

Minutes

Baltimore County Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

April 26, 2023 at 7 pm on Webex

CEQ webpage: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/ceq/index.html

Participants: Jennifer Aiosa, Carol Newill, Chris Overcash, Dustin Shearer, Jennifer Langford, Karen Wynn, Lynda Eisenberg, Mahnaz Mazaheri Assadi, Lois Jacobs, Steve Malan, Valerie Androutsopoulos, Andy Miller, Brian Lindley, Radu Zamfirache, Jenna Mitchell, Margie Brassil, John W. Commissioners Brian Fath and Brian Bernstein were unable to attend.

I. Welcome. This is the 6th evening in the CEQ series on the expected increases in extreme weather and water-related challenges (coastal and non-coastal) in Baltimore County, their projected impacts, and the development of resiliency to protect essential infrastructure and public health. Goals of the series are to present information and to stimulate discussion, thus encouraging timely progress on climate change adaptation in our county.

II. Jenn Aiosa is speaking on “Ramping Up Resilience Efforts in Baltimore County”. Ms. Aiosa is the Director of Government Affairs and former Chief Sustainability Officer, Baltimore County.

Gave a PowerPoint presentation on Climate Change and Greenhouse gas emissions. Presented how the county is using this information for services and impacts to services. Examples shown from the County’s Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) and issues with Emergency Services and Preparedness in the face of climate change. Introduced the What’s next with several regional programs being prepared by BMC, Chesapeake Bay Program and MDE. Looking more holistically on how we can do that. Baltimore County specific initiatives: Equitable Resilience- Tree Canopy across the county and the correlation with poverty level and black and brown communities having the lowest among of tree canopy. Interesting info that these areas have higher emergency calls to 911 for heat related issues. Discussed grants specifically for Turner Station to reduce flooding vulnerabilities. Mentioned 2012 SWM Bill “Rain Tax” that the County did not implement and instead rely on County CIP and grants for SWM projects which is not enough money for all the projects needed. Baltimore County is now looking at a potential for a resilience authority similar to Charles County Maryland. Looking to increase Climate Outreach, Education and Advocacy in the County. Jen shared her optimism for the future as the County moves forward to address these issues

Chris Overcash asked about a possible plan for Resilience Authority and about a plan for Turner Station.

Jennifer Aiosa: We are looking to our consultant to help with plans for the Resilience Authority. They have experience working with local jurisdictions to come up with local funding for green and gray infrastructure. Does the County have any assets we could monetize that might provide the funding for the repayment of bonds? Could we look at more innovative financing tools like environmental impact bonds? Are there fees for service in particular communities to address a particular challenge or concern? Also, one of the things a Resilience Authority can provide is a more streamlined approach to things like procuring services, leveraging grant dollars and other sources of funding. We are awaiting the ideas that the consulting group generates that may help us articulate what those revenue streams might look like.

On Turner Station, we have some exciting work that is blooming there. The two grants that we were recently awarded – the first was a nationally competitive coastal resilience planning grant from National

Fish & Wildlife Federation that involves multiple agency and NGO partners to evaluate where there are opportunities in the landscape to reduce the volumes of runoff that is flooding particular areas of the community. And what does the community really want to see? What are their biggest concerns about flooding, heat, climate change? If we know we can't stop sea-level rise, what are things that residents of Turner Station and other low-lying communities can do to reduce property damage and to manage the effects of flooding and heat? The end of the process will be to produce a resilience roadmap with things that can be done including green and gray infrastructure to reduce flooding as much as possible. This comes from my experience when I first came to the County administration and realized there was so much interest in Turner Station but there were not coordinated efforts. The idea developed to bring those partners and stakeholder groups together to develop a plan, with different tasks but all seeking to develop one plan that comes from community conversations to develop this road map. There was also a pot of money (\$1.4 million) from congressionally designated sources to develop ideas to see what might work and begin to implement some elements of the resilience planning that community members are hoping for. A lot of excitement and activity going on around capacity building within the community itself and around how we can help this community to implement their vision.

Dustin Shearer: are you going to push for additional stormwater requirements for the county specifically for volume?

Jennifer Aiosa: I don't know – I know Baltimore County is actively participating in MDE's A-Storm process and I do have an expectation that our local management standards may well change or increase associated with what comes out of the state-driven process. I'm also very mindful that in some of the places where we may be experiencing the greatest need, people aren't necessarily seeing a lot of new development or redevelopment so we may have to think about our regulatory framework to best address the needs in some communities that may not be able to rely on increased development or redevelopment standards for stormwater. I know we will have those conversations but can't predetermine the outcome.

