



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – May 17, 2018

Attendees:

Kendall Blake	Culpeper County
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Steve Cook	Virginia Department of Health
Joe Costello	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Kathleen Harrigan	Friends of the Rappahannock
Eldon James	Rappahannock River Basin Commission
Patrick Mauney	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
John McCarthy	Piedmont Environmental Council
Sam McLearen	Culpeper County

Planning for Solar – Regional Data and Local Tools

Joe Costello and Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)

Michelle Edwards provided an update on the half-day solar planning workshop RRRC hosted together with the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) on April 13th near Remington. Over seventy participants attended the “Shedding a Light on Solar” event, including local elected officials, planning commissioners, locality staff, local landowners and other interested citizens from within the region and outside of it. Workshop presentations are available on RRRC’s homepage at www.rrregion.org.

As a follow-up to the workshop and his previous Land Use and Environment Committee meeting presentation, Joe Costello delivered a presentation on a draft Solar Suitability Analysis for the region (see attached) and requested members’ feedback. John McCarthy asked if he had tried getting information on the electric substations and transmission lines from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Mr. Costello answered no, he obtained the information from the Department of Homeland Security. Patrick Mauney noted that they decided not to include parcel data at the regional scale, but it could be included at the local level.

Sam McLearen suggested Mr. Costello may want to expand the suitable distance from the transmission lines and substations a little based on project applications Culpeper County has received, which were 5 miles from the substations. Mr. McCarthy stated that siting distance

seems to be based on project size; larger projects can be sited further from electric infrastructure and still be profitable.

Mr. Costello noted that the utility-scale solar project in Locust Grove was located in the floodplain, so even if the site conditions are not “ideal,” it does not mean a project will not happen there. Dierdre Clark asked how a solar project could be sited in a floodplain, since it would need a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. McLearen replied that Culpeper County’s floodplain ordinance would make it very, very difficult. Ms. Edwards said it would be interesting to look into the permit approval for that project.

Kathleen Harrigan asked how Mr. Costello’s analysis can be shared with other Planning District Commissions (PDC). Mr. Mauney responded that the state-wide PDC annual meeting would be the best avenue.

Ms. Edwards provided an overview of SolSmart, a tool for local governments presented during RRRC’s solar planning workshop. Handouts were provided to attendees for additional information (see attached). SolSmart is a national designation program recognizing cities, counties, and towns that foster the development of local solar markets. To help communities achieve designation, SolSmart provides no-cost technical assistance and works with local governments to evaluate their programs and practices.

Localities can also apply for a technical assistance grant to host a SolSmart Advisor, who works in communities for periods of up to six months. Additional information is available at www.solsmart.org. Ms. Edwards noted that if several localities are interested in a SolSmart Advisor, a regional application could be pursued, with the Advisor housed at either RRRC or PEC.

Ms. Harrigan asked whether SolSmart is only promoting solar utilities’ interests. Ms. Edwards replied that they appear to help with planning for utility-scale solar projects as well as residential and commercial solar, based on the library of resources on their website. They appear to be a good resource, even if a locality is not interested in achieving full designation. A locality can fill out a brief form stating they are pursuing designation in order to have access to the technical assistance network.

Mr. McLearen noted that Culpeper County was contacted by SolSmart. Mr. McCarthy stated that as battery life and efficiency of solar systems increase, homeowner interest will also increase.

Ms. Edwards also discussed another national solar tool for local governments, C-PACE, which was brought to the Regional Commission’s attention following the workshop. Program handouts were distributed (see attached). Arlington C-PACE is a county-sponsored program that enables owners of commercial and industrial buildings to use private sector money to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water efficiency improvements to their property. It provides 100% financing for existing building projects and up to 20% financing for new construction projects. Loan terms can go up to 25 years, and because the C-PACE assessment obligation is

tied to the property (and not the owner), the assessment can transfer to the next owner when the property is sold.

More than 30 states, including Virginia, have passed legislation enabling C-PACE. On November 18, 2017, in accordance with the Commonwealth's clean energy financing law, the Arlington County Board adopted an ordinance that established the first C-PACE program in Virginia. Sustainable Real Estate Solutions (SRS) administers the Arlington C-PACE program. The Arlington program is self-financed through program fees charged to participating property owners. A one-time program administration fee is charged to the owner, equal to 2.5 percent of the project finance amount, not to exceed \$75,000 per project. Other Virginia localities have the option to ride Arlington's program administration contract with SRS to avoid going through the RFP process. Additional information is available at <https://arlington-pace.us>.

The Town of Culpeper is currently looking into the C-PACE program. Mr. McCarthy stated he is surprised all Virginia localities are not adopting a program for economic development benefits.

Further questions and comments regarding the regional solar suitability analysis should be directed to Joe Costello at jcostello@rrregion.org or (540) 829-7450. For additional information regarding SolSmart, please contact Nick Kasza with the National League of Cities at (202) 626-3007 or kasza@nlc.org. For additional information regarding C-PACE, please contact either Rich Dooley with Arlington County at (703) 228-3532 or rdooley@arlingtonva.us, or Scott Dicke with SRS at (703)344-6432 or SDicke@PACEworx.com.

Chesapeake Bay TMDL – WIP III Process

Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Ms. Edwards presented an overview of the Phase III Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III) process at both the state and regional level (see attached). RRRC will be coordinating the region's process for the urban sector, while the SWCDs will coordinate the agricultural sector process. RRRC will begin holding stakeholder meetings in July and conclude in mid-December, with a minimum of three urban stakeholder meetings and one joint ag-urban sector meeting to review the combined data. Ms. Clark asked who will be combining the region's agriculture and urban sector data, to which Ms. Edwards responded that the Department of Environmental Quality will.

