town Hall Meetings.
- Testified on recycling issues, Climate Change issues and the need for a Sustainability Coordinator.
- Welcomed the ongoing attendance, information, advice and support provided by our CEQ County Liaisons Brian Lindley (EPS), Kui Zhou (Planning), Sheldon Epstein (DPW).
- Initiated contact and conversation with members of the new Administration.

- Had as guests Department Directors Gutwald and Walsh, Bureau Head Reighart, and Sustainability Coordinator Lafferty.

## COMMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The Commissioners discussed concerns and priorities in their districts and the County as a whole, and in their areas of environmental expertise. The Commission updated the CEQ website, and prioritized topics for ongoing and future consideration. Commission members also attended environmental hearings, workshops, lectures and events around the County.

## ONGOING CEQ MEMBER CONCERNS

The Commission will continue to review environmental issues confronting the County, with particular attention to Council members topics of concern, or the environmental concerns of the Executive. Issues for future actions include:

- Climate change Adaption and Resilience in Baltimore County.
- Urban and Forest Tree Canopies.
- Reduction of air-borne pollutants.
- Recycling and waste reduction – including Food Waste Strategies.
- Alternative energy generation/production.
- Deer Management - other wildlife issues when appropriate.
- Pesticides and Toxins
- Update of CEQ Reports on Road Salt and Plastic Bags
- Invasive Species