

City of Falls Church

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COUNCIL

To: Council Members, City of Falls Church

January 23, 2016

Subject: 2016 Annual Report

This report summarizes key 2016 activities of the City's Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC). The ESC advises the City Council on a range of environmental issues affecting our City. It meets monthly and has nine positions, all of which are currently filled. This year the ESC has two high-school student participants.

I became Chair of the ESC in September, when Ray Arnaudo announced his resignation as he was preparing to move to Brussels. Ray's position on the ESC was filled by Jon Ward, a mechanical engineer with experience in energy-related issues. Peter Adriance continues as Vice Chair. Kate Walker, the City's Environmental Programs Coordinator, serves as our staff liaison.

The ESC has clarified its purpose and goals this year. In May 2016, the City Council adopted our proposed resolution changing the name of the group from the Environmental Services Council to the Environmental Sustainability Council, reflecting the fact that protection of the environment requires consideration of both near-term and future effects of our actions and acknowledging the full panoply of matters that are supported and considered by the ESC. In October we adopted goals which identify how we can most effectively help the City achieve the environmental vision set forth by City Council. – see appendix A.

As part of our consideration of our goals, the ESC hosted presentations from Wyatt Shields, City Manager, on promoting environmental action in a Dillon Rule state; Cindy Mester, Assistant City Manager on the CIP process, legislative agenda and City Hall Public Safety & Access improvements; Jason Widstrom, Principal Engineer on stormwater management and the MS4, and David Snyder, Council Member on transportation funding and air quality. Members of the public addressed us on issues including the potential uses of Falls Church Cable TV, local honey bee colony collapse problems and the City's plans for Big Chimneys Park.

We provided input to students from Virginia Tech in Shelley Mastran's Planning Studio class to help them prepare their report on the Natural Resources chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan. We look forward to playing a key role in the rewrite of the chapter in the near future. We have participated in the Streetscape Task Force, and are working with the project engineer for City Hall to ensure the renovation and expansion achieves the maximum energy efficiency possible while meeting other goals for the project.

The ESC is very pleased to note Chris McGough's continued success with solid waste management in the City, including the very successful combination of the recycling and household hazardous waste programs, implementation of a compost drop-off facility and provision of dog waste bag-sharing stations. The solid waste program has provided the opportunity for outreach at the Farmers' Market not only on these topics but also on home energy efficiency and the tax credits and rebates available to support it, solar power and LED lighting, bikeshare, the City Vision and the downtown plaza.

Additionally, three ESC sub-groups, led by volunteers, advance environmental progress in Falls Church. The Energy Transition Subcommittee, led by Tim Stevens, meets monthly; the Education Task Group, led by Sarah Beaman Bayldon, meets on an *ad hoc* basis for to run the Earth Watch program in the elementary schools. Kate Walker, the City's Environmental Programs Coordinator, serves as staff liaison for these groups. The Habitat Restoration Task Group, led by Melissa Teates, with Charles Prince of the City's Green Space crew as Staff Liaison, meets for specific clean-up events. Membership in these subgroups is open to any city resident. There are 12 non-ESC member participants, including one additional student – see organization chart, Appendix B.

The addition of the Environmental Coordinator to City staff enabled the Energy Transition Subcommittee (ETS) to resume the work of the former citizen energy issues committee. The ETS's goals are intended to help the City reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by:

- Reduction of community-wide energy use;
- Expansion of renewable energy (both distributed and utility-scale);
- Dissemination of information on energy issues;
- Advising the City on energy issues, and
- Interaction and cooperation with other groups in the City (e.g. boards and commissions), with neighboring jurisdictions, and with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

During the past year, the ETS has worked on many projects, including:

- Establishing overall targets for reducing the City's greenhouse gas emissions
- Re-constructing the City's Greenhouse Gas Inventory and collecting energy use data
- Maintaining the City's status as an EPA Green Power Community
- Conducting the Solarize campaign for the City
- Establishing an Energy Efficiency Toolkit, available through MRS library
- Developing recommended City positions (e.g. energy efficiency upgrades for City Hall and Library renovations, use of VW state settlement funds to promote EVs, etc.)
- Examining the application of Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing in the City

