

**THE SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE**

March 3y 5, 2016

1. Summary of the March 3, 2016 Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee (REC).

There were no comments on the meeting summary.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is an urban cost-share program that provides financial reimbursement to property owners who install eligible best management practices (BMPs). Through VCAP, property owners can maintain or improve their property value, receive technical assistance, and receive cost-share assistance. All of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are eligible for VCAP. Mr. Kevin McLean, VCAP Coordinator, presented an overview of the program.

VCAP began in the central VA SWCDs to provide an incentive for private property owners to install BMPs on their property. The SWCDs were recently awarded a federal grant to expand the program to all of the SWCDs within the Bay watershed. They hope to eventually expand the program state-wide.

Private property owners submit applications to the Steering Committee to approve based on a ranking system. Local SWCD will assist property owners with the applications. There is no up-front funding available; it is strictly reimbursement.

The most popular BMPs so far have been conservation landscaping and rain gardens. Mr. McLean is working with Ms. Shereen Hughes of Wetlands Watch to expand VCAP and relate it to the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP) Certification program pilot.

Mr. Swets asked what the cost-share will cover. Mr. McLean said it will cover up to 75% of design and installation. He has seen up to \$12,000 for one project – a green roof.

Ms. Brumbaugh and Ms. Whitehurst asked if the MS4 can still claim credit even though the VCAP BMPs are not intended to meet regulatory requirements. Mr. McLean said they could.

Ms. Dyba asked about required maintenance and whether there is an associated inspection program. VCAP pays the local SWCDs to inspect 25% of the program BMPs within their district annually. A maintenance agreement is also required.

Mr. McFarlane asked about challenges associated with conducting inspections on private property and when property changes hands. The property owners are required

to sign a form that permits access for inspections of the BMP. The maintenance agreements are transferred to the new property owners or the funding has to be repaid.

Mr. Swets asked if there was a list of professionals who work on small private property BMPs. Mr. McLean is coordinating with CBLP program to ensure that landscapers are certified to do the installation and maintenance.

Ms. Coffey asked if there was a tracking system that the localities can access. Mr. Mclean said that it is an internal system as of now. Mr. McLean added that there have been 55 projects completed so far within VCAP and most of them have been by Master Gardeners.

Any locality within a SWCD in the Bay watershed is eligible. The Committee discussed connecting the program with Bay Star Homes. A few localities asked if they are within a SWCD, so HRPDC staff will send out a list of the SWCD localities.

4. Working Waterfronts

HRPDC staff has been working with three other coastal PDCs, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program to develop a working waterfronts plan for coastal Virginia. As part of this effort HRPDC staff has completed an inventory and summary of the current status of working waterfronts in Hampton Roads communities. Mr. McFarlane updated the Committee on the progress.

The HRPDC conducted an inventory of working waterfronts in 2011-2013 and identified 165 working waterfronts in 12 localities. HRPDC staff updated this inventory and is assembling a chapter of the new working waterfronts plan for coastal VA.

The chapter includes local summaries of 14 localities. Franklin and Southampton were excluded and Gloucester is part of the Middle Peninsula PDC chapter. The summaries include the following:

- Types of working waterfronts identified
- Locations
- Whether working waterfronts are included in the zoning ordinance
- Where working waterfronts are allowed

Some data from the NOAA Coastal County Maritime Jobs Snapshots were included. Mr. McFarlane advised Committee members to be cautious using the data on the Snapshots because it is not comprehensive. Some employers are excluded because of confidentiality restrictions. Mr. McFarlane will distribute a link to the Snapshots to the Committee members.

The policies surrounding working waterfronts used to be focused on economic benefits but the land use and development goals and policies have changed to the following:

- Improve public waterfront access for recreation, fishing, and boating
- Convert underutilized industrial waterfronts to mixed-use waterfront districts
- Encourage businesses involved in water-based recreation and tourism
- Improve and protect water quality

- Support for existing working waterfronts districts
 - Southeast Newport News
 - Elizabeth River (Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth)
 - Port terminals
 - Poquoson

Mr. McFarlane will send out the GIS-based inventory and a draft of the chapter. Comments are requested by the end of May.

Ms. Brumbaugh asked if a business adjacent to the water would count as a working waterfront if the business only used the view. Mr. McFarlane replied that it would not. Ms. Brumbaugh also asked if a business that used the water exclusively for recreation would be a working waterfront, and the answer was yes.

Ms. Roberts asked if marinas and yacht clubs would count. Yes, they would.

Mr. McFarlane concluded by asking Committee members to let him know if additional working waterfronts were in development in their localities.

5. **Coastal Zone Program Updates**

Mr. McFarlane provided an update on the CZM program. The Norfolk kayak launch project recently got approved by NOAA. The Isle of Wight kayak launch is still in the 306A process. There have been some questions of whether NOAA's environmental impact review process fully meets the requirements. It may impact future kayak launch project proposals because a full-blown environmental impact study would not be appropriate for a small project.

