

**Commission on Environmental Justice & Sustainable Communities (CEJSC)**  
**Special Meeting at the Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources**  
**December 17, 2013**  
**1400 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Conference Room 308**

In Attendance

- Commissioners: Calvin Ball, Dick Fairbanks, Andrew Fellows, John Quinn, Nancy Servatius, Benoy Thomas, Stephan Levitsky, Megan Ulrich
  
- Participants: Delegate Aisha Braveboy, Adam Ortiz, Dawn Hawkins-Nixon, Debbie Weller, Carole Ann Barth, Larry Coffman, Crystal Heide, Darlene Mitchell

**Introductions**

Calvin introduced Delegate Aisha Braveboy.

Delegate Braveboy discussed Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and her work for the Legislative Black Caucus.

**Overview: Adam Ortiz**

Adam gave an overview of the work of the Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources (the Department).

The first area the Department is focusing on is waste management. They are practicing resource recovery and are finding items of value in the landfills. They currently have a 43% recycling rate in the county and they hope to increase that to 50%. Two years ago the County Council passed a bill to require condominiums and apartments in the county to recycle.

Darlene asked if the 50% disparity was due to the fact that condominiums previously could not participate.

Adam said yes, that is part of it.

Adam said another part of waste management that they are focusing on is a composting pilot program. The Department collects food waste from the University of Maryland and Whole Foods. They partnered with a company to use GORE cover technology, which acts like a big jacket going over the food scraps and cuts down the composting time by 80%. The compost product is being sold by the county and Maryland Environmental Service (MES) to organic gardeners. They are currently selling 300 tons a day and are selling out. They would like to expand the program countywide and include restaurants.

The second area that they are focusing on is improving water quality. They are working on retrofitting 800,000 acres of urban areas to control stormwater by utilizing 46,000 stormwater devices, such as rain gardens and pervious pavement. Adam said that this is a job creation issue. 60% of Prince George's County's residents commute out of the county for work. This work will bring a series of jobs and local hire initiatives. This is a long term investment. They are focusing on black top areas and they are coordinating with the Department of Public Works to create bike lanes to blighted urban communities.

Dick asked about the effectiveness of single stream recycling in Prince George's County.

Adam said that they have been very successful using single stream recycling.

Calvin said it has been very successful in Howard County too.

The Department is also using methane from a landfill to provide power to the county jail and they are looking at installing the largest solar array in Maryland at the landfill.

Delegate Braveboy said that is good news because currently most RPS credits are currently bought from out of state. So companies from out of state are the ones benefitting.

Darlene asked if Prince George's County is doing anything with scrap tires.

Adam said they are not currently doing anything with scrap tires.

Darlene suggested looking into covering the ground at school playgrounds with scrap tire pieces.

Adam said the last area that they are focusing on is cleaning up trash. Trash impacts older communities especially hard. There is a special focus on cleaning up the Anacostia River. The County Council is currently working on legislation geared towards plastic bottles and bags.

### **EJ and Sustainability Initiatives Presentation: Dawn Hawkins-Nixon**

Dawn said that there is no EJ program yet; however, it is one of the proposed sustainability initiatives in T.W.E.E.T.S. (trees, water, energy, EJ, trash, sustainability).

They are working on increasing the tree canopy. They planted trees for Arbor Day at various schools around the county.

They are also working on increasing water conservation and reuse. They are looking into water reuse systems and are in discussions with the University of Maryland about a pilot project.

They are also promoting investment in renewable energy. They have set up electric vehicle charging stations and submitted a smart energy community application.

They are currently looking at setting up an EJ program. They are also working to reduce trash and litter. 21 communities are picked every year to participate in a county cleanup program.

They also have a transforming neighborhoods initiative (TNI) that is meant to achieve a thriving economy, great schools, and safe neighborhoods. They looked at Environmental Benefits Districts (EBDs) to get an idea of areas. There is some overlap between the Bladensburg and Hillcrest Heights TNIs and EBDs. They are hoping the TNIs can be a springboard into EJ. They are trying to promote education and outreach. The key TNI indicators are the reading/math level in schools, the crime rate, and trash in the neighborhood. They are initiating a dialogue and reaching out to stakeholders. The target areas they are looking at are Langley Park, East Riverdale, Palmer Park, etc.

Darlene said that some of these target areas sit on waterways.

Dawn said yes, a lot of it goes back to the fact that these are older communities that were left behind. The waterways in this area are impaired.

Darlene asked if the waterways are still used for commerce.

Dawn said no, the waterways are too shallow to get ships up now.

Andy said that Prince George's County is a good model for dealing with water sustainability in the state and county.

Dick said that historically big ships came all the way up the Patapsco River to Ellicott City, but the Patapsco is very shallow now.

Andy said that the colonial agricultural practices added to the sediment runoff that filled in the rivers.

The meeting adjourned and lunch was provided.