

Environmental Vision Update

Public Meeting

July 27, 2016, 7 -9 pm

South County Government Center, 8350 Richmond Highway

Q1 - TOP THREE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- Quantity and quality of tree cover
- Promote/improve water quality of streams
- Address invasive species of plants and animals
- Dumping of refuse in street, streams, neighborhoods
- Lack of an environmental assessment process during the land use decision process—No county equivalent of NEPA reviews
- Need for information about locations of special/unique natural resources in Fairfax County in order to provide for their preservation/protection

- A lot of our data is outdated and needs to be updated (e.g., stream conditions)
- Loss of habitat and open space [*This issue was reiterated by several people in attendance*]
 - County actions facilitate loss of habitat (e.g., the county is no longer holding public hearings on proposals to disturb Resource Protection Areas)
 - Do our procedures really protect habitat? Is County allowing/shepherding?
- Stronger policy (just say no) in remaining RPAs [Lots of support for this statement]
- Evidence that we are investing and maintaining inroads regarding sustainable initiatives...e.g., rain gardens and other LID facilities
- Incentives to reduce impermeable surfaces as part of construction permitting
- Outdated and inconsistent watershed plans
- Lead by example with respect to County properties—should be exemplars of best practices for water quality, landscaping and other environmental concerns
- Tree conservation/preservation during re-development
- Stronger commitment to restoring degraded properties, including or in particular the county's own properties (schools, parks, and other County properties)
- Adopt clear goals to reduce energy use in government facilities
- County does not have a litter management plan. Get one! Or at least review Mt. Vernon Council's recommended Plan.

- Create synergy through schools—need for education/environmental stewardship. This is happening at some schools (e.g., Hollin Meadows ES) but not across-the-board. Need for hands-on educational experiences (e.g., biology; recycling); learn by doing. Kids are oblivious to the environment—education and hands-on experiences are vital.
- Also need to stress environmental stewardship in the operation of schools—FCPS staff is not always buying in to environmental stewardship/recycling. The efforts are limited and can be improved.

- Promote environmental stewardship at all levels of school and government (include police, fire, etc...)
- Introduce measurable goals!
- Climate change (suburban sprawl contributing)
- By-Right development. Enabling legislation and zoning Ordinance changes
- Improve air quality
 - Reduce use of cars by increasing bicycling; walking
 - There is a need for shade to increase the desirability of nonmotorized transportation AND to improve air quality; need a firm commitment to shade trees in our designs, including VDOT's designs
- Conduct monitoring of Covanta ash and air emissions, particularly during start-up and shut-down. Report to citizens (public disclosure of monitoring data).

Question 2 – Do you feel The Environmental Vision is complete?

- NO!
- Too soft. Not enough tangible goals, measurable targets, performance measures and accountability
- What is needed is an Action Plan and budget
- How does the County use the Environmental Vision? Not a clear understanding.
- Climate change. E.g., implications of sea level rise and increase in serious storms.
- Emissions of GHGs.

- BOS bent towards pro-growth to support economic sustainability...maybe the vision shouldn't be pro-growth, rather smart growth, promoting quality of life
- The document is too soft. It needs goals and accountability
- Preserve, protect, enhance and restore! Concept applicable to all sections of the document.
- More in the way of public education and community involvement (particularly by kids), even on basic issues such as litter
- Need for a strong connection to Chesapeake Bay Agreement and Action Plan
- In a sustainable green environment, all boats rise....quality of life, public health, lower crime....engineers should keep these in mind!
- More with respect to Ecology. More interagency communication/cooperation on common problems. Ecological systems approach. E.g., health department recommending mosquito spraying but Virginia Cooperative Extension guidance/recommendation conflicts with that approach. Need broader thinking about environmental implications of decisions

Q3 – Are there any other changes to the EV you would suggest?

- The EV is the responsibility of all of us (County employees AND citizens).
- Nothing in it that encourages community input and involvement.
- Not a lot of science in it.
- Limited quantification of.....e.g., “we preserved x acres of open space but lost.....”
Perhaps this is appropriate for a vision statement, but there is a need for some idea of the magnitude of environmental change and accomplishment
- Nothing in it that encourages community input and involvement.
- Mixed message. General policy sounds good on paper. But oif county does really enforce those ideas and says NO, then developers will...” do as I do, not as I say.”
- Every proposal for development should be considered as to whether it impacts environmental quality. First sentence of EV says....”should be interwoven into all decisions.” Sounds good, but.....is it happening?
- Commit to restore biodiversity.
- Enforcement of development laws.
- Horrified at decline in Little Hunting Creek.....captured via photo essay [*comment related to development along Little Hunting Creek, within areas that the commenter felt development should not have been allowed.*]
- Beef up Parks, Trails and Open Space section...more access, open space
- The term “resources” is used with different modifiers—Natural resources? Budget resources? Don’t get a good sense as to what counts as natural resources. Mixed message in use of “resource.” Quantify value of natural resources.
- Make it strong.....guide for budgeting and staffing. We say we are going to do this and how.
- Need strong accountability—names of people who are accountable
- Make sure its bought into by all departments and decision makers (e.g., Health Department, not just Environmental Department).
- Develop and inventory sensitive ecological resources. And protection of them.
- Build environmental vision into curriculum
- Make a more concerted effort to “live with wildlife”