Committee members were asked to provide recommendations to Ms. Edwards on additional stakeholder groups and individuals to invite beyond the list presented. Ms. Clark suggested the Farm Bureau and Eldon James recommended the Chambers of Commerce.

Ms. Edwards stated she is planning to hold the first stakeholder meeting the second week of July and asked Committee members to review their schedules for any potential conflicts. Mr. McLearn noted that the Culpeper County Planning Commission meeting is Wednesday of that week.

For additional questions and comments regarding WIP III, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or medwards@rrregion.org.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Tween Rivers Agri-artisan Trail – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

The Tween Rivers Trail is a virtual agri-artisan trail created by RRRC's Regional Tourism Committee in 2017 to support such businesses in the Commission's five-county region. The Tourism Committee hosted its first quarterly workshop of the year on "Packages & Promotions" on April 3rd at Narmada Winery in Amissville. While 50 people registered, the workshop had to be postponed due to severe weather and thirty people were able to attend the rescheduled event. Attendees represented various businesses, including wineries, accommodations and restaurants, in various locations within and outside of the region.

Paige Read, Culpeper Tourism & Economic Development Director, presented information, tips and recommendations on building a successful discount package as well as strategies for promoting it. Small groups of attendees were given a tourist scenario and asked to work collaboratively with one another to develop a mock weekend package with assistance from Regional Tourism Committee members. Feedback from the attendees was overwhelmingly positive and many new networking connections were made. The Tourism Committee will meet on May 17th to plan the remaining quarterly workshops for the year.

The Tourism Committee is hosting a contest where attendees and Trail site members are encouraged to develop an actual package and promotion, and enter it for a chance to win a half page advertisement space in VA Living Magazine (see attached flyer). Entries must be received by July 9th. At least one partner in the package must be a Tween Rivers Trail site member, and at least half of the partners participating in the package must reside within the region.

Additionally, the Tourism Committee was awarded a Virginia Tourism Corporation Leverage & Marketing Program grant in the amount of \$21, 012.50. Funds will be used to market the Trail and to update the Virginia Piedmont website. Brochures, promotional items, digital ads, videos and social media boosts will also be developed.

For additional information on the Tween Rivers Trail, please visit www.tweenriverstrail.com, or contact Jenny Biché at jkbiche@rrregion.org or (540) 829-7450.

Regional Food Policy Council – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

The Purely Piedmont billboard, promoting the region's locally grown food and beverages, is now up on Business Rt 29 heading into Culpeper. It will run throughout May and June. A similar advertisement is also on the Culpeper – Orange Connector bus from May through July. Additionally, a postcard mailer with the region's local food statistics was sent to 20,000 residents in the region to encourage local food buying and should begin appearing in mailboxes next week.

The second annual farmer-buyer event is scheduled for September 24th, 2:00-5:00pm at a location yet to be determined [edited to add Rock Hill Farm in Culpeper County will be the event location]. Sellers will reserve vendor tables where they can provide samples and informational materials, while buyers circulate. The format will be open-house style, where buyers can come and go at any time during the three-hour period.

The Food Policy Council's next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 29, 2018, at 5:30 pm in the RRRC conference room. For further information about the regional Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council, including upcoming meetings, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or medwards@rrregion.org, or visit RRRC's Regional Food System webpage at www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html. To learn more about the Purely Piedmont label program, including free producer registration, please visit purelypiedmont.com.

Member Roundtable

- **Steve Cook, Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**– Mr. Cook is working with Becky Gartner, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent, to facilitate the donation of old school kitchen equipment to the George Washington Carver Food Enterprise Center.
- **Eldon James, Rappahannock River Basin Commission**– The River Basin Commission is beginning Phase III of the Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative, which will include developing a transferrable financial model in two counties within the Rappahannock River watershed to incentivize forest conservation (see attached summary). Mr. James will be presenting to the Orange County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, May 22 at 5:00pm regarding their potential participation. He has already met with Jim White, Board Chairman, Bryan David, County Administrator, and Josh Frederick, Planning and Zoning Director.
- **Sam McLearen, Culpeper County**– Mr. McLearen introduced Kendall Blake, the County's newest planner and Erosion and Sediment Control Administrator. The County has a lot of on-going, large development projects. County staff are working with the Army Corps of Engineers on a watershed management ordinance, and with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to update the public on changes to floodplain boundaries. The revised boundaries are more accurate, but will extend further. The County is in need of public outreach materials regarding the changes.
- **Deirdre Clark, John Marshall SWCD**– The District is waiting for the state budget to be approved to know what its budget will be. They are also waiting on Goose Creek TMDL implementation funds. The District is working with Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) on possible river access.
- **Kathleen Harrigan, Friends of the Rappahannock**– FOR planted 9000 trees this spring with its partners through Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences. The Kinsey Run stream restoration project, which restored trout habitat, should be finished next week. Additionally, FOR is looking to expand its environmental STEM program in Fauquier this spring.
- **John McCarthy, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)**– The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors is likely to pledge funds for three different fish passage projects in the western portion of the County. PEC is currently working on a VA Department of Transportation (VDOT) stream restoration project in Rappahannock County. After demonstrating the cost savings, hopefully VDOT will then undertake such projects on their own.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for August 16, 2018 at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in the RRRC conference room. Please provide any suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org.