

Environment and Energy Committee Minutes, December 14, 2010

Minutes of Environment and Energy Committee Meeting
December 14, 2010

The Environment and Energy Committee (E&EC) met on Tuesday, December 14, 2010, from 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. at the home of Marea Hatzios Grant, Co-Chair. Present were: Marilyn Bracken, Co-Chair; Betsy and Ralph Stephens; Valery Amiel; and guest presenter, Sally Kelly, Chair of the Environment Committee of the Town of Chevy Chase. The purpose of inviting Ms. Kelly was to find out more about what neighboring towns are doing in the area of sustainability and lowering the overall environmental and carbon footprint of the community. In the same vein, the E&EC co-chairs had met the week before with Judy MacGuire, Chair of the Town of Chevy Chase' Climate Protection Committee, to get a handle on some of the award winning activities that that group has sponsored, including, most notably, signing on to the Local Government for Sustainability (ICLEI: a worldwide network of mayors committed to environmentally sustainable management practices) challenge, and developing a Climate Action Plan, approved by the Town Board of Governors.

At the start of the meeting, the two co-chairs briefed the E&EC committee on some of the innovative ideas and initiatives introduced by the Climate Protection Committee to help households lower their carbon footprint, as well as to get the word out about what climate change means, the cause and impacts of climate change, and how we as concerned citizens can begin to address it. This information and more is available on the Town of Chevy Chase's November newsletter, Forecast: <http://townofchevyCHASE.org/assets/documents/pdfs/forecast/2010/forecast-nov10.pdf>

Ms. Kelly then described the work of the Town of Chevy Chase's Environment Committee, including its history, beginning in 2009, and its modus operandi. A major thrust of the Committee is education and outreach about greener living practices, and facilitating more sustainable alternative to consumption and waste management—through programs supported by the Board and the active participation of the community. These programs are summarized on the Town of Chevy Chase's website, under "Environment Committee" (<http://www.townofchevyCHASE.org/c/139>), and in the excellent web page, "Shades of Green" <http://www.townofchevyCHASE.org/c/314>, where residents can find information on a range of topics, from choosing more environmentally friendly home improvement options to transportation modes.

The Committee discussed the possibility of the Village piggy backing on some of the programs, like special events to recycle large household items such as old appliances, furniture, electronics, and bicycles, as well as co-sponsoring informational lectures and demonstrations on green landscaping, weather proofing and household energy audits. Ms. Kelly agreed to explore such possibilities with the Town Council. In the meantime, the E&EC Committee agreed to run a series of articles in the Town Crier on some of the resources and green options described by Ms. Kelly, including tips from the Shades of Green.

Following this discussion, the Committee turned to the topic of tree conservation in the Village and the possibility of developing guidelines on replacement of trees that have been removed from the public right of way or private property as a result of disease or the granting of a special variance, as well as a longer term strategy to increase the number of trees and green canopy in the Village. Trees provide a multitude of environmental services, not the least of which is sucking up carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere. They also provide shade, a home for wildlife, and help regulate local temperature and humidity, in addition to their aesthetic appeal. The Committee has agreed to work with the Tree Committee to help educate residents about the value of trees, why replacing mature trees with saplings does not begin to replace the lost services provided by mature trees. The Village regulation against the cutting down of trees without a special permit is a critical first step. One of the most cost effective measures we could undertake to offset our carbon footprint would be to develop and implement a plan to enhance the green space in the Village by planting native tree species wherever possible..

The meeting concluded with an agreement by the Committee to work with the Village management on drafting an agenda work plan for 2011 for presentation to the Village Board in the very near future. It also observed that the work would need to be shared by all those who are members of the Environment and Energy Committee, and requested that members indicate what elements of the plan they would most like to contribute to once a draft becomes available. Other village residents who would like to participate on the Committee are urged to call Marilyn or Marea or email them at marbracken@msn.com or mhatziolos@worldbank.org.

Submitted by Marea Hatziolos.