

**Anne Arundel County
Citizens Environmental Commission (CEC)**

**Annual Report
April 2019 - June 2020**

On April 22nd, 2019, the 49th Earth Day, the [Pittman Administration officially chartered the Citizens Environmental Commission \(CEC\)](#). The event took place at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) in Edgewater.

The Commission was officially chartered through [Executive Order 8](#), which provides language regarding composition of Commissioners, how public meetings are to be held, and governance. The Commission consists of thirteen (13) voting members, as follows:

- A. One representative from each of the following nine (9) watershed assessment and planning areas: Patapsco River (non-tidal portion); Patapsco River (tidal portion) and Bodkin Creek; Magothy River; Severn River, Little Patuxent River; Patuxent River (upper portion); Patuxent River (middle and lower portions) and Herring Bay; West River and Rhode River; and
- B. Four (4) representatives from environmental, not-for-profit organizations with offices in Anne Arundel County.

The Executive Order states that the Commission shall recommend actions by the County to:

- a. Protect the County's environmental resources, including, but not limited to: clean air, clean water, open space, forests, and wildlife;
- b. Promote clean, renewable energy solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- c. Defend more than five hundred (500) miles of shoreline and adjacent and nearby communities from rising sea levels.

The Commission receives support from Matt Johnston, Environmental Policy Director, and Jenny Proebstle, Communications and Policy Assistant, who both serve in the Office of the County Executive. The Commission held its first meeting on July 25, 2019 at the County's Office Building. A timeline with Commission meeting dates and agenda summaries are provided in the details later in this report.

Transition Team Alignment

The Commission was chartered because it was a recommendation from the Sustainable Communities Transition Team, which aided in providing top priority recommendations to the Pittman Administration during their transition into office.

When the Pittman Administration transitioned into office in December 2018, the Administration formed various Transition Team's focused on cross-sector areas of prioritization for Anne Arundel County's future. The Sustainable Communities Transition Committee was tasked with providing the Pittman Administration recommendations for improving environmental sustainability in all facets of Anne Arundel County operations, policies, and programs. The final version of the report can be viewed at this web link: [2020 Sustainable Communities Transition Team report](#).

The 23-member AAC resident Sustainable Communities Transition Team provided a final report to County Executive Pittman on February 13, 2020. This report included 8 high-level, strategic recommendations, prioritized by five subcommittees of the larger Sustainable Communities team. These five subcommittees included:

1. Resource Protection and Restoration
2. Green Energy and Waste
3. Smart Growth
4. Environmental Justice and Education
5. Climate Change

While it is not the exclusive purview of the Environmental Commission to directly implement or track the recommendations of the Transition Team report, the report has served as a starting place for forming an agenda for the Commission.

Achievements

The Commission was chartered based on "Recommendation 2: Create a Countywide, standing Environmental Advisory." The committee was chartered in April 2019 and held its first meeting on July 25, 2019.

Another recommendation proposed by the Sustainable Communities Transition Team was to establish a countywide policy for no net loss of forests. On November 25, 2019, the Anne Arundel County Delegation passed Bill 68-19: An Ordinance concerning Subdivision and Development Forest Conservation. **Attachment B** includes the letter that the CEC sent to the County Council in support of this bill.

In Progress

The Commission is currently working on **Recommendation 4: Modernize the Anne Arundel County Codes and Evaluate Procedures and Practices to facilitate Smart Growth, Community Based Planning, Sustainability, and Resiliency** from the Sustainable Communities Transition Team Report. This Commission met with the GDP's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) in September 2019 to discuss and make recommendations to the Natural Resources section of the General Development Plan 2040. Ongoing efforts here will include participating in other county planning efforts, such as the upcoming Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), regional plan development as part of implementation of the General Development Plan, and other efforts as they develop.

Pending Action

The Commission is looking at other recommendations in the Sustainable Communities Transition Team Report, especially as it comes to top environmental priorities in the County. As the CEC works through its committees, the recommendations may be modified to address the priorities listed below (see Commission Committees).

- **Recommendation 1:** Form a leadership-level “Streams and Creeks Cabinet”
- **Recommendations 3:** Create a Department of the Environment and Sustainability
- **Recommendation 5:** Adopt a policy goal of achieving a level of solar energy generation
- **Recommendation 6:** Create an environmental justice assessment tool to be used prior to new development, as well as updates, to existing development
- **Recommendation 7:** Institutionalize and operationalize climate change planning across county agencies and with the public

Commission Members:

- Ammar Hanif - Interfaith Partners of the Chesapeake
- Carmera Thomas - Little Patuxent River
- Jesse Iliff - Arundel Rivers Federation
- Jette Findsen - Patuxent Middle/Patuxent Lower/Herring Bay
- Jim Lyons - West/Rhode River
- Kate Fritz, Chair - Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Kirvin Bonner - Patapsco Non-Tidal
- Milly Welsh - South River
- Richard Hergenroeder - Patapsco Tidal River/Bodkin Creek
- Ruth Berlin - Severn River
- Sally Hornor - Magothy River Association
- Steve Miller - Magothy River

Commission Committees

The Commission categorized priorities for ongoing attention. The priorities are below. Members of the Commission have divided themselves into workgroups based on various County priorities, including **Education and Outreach, Pesticides/Toxins, Renewable Energy and the General Development Plan**. To provide recommendations that are most inclusive to all County residents, the priorities will also be looked at through a lens of public health, equity, and accessibility.

