

# **Takoma Park Task Force on Environmental Action**

## **Minutes for meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

**TFEA members present:** Nadine Bloch; Leandra Carrasco; Steve Davies; Joe Edgell; Alphie Fair; Timothy Fox; Shari Friedman; David Hunter; Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa; Austin Meyermann; Terrill North; Emily Riddle; Milford Sprecher; Patricia Stephenson; Catherine Tunis.

**TFEA members absent:** Timothy Male, Liz Marshall; John Peterson; Scott Schang.

**Members of the public present:** Dan Robinson (Ward 3 City Council), Zachary Scott, Margot Bloch.

Steve Davies facilitated the meeting, Emily Riddle took notes.

### **Introduction, Agenda Approval and minutes review and approval for the past two meetings**

The task force approved the meeting agenda. The task force agreed to add language to the minutes from November 18<sup>th</sup>, stressing the need to have good communication with the city council. The task force also agreed to note in the minutes the discussion that took place about a possible public meeting in February. Minutes from the meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup> were approved with these amendments. The task force agreed that minutes from meeting on November 4<sup>th</sup> will state that Daryl Braithwaite gave a presentation and will reference her presentation notes. TFEA will vote to approve Nov 4<sup>th</sup> minutes at next meeting.

### **Public Input period**

Members of the public introduced themselves, but had no additional comments at this time.

### **Energy Stimulus Grant**

Catherine Tunis announced that a subgroup has compiled ideas for a DOE stimulus grant and the city has decided to apply for the grant. The grant deadline is December 14<sup>th</sup>. The subgroup is meeting with council member Clay on Thursday Dec 3rd at 7:30 in the Lilac room to move forward with the grant. Everyone is welcome. Council member Dan Robinson added that he wants to make sure that the end product of the TFEA is disseminated to the other cities. He suggested that grant funds could be used to facilitate this process.

## **City Council Interim Report**

Joe Edgell proposed January 11<sup>th</sup> for an interim report to the city council. He requested that members who would like to help with a power point presentation for the council meeting should contact him directly. Catherine Tunis volunteered to help with the presentation. As a follow up from the previous meeting, several members voiced the view that the report should be an update of our activities and directions and not a report of preliminary results, and the council should have realistic expectations of the nature of the report. Joe reported that the mayor had requested an update, but that the nature of the presentation was up to the task force. The task force agreed that Joe will move forward to get 15 minutes on the city council agenda for January 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Decision Matrix and Evaluation Criteria**

Nadine Bloch presented ideas for a decision making matrix. The purpose of the decision matrix would be to provide a mechanism for evaluating and comparing the different action recommendations and for setting priorities in the report to the city council. Nadine suggested that the evaluation criteria should provide a rationale for decision making, but allow for flexibility for actions chosen for a variety of different reasons. The LAP/climate subcommittee had examined evaluation criteria used by other organizations to compare greenhouse gas reduction actions. A compilation of some of these was passed around. From these, Nadine suggested five general evaluation categories:

- 1) Effectiveness (e.g., emission reductions)
- 2) Efficiency (e.g., cost effectiveness)
- 3) Feasibility (e.g., precedent, specific roadblocks)
- 4) Flexibility (e.g. scalability, transferability)
- 5) Resiliency to future uncertainties (e.g., Is it forward thinking? Will it improve the overall self-sufficiency and strength of the community?)

Other suggestions from the ensuing discussion:

- 6) Co-benefits of an action/policy (e.g. commercial, community, safety)
- 7) Precedent (has it been implemented elsewhere successfully?)

Nadine suggested that each of these broad categories could be divided into more specific measurement criteria (e.g., expected cost under “efficiency” or precedent under “feasibility”). The resulting matrix would be like a report card, where scores for specific criteria are used to compile overall scores in each broader category. The LAP/Climate group will continue to work on refining matrix ideas and present some concrete suggestions to the Task Force.

Joe Edgell handed out a list of specific criteria (likely also to be included in the evaluation matrix) which he thought should be particularly highlighted in the final report to the City Council. This list included 1) Cost, 2) Environmental Benefit, 3) Geographic Impact, 4) Implementation Difficulty, 5) Recommended implementation timeframe.

The task force discussed how the matrix would be used. Three possible uses were discussed: 1) The matrix could be used by the Task Force to decide on actions to include/leave out of the report, 2) The matrix could be used by the Task Force to prioritize its final recommendations to city council, 3) The matrix could be used by the City to assess the strengths and weaknesses of different strategies as they decide on their ultimate course of action. Members noted that the final report may include actions that are not recommended, and explain the reasons why we don't think they are good ideas. Council may decide to adopt lower priority items because the opportunity arises.