The Habitat Restoration Group held nine planting and invasive plant removal events in 2017, in Cherry Hill Park, Berman Park, Crossman Park and Howard E. Herman Stream Valley Park (HEHSVP). Our work in HEHSVP focused on restoring the native ecology after the park had been transformed through the daylighting of the Coe Branch. Jeremy Edwards, the City's Green Space Manager, led the project in cooperation with EarthSangha, a non-profit organization specializing in native plantings. Funding for plant purchases came in part from a grant from the Dominion Foundation secured by EarthSangha with help from Kate Walker. We also continued the tradition of holding an annual native plant sale in May,

and were successful in recertifying the City as a National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat.

Operation EarthWatch, our Education Task Group's environmental education and action program for elementary school students, reached 116 students and their families this year. Increased sponsorship enabled us to hire an intern to update the web page and begin preparations for our 25th anniversary celebration next year.

In 2017, the ESC and its sub-groups look forward to continuing to work towards a sustainable future for Falls Church City.

Cory Firestone Weiss

Chair, Environmental Sustainability Council

Cc: Members of the ESC

Appendix A – ESC Vision and Goals

City of Falls Church Environmental Sustainability Council Vision October 2016

The Falls Church City's Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) seeks to help the City achieve the environmental vision set forth by City Council:

Falls Church City Council Environmental Vision

The people of Falls Church believe protecting and nurturing a healthy natural environment is one of their highest callings. The city's public and private development reflect this belief in tangible ways. Parks, open spaces, and clean waterways are valued as recreational, ecological, and economic resources. Environmentally friendly residential and commercial buildings throughout the city incorporate nationally accepted benchmarks for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. The city integrates sustainability into all of its operations, including a strong emphasis on reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

The ESC believes that achieving this environmental vision is a necessary component of the long-term economic growth of our city and well-being of our citizens. The committee aims for the City to build on its record as a local and state-wide leader on environmental issues.

To continue bringing the City's Environmental Vision to life, the ESC believes the City should make a concerted effort to meet or exceed the five environmental goals set forth by the Village Preservation and Improvement Society in its *Five Environmental Goals for Falls Church: A Progress Report for 2015*. The ESC will help the City target the following goals:

1. Maintain existing levels of tree canopy by 2025¹. As of 2016, tree canopy is 46%.
2. Increase residential solid waste recycling to 75% by 2020, from a baseline of 68% in 2016.
3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below the 2008 baseline of 138,000 tons CO₂e by 2020².
4. Increase effective pervious surface to 65% by 2020 from a 2012 baseline of 59% to reduce stormwater runoff.
5. Achieve LEED Silver ratings for all new and 15% of existing large commercial and multi-family residential buildings by 2020, and achieve LEED or equivalent third party certification for all new development or major redevelopment of single family homes. As of September 2016, the City of Falls Church has five LEED certified commercial or multi-family residential buildings. As of 2016, 20 single family

¹ VPIS sets a goal of 40% tree canopy by 2025. ESC prefers to maintain current canopy levels, which are higher.

² Based on data gathered by City of Falls Church staff and volunteers on the Energy Efficiency Climate Change Task Group.

Appendix A – ESC Vision and Goals

homes have participated in the City's Green Homes Award Program, which recognizes third party energy certifications.

The ESC will help the City to make progress towards the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee Action Plan. The City should leverage any resources that MWCOG or others may provide to help meet our environmental goals.

In addition, the ESC will help the City monitor progress and seek to achieve best regional practice with respect to other environmental concerns, such as invasive plants, light pollution or the loss of pollinators.