Governance

Under normal circumstances, the Commission meets every third Thursday of the month in the Chesapeake Room of the Heritage Office Complex at 2664 Riva Road, Annapolis, Maryland. Members of the public are welcome to attend, and the CEC opens the last 15 minutes of every

meeting for members of the public to ask questions and provide other relevant matters related to the environment and their communities.

The Commission held monthly meetings between July and November, and in January. Due to COVID or and other circumstances, meetings in February, March, April and May were cancelled. The Commission met in June via Zoom, cancelled in July to allow a small group of commissioners to focus on a community issue in July, recessed in August, and plans to continue to meet virtually until further notice.

Interests and Priorities

The Commission members requested presentations from Anne Arundel County staff to gather background information to provide logical recommendations.

Presentations throughout the year were provided by:

1. Septics Taskforce- Chris Phipps and George Heiner, DPW (October 17, 2019)

The intention of this agenda was to provide the CEC with recommendations for implementation for a guidance document for developers, create subsidies to connect septic systems for residents in need, and to streamline the community petition process for service. The concept of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) areas was also introduced to the CEC.

2. Inspections & Permits- Greg Africa and Raghu Badami, Inspections & Permits (November 21, 2019)

The intention of this presentation was to provide updates on improvements that the Inspections and Permits Department is making in regards to inspection checklists for more predictable outcomes, creating policy guidelines for permit-applicants, and other activities related to improving maintenance efforts.

3. Review of draft GDP “Planning for the Natural Environment”- Cindy Carrier & Erik Michelsen (January 16, 2020)

This presentation was a focused work session, where the CEC walked through every recommendation in the draft Natural Resources Chapter of the General Development Plan. The CEC provided immediate feedback, specifically related to strengthening language around policies related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and limiting pesticide usage countywide.

The Review of the draft GDP section “Planning for the Natural Environment” led to recommendations to update the maps for green hubs and corridors to define countywide conservation areas for protection. The CEC also recommended that the county include a fish advisory for local waterways, pollution indicators and community engagement; especially in areas where there is environmentally sensitive habitat.

On September 18, 2019 the Citizens Environmental Commission joined the GDP's Citizen Advisory (CAC) Commission meeting. The CEC discussed making recommendations to the environment sections of the GDP.

In review of the GDP - [Plan 2040 Community Engagement at Home](#), the CEC provided input and guidance on the following:

- Several studies or plan are completed or in progress relevant to GDP effort
- Draft environmental policy recommendations to come out in December for review and input
- Draft of GDP chapter (Natural Environment) shared with CEC in February for review and input on goals and strategies
- Implementation strategy should include community engagement- community-based learning and county agency speakers/liaisons assigned by district

In May 2020, the CEC transmitted official recommendations for language improvements of the GDP to the County Executive, members of the GDP's Citizens Advisory Committee, and officials in the Planning Department. **Attachment A** of this document includes the memo to the County Executive, and the detailed recommendations transmitted to the Planning Department.

Legislative Priorities

- Forest Conservation legislation
 - The Commission supported legislation by providing written public testimony via a letter to Council in support of passage of the Forest Conservation (Bill 68-19) (MONTH?)
 - Anne Arundel County Delegation passed Bill 68-19: An Ordinance concerning Subdivision and Development Forest Conservation passed on November 25, 2019

Community Engagement

The Citizens Environmental Commission is focused on evaluating issues around the County related to climate change, energy, resource protection and preservation, environmental justice and education. If there are communities around Anne Arundel County that have an issue to discuss, we welcome them to present them to the CEC for analysis and recommendations.

We would like to serve as a place for residents to seek assistance, provide input and facilitate community-based planning for county-wide environmental issues. One example from 2020 includes Harwood and Lothian residents presented with environmental compliance issues impacting neighborhoods surrounding Sands Road in southern Anne Arundel County.

As a result, the CEC has formed a smaller committee working with Waterkeeper Fred Tutman and Harwood/Lothian residents to investigate permits and discuss environmental justice issues

Next steps and Recommendations:

1. **Investing in an Equity Officer:** For further recommendation, the Commission suggests an Equity Officer for Anne Arundel County. The Equity Officer would provide expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion and community relations for the County. The officer would collaborate with county leaders, staff and partner agencies to ensure inclusive practices and an equitable environment for all.
2. **Collaborating with Other County Commissions and Board:** The second recommendation is to collaborate with other County Commissions and Boards. Increased interaction and cohesion would connect environmental priorities to social, education and other administration priorities. Some of the top Commissions or Boards to meet with include the Recreation Advisory Board, the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, the Local Workforce Investment Board, and the Bicycle Advisory Commission.

CEC webpage <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/environmental-commission/index.html>

Submit Agenda ideas: <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/environmental-commission/form/index.html#agenda>

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