CZM recently awarded the project that replaced the Hampton threshold analysis study, Integrating Coastal Resilience into Local Plans, Policies, and Ordinances. HRPDC staff will, based on case study research and discussion with local government staff, identify the best strategies for local governments to incorporate coastal hazards and resilience into local plans, policies, and ordinances. The project will be completed by March 2017.

HRPDC had proposed a study on dredge material; however it was not funded this year. Mr. McFarlane suggested including it in a technical assistance grant next year.

Mr. Charlie Banks (DCR) intends to distribute floodplain management information that he receives through FEMA using the Planning Districts throughout the state.

Mr. McFarlane has scheduled a NOAA training course, Introducing Green Infrastructure for Coastal Resilience, for August 23 or 24. It will be a full day workshop at the HRPDC, and the date will soon be finalized.

6. **askHRgreen.org Update**

Ms. Hillegass updated the Committee on the status of the Green Magazine publication. Instead of dedicating an issue to Green Living, Coastal Virginia magazine is featuring

environmentally friendly topics throughout the year. The April issue included info graphics from the askHRgreen.org campaign. The July/August issue will highlight the green scene for kids. The September/October issue will explore green art. And finally, the January issue will feature farm-to-table green eats. Ms. Hillegass noted that they have a great working relationship with Coastal Virginia, and the content is published at no cost to askHRgreen.org. At the end of the year, a summary publication of all of the green articles and content will be provided to the localities.

7. Planning Director's Meeting

A meeting of the Planning Directors was held on April 28, 2016 at the HRPDC. Ms. McBride gave an overview of the discussion, which included the following topics:

- Sharing of information on locality sign ordinances
- Renewable Energy Farms
- Process for Developing the 2045 Socioeconomic Forecasts
- Update on Envision Hampton Roads

The Planning Directors found the meeting to be very valuable and have requested quarterly meetings.

8. HRPDC Annual Retreat

Mr. Keaton gave a summary of the discussions from the HRPDC Annual Retreat, which was held on April 21, 2016.

The Commission voted to have the HRPDC take the lead role in developing a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS will enable localities to qualify for assistance from the Economic Development Administration (EDA). There is an eight-step process for developing the strategy, including creating a committee, seeking stakeholder input, finalizing the document, and preparing annual performance reports.

The CAOs presented a recommendation to change the structure for the Board, which the Commission supported. The Commission is in favor of a 17 member Board, whose votes are weighted by population. The bylaws and charter have to be changed. The changes will be in effect by October.

HRPDC staff also presented an update on Envision Hampton Roads to the Commission. During the past 18 months, HRPDC staff has completed a public engagement process that included attending over 80 meetings across the region to receive community input on important issues. The process resulted in the development of seven regional priorities that will form the basis of the Strategic Plan.

9. Status Reports

A. HRPDC – Mr. McFarlane reminded the Committee that the HR Sea Level Rise Adaptation Forum was to be held the next day. The HRPDC is hosting an APA webinar on May 11, 2016. Should Committee members need certification credits, the HRPDC has five recorded webinars available. Mr. McFarlane is attending the Chesapeake Bay Program Climate Resiliency Workgroup meeting in Annapolis on

May 23, 2016. Ms. Roberts requested that he bring forward the issue of tidal wetlands that are created not only those that are lost. Ms. Hillegass announced that askHRgreen.org was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Chesapeake Bay license plate fund. They are planning to use the funds for additional pet waste stations, the Bay Star Homes (BSH) program, and training workshops this fall. Ms. Kidd informed the Committee that a great proposal was developed for the Regional GIS project; however the funding fell through. The proposal is currently being scaled back and the partners are deciding which layers to prioritize and other potential funding mechanisms. Ms. Kidd asked the Committee members to provide their input.

- B. PQ - Ms. Roberts requested that the BSH website be revised to reflect that each locality runs their program a little differently. She gave an example that NO is covering the cost of soil tests for their residents but none of the other localities are.
- C. NO - NO is hosting the Tactical Urbanism Workgroup downtown on June 3-4. The mini festival, which will focus on flooding and water quality, is funded by the NDRC grant. Mr. McFarlane asked that Ms. Whitehurst send him the flyer.
- D. SU - Mr. Heide asked about SB 598, which passed in this year's session. He asked if there were any significant changes, since it appears that the bill was only passed to clarify existing requirements. Ms. Sunderland said that both she and Ms. Tribo had looked into it and agreed with Mr. Heide that it was passed only for clarification. It was not called out as a bill to watch during the VAMSA legislative calls, led by Mr. Chris Pomeroy of VAMSA during the session either.