Radu Zamfirache: The main issue in Turner Station is that we can't drain it naturally because elevations are too low. We need pumping and that has enormous costs. The question is how much watershed storage we can develop to reduce the need for pumping. That is what the federal earmark grant will be paying for. In terms of regulatory mandates, Jennifer is absolutely correct, but Turner Station is somewhat unique relative to upland locations. There is a high environmental justice score and high vulnerability here and that is one reason why Turner Station is getting so much attention. There is a sanitary sewer pumping station, but we have no stormwater pumping station at community level to keep an area dry.

Carol Newill: Thank you to Jenn Aiosa for a good presentation. I hope we will hear more about measures specifically designed to protect public health – including the sewage transfer stations and also access to hospitals and other essential medical services as flooding becomes more frequent and severe.

III. 8 pm: Minutes of 3/22/2023 meeting, correct and approve. Thank you, Valerie.

No corrections requested on the minutes other than the family name for Mahnaz Mazaheri. A few small fill-in additions are needed; suggest we approve the minutes with the understanding that a few missing words will be filled in with help from CEQ members who can assist. With that proviso, minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. Award for a farmer who is using creative and effective measures to save soil from erosion due to extreme storms and flooding. Workgroup: Steve Malan, Dustin Shearer, Andy Miller, David Ruppert

Steve Malan has had conversation with nine people and most of them felt the award was premature at best and some laughed out loud about it. It may be best not to push this at this particular time. The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture indicated that the Soil Conservation Districts give out an award for Cooperator of the Year and several times they have not been able to find someone to whom they can give the award. Steve recommends suspending this effort.

Carol Newill – David Ruppert has reached out to people from the State and said he would speak with Jim Ensor (head of Baltimore County Soil Conservation) and with Steve Malan. The State people like the idea of the award and suggested the award not be so broad but focus on something more discrete.

According to Steve, David spoke with Steve yesterday and David said he was finished commenting on the subject and the farmers he talked with were more in line with David's thinking than with going forward.

Carol Newill: Thanks for your work, input and opinion, let's take this offline and decide what to do.

V. Update on Oregon Ridge Master Plan. Report was presented online on 4/13, see <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/recreation/programs/oregon-ridge-lodge/master-plan>

Public input online Wednesday 5/24 at 6 pm; Dept Recreation & Parks to post the link.

The online presentation of the final draft of the Master Plan was on April 13 by the contractor. They had not yet had a time or date for public input but that has been announced (see above). CEQ members have been sent the link to the Master Plan that has been made available to the public.

VI. Update on Forest Conservation code changes. State law (SB 526 /House bill 0723) Forest Preservation and Retention, addresses several of the concerns that were raised by speakers at CEQ's Symposium in 2022

The state law that passed on Forest Preservation had Dana Stein as a sponsor. The law reflected a number of things that were covered in the presentation at our meetings on the topic, but not the length of time required for monitoring and maintaining the tree planting areas.

Lynda Eisenberg says she thinks there is a two-for-one replacement policy in the legislation. Lynda will get a synopsis and send it to the group.

Brian Lindley: There are some issues to be resolved and reforestation is a component that is hard to meet when you are trying to develop in smaller areas. The law did not address the inspection and maintenance timeline; Baltimore County Green Alliance is following up with Council members including Marks and Patoka to see if they want to propose a change to the County code. The State code currently requires three years. Maintenance has always been the biggest problem. That's why Baltimore County has a maintenance section now; we are going to look at all previous and current forest conversation plans, and we will have maintenance beyond a three-year period for all of our projects. Green Towson

Alliance is also working on their habitat preservation program to manage invasives in green areas and parks.

VII. Closing comments: Carol Newill

CEQ meeting dates: 5/24, 9/27, 10/25, 12/6/2023.

On May 24 we will hear from Barbara Hopkins, formerly of NeighborSpace, and former president of Baltimore County Green Alliance, who is now executive director of a national organization.

Carol asked people to consider attending the presentation by Alice Volpitta on May 15 at 7:30 pm, re climate change and polluted stormwater flowing into streams and rivers of Baltimore County's watersheds: Alice Volpitta, Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper, will speak in person at Oregon Ridge Nature Center, Register at: <https://oregonridgenaturecenter.wildapricot.org/event-5109725>

Motion to adjourn at 8:17 p.m.