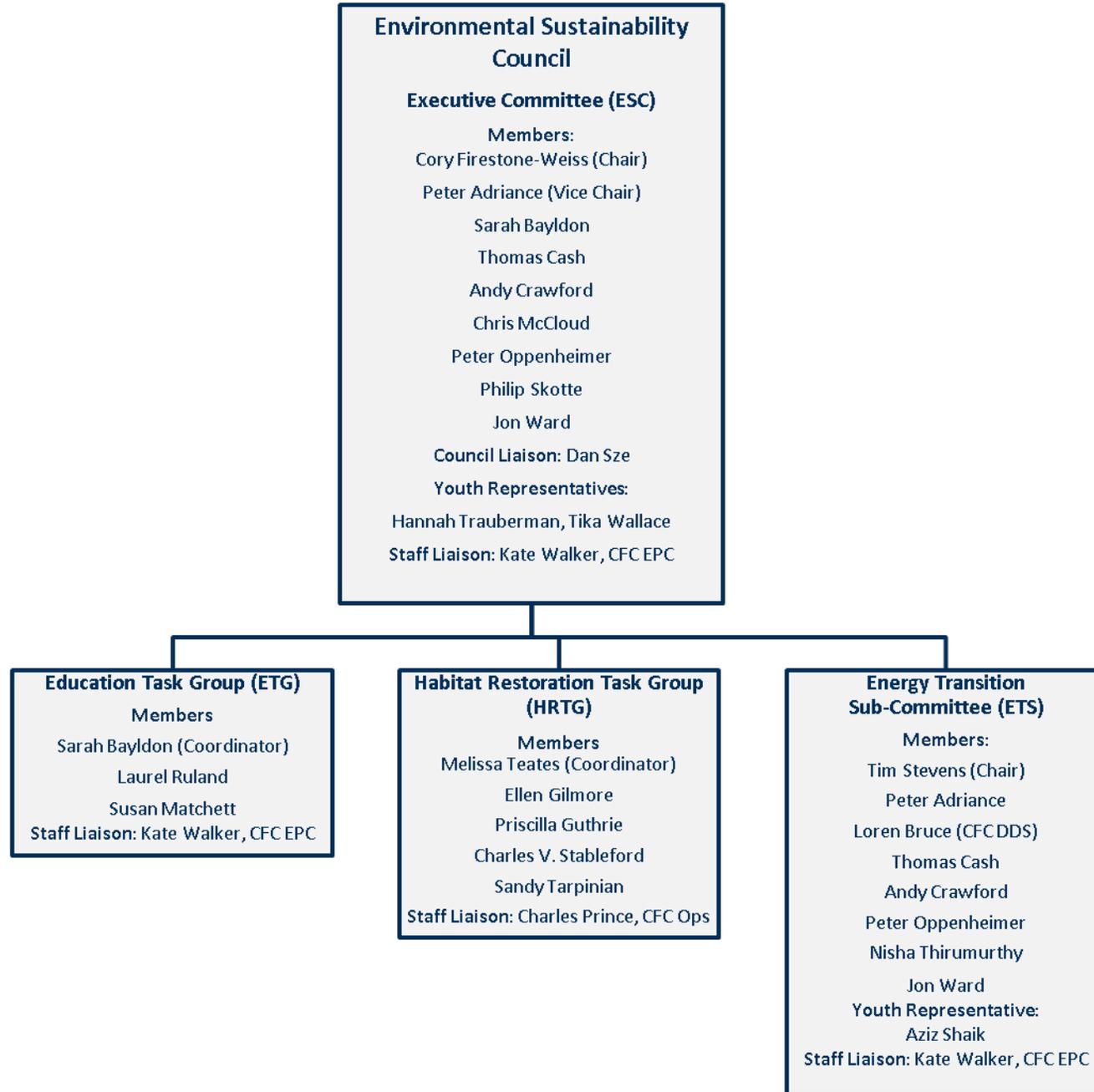
Finally, the City should report progress against these goals on an annual basis along with plans for making progress in the future.

The ESC will develop periodic work plans to guide its work advising the City on how it may achieve these goals, with a specific focus on:

- Ensuring that public facilities, including the schools, are designed, built, and operated in a manner consistent with the City's goals, including those outlined in this vision statement.
- Achieving high environmental standards in all new development within the City, both large and small scale.
- Encouraging the attainment of high environmental standards among existing facilities within the City, including commercial and residential.
- Educating Falls Church residents and businesses on the value of achieving these goals and how they may do so.

ESC will collaborate with Falls Church City residents, the City Council and City government staff, businesses and organizations such as the Village Preservation and Improvement Society and others to help the City achieve its vision. Its members will approach their work with mutual respect and a commitment to serving the public interest.

Appendix B – ESC Organizational Chart



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