



Dr. Mark Southerland
Chair

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April 13, 2017

2016 Annual Report Environmental Sustainability Board

To the County Executive and the County Council:

The primary responsibility of the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) is to advise the County Executive and County Council on matters related to environmental sustainability. Each year we produce an annual report that summarizes our activities and suggests priorities for the future. In last year's report, we proposed possible next steps for four major areas of concern.

- Agriculture and Food Policy
- Energy Management
- Water Quality
- Green Infrastructure Network (GIN)

In 2016 we addressed these areas of concern through (1) information gathering from the government and the public, (2) activities of board committees, and (3) discussion and recommendations.

Information Gathering

The ESB had discussions with the following parts of Howard County government to assess sustainability goals, progress toward those goals, and needs for the future:

- Bureau of Facilities, Daryl Paunil
- Department of Planning and Zoning, Val Lazdins
- Department of Public Works, Jim Irvin
- Department of Recreation and Parks, John Byrd
- Health Department, Bert Nixon
- Office of Transportation, Chris Eatough

The following challenges for government operations were identified: (1) adequate funding for stormwater management, (2) achievability of zero waste, (3) disposal of bio-solids, (4) competition for recreational space, (5) funding for recreation and parks, and (6) projecting recreational and parks needs into the future.

The board also listened to citizen concerns on the following topics:

- Climate change
- Road salt
- Noise at Merriweather Post Pavilion
- Mold in public schools
- Ellicott City flooding
- Bicycle Master Plan intersection with LEED building and proposed Bikeway

The board is in support of the County Bicycle Master Plan and also supports funding for the Horizon Foundation proposal for the Bikeway to jump start implementation of the plan.

Board Committees

One of the major activities of the ESB is the formation of committees, drawing upon both board members and outside members. These committees may be self-generated or mandated by executive or legislative request. In 2016, the following committees completed their activities and produced reports to the County Executive and County Council:

Energy Task Force. This task force was created by the ESB and co-chaired by board member Ed Wilson and Rizwan Siddiqi. The task force made 21 recommendations including creation of a Director of Energy. Other recommendations included designating energy liaisons in each department, dedicating 5% of energy spend for efficiency projects, having each department pay for its share of energy spend, evaluating renewable projects with an incremental 10% for societal benefits, promoting community solar projects, considering commercial and residential incentives, considering a pilot micro-grid, assessing backup power for vulnerable populations, and creating education partnerships.

Commercial Stormwater Solutions Work Group. This work group was created by executive order and chaired by board member Dr. Mark Southerland. The other ten members of the work group were commercial property owners or individuals who work closely with this business sector. The work group made seven recommendations that were presented to the County Executive and County Council in November. Based on these recommendations, the Office of Community Sustainability is looking for pilot projects on commercial property that might jump start a County commercial stormwater program similar to the nonprofit stormwater program already in place.

Mold in Howard County Public Schools. The County Council passed two resolutions requesting that ESB review various reports pertaining to mold at Howard County Public Schools. ESB created a committee of board members chaired by Chris Tsien. The ESB concluded that the studies appeared to be competently done and that no accepted standard exists for mold concerns, given the variability in individual sensitivities. Subsequent to submitting our original report, the ESB met with HCPSS staff who presented the origin and implementation of their Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) program to address mold. The ESB concluded that the protocols adopted by HCPSS are consistent with controlling moisture as a means to limit mold and that the IEQ process is appropriate.

Discussions

As described above, ESB discussions frequently involved the progress of our three committees and concluded with a consensus on the recommendations arising from each. This work constituted significant progress in addressing two of the 2015 areas of concern—Energy Management and Water Quality.

Another 2015 area of concern—Agricultural and Food Policy—was addressed through discussions with the Office of Community Sustainability leading to proposed initiatives ranging from education to legislation. During 2016, an agricultural liaison position was funded and the Roving Radish was expanded.

The ESB was also asked by the Department of Recreation and Parks to review their pesticide use policy, especially as it relates to the use of neonicotinoids. Neonicotinoids have been implicated in the decline of pollinators such as bees. The ESB concluded that the level of prohibition of neonicotinoids was probably appropriate, but suggested that the exception for County lands leased for farming should be considered for elimination. The ESB also recommended the policy apply to all County activities. Lastly, the ESB recommended that enhancements to native pollinator habitat, such as more native meadow, be considered.

Recommendations for Future Actions

The board makes the following recommendations to the County Executive and County Council:

1. Implement additional agriculture initiatives proposed by the Office of Community Sustainability.
2. Implement the recommendations of the Energy Task Force, specifically creation of a Director of Energy position.
3. Create a commercial stormwater program based on the recommendations of the Commercial Stormwater Solutions Work Group, including implementing pilot projects as soon as possible.
4. Undertake an outreach program for Green Infrastructure Network (GIN) and develop a process for incorporating GIN considerations in all County decision making.

Thank you for your interest in these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Southerland', written over a horizontal line.

Mark Southerland, Ph.D., Chair

Olivia Farrow, Vice Chair

Chein-Chi Chang

Christine Conn

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Georgia Eacker
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Nancy McAllister
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