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Buildings and Energy Use (Presented by Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa)**

The building and energy use committee has met twice. They are gathering information from the city, including an inventory of buildings, zoning maps, land use maps, demographic info, etc. Specific individuals are also exploring the following topics: 1) Mechanisms to promote energy efficiency improvements (e.g., cash incentives or exemptions for owners and landlords). 2) Mechanisms to get people tied together into bigger projects (e.g, Solar and other cooperatives, local improvement districts in Maryland). 3) Street lighting: The committee is exploring if the city could buy street lights from PEPCO. Austin has put Daryl in touch with the director of a public/private partnership program for this. 4) Green building code: The committee determined that city does have some jurisdiction over this and are researching it further. Other ideas: Shari Friedman suggested exploring Historic Commission barriers to energy efficiency improvements. This is regulated at the county level, but the city could take a stance.

#### **LAP/climate group (Presented by David Hunter)**

The LAP group has met once and decided to focus on the following: 1) Review the existing LAP and develop a table of what has been implemented (or not) from the previous plan, and identify why or why not, when appropriate. 2) Research climate action plans from other cities to use for comparison and guidance. 3) Determine how the local plan fits in with the larger context of county, state and federal programs. Identify emissions reduction goals of different levels of government. 4) Assess the feasibility of updating the GHG inventory perhaps by using student help or suggesting that the city finds a way to do this. 5) Come up with a proposal for a decision matrix (discussed above) to bring to the larger group for discussion. The group also discussed suggesting money for a sustainability coordinator for plan implementation and for monitoring and measuring. In addition, the group suggested that it may be important to examine timelines beyond the 5-year timeline required by the council.

#### **Habitat and Openspace (Presented by David Hunter)**

The habitat group has decided to focus on the following: 1) Review implementation of previous open space plans and make recommendations to protect open space. 2) Review the city's tree ordinance. 3) Look at city's tree data. 4) Look at effectiveness of public outreach around trees. 5) Seek out experts in

the area who know about this (e.g, Friends of Sligo creek, oldest continuous suburban bird study). 6) Promote healthy back yard habitats. The group stressed the uniqueness of the habitat we live in and the importance of preserving it.

### **Transportation/fuel use (Presented by Shari Friedman)**

Transportation group members decide to divide up research on topics between its members: 1) City Vehicles (already covered well by Daryl); 2) Traffic control: traffic calming measures, speed bumps, lights, roundabouts (Joe Edgell); 3) Non-road: leaf blowers, lawn mowers, tree grinders, generators (Steve Davies); 4) Other: Safety and walkability, biofuels (Shari Friedman); 5) Alternative transportation: Carpool systems, biking, streetcars, linking to the purple line, bus rapid transport (Leandra Carrasco).

### **Solid Waste (Presented by Shari Friedman)**

The group is gathering data from the city on poundage of waste (garbage and recyclables), current home composting programs and researching capturing GHG emissions from large scale composting. They have identified policies or measures to investigate in future meetings including 1) per unit pricing of garbage, 2) establishing a diversion goal, 3) Advantages and disadvantages of hand sorting recyclables vs. single stream, 4) Composting vegetable waste, and 5) Reducing consumption focusing on the city's operations.

Council member Dan Robinson informed the TFEA about a presentation he went to by the town of Babylon, NY at the ICLEI conference a few months ago. Babylon legally defined waste heat from buildings under the category of solid waste, allowing for innovative financing opportunities for energy efficiency measures to reduce the "waste stream".

### **Water / Storm water (presented by Patricia Stephenson):**

The storm water group recognized that most storm water ordinances tend to be within a minimal framework (e.g., new construction) and the group would like to develop a more holistic plan based on needs assessment that includes existing housing stock and developed property. The group would like to identify "existing hotspots" using existing maps and data and then develop a plan that would keep an inventory of retrofit options for different hotspot sites. The recommendations for the group should have the ultimate goals of 1) Protection of Sligo Creek watershed functioning, 2) Protection of the Chesapeake Bay from runoff pollution. Other objectives would include reducing flooding of local streams and basements, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of climate change (reducing waste water treatment), reducing management burden on city. The group is seeking input from a variety of NGO's including Friends of Sligo Creek. Some preliminary ideas for the city include repaving driveways, promoting raingardens and cisterns, considering incentive programs for community and individual action and recommendations for updating city's storm water ordinance. In doing this, they would like to use what other cities have done and consider EPA best practices.

### **Committee Breakout**

The task force had 35 minutes to break into subcommittee groups.

### **Agenda for next meeting**

The task force discussed methods for consolidating questions for Daryl Braithwaite so that she is not overloaded. For this week task force members will send questions to Joe Edgell to pass on to Daryl.

The task force decided that the next meeting, at 7:30 on December 16<sup>th</sup>, should again be divided between large and small group discussions. Possible agenda items for large group discussion: Decision making matrix, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> interim report.