



Monthly Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 4, 2020

via GoToMeeting pursuant to and in compliance with City Council Ord. 20-05

6:30 p.m.

Commissioners in Attendance: Robert Courtnage (Chair), Kerry Devine (City Council), Christi Carver, Holly Chichester, Damian Cobey, Sarah Hurst, George Solley, Amanda Stebbins

Ex-Officio Members: Mike Ward (Parks and Rec), Diane Jones and M.C. Morris (R-Board), Diane Beyer (Public Works), Tyler Gelles (Planning)

* **Call to order at 6:41 p.m.**

* **Approval of Minutes** of March meeting motioned by Sarah Hurst and seconded by George Solley. All in favor.

* **Virtual Earth Day:** Robert Courtnage noted that the 50th anniversary of Earth Day was celebrated via Facebook on April 22. People posted what they were doing to honor the Earth. There was a good turnout, with lots of reshares. We learned more about the IT side for future events. Sarah asked if people would invite their friends to like our Facebook page.

* **Thurman Brisben Center Solar Array:** Robert noted that the major rollout event, which had been planned for April, was canceled due to the coronavirus. On Thursday morning (May 7), a media event will be held (with Ted Schubel and a FLS reporter) to talk about the project, including the fact that the Center will be able to generate 70% of energy needs from solar, saving money that can be used for their operating expenses. Robert noted that M.C. Morris and Sarah had put in lots of work on this event. Especially with City Council passing the fossil-free resolution, there will be opportunities to install solar on city buildings, school buildings, etc. and to provide training to people on doing the installations.

* **Fred Nats Stadium:** Robert said that the work of Commission members on the stadium project should be celebrated. They coordinated with the owners on LED lighting, energy-efficient appliances, and solar for the parking lot lights. The stadium is also solar-ready for more installations down the road. Kerry Devine said the stadium would be a catalyst for more sustainable projects in the future. Holly Chichester noted that we didn't get a chance to do the city tree planting at the stadium, but hopefully we can do that in the fall as a community event.

Amanda Stebbins asked if Grid Alternatives is interested in more projects in Fredericksburg beyond Thurman Brisben. Robert thought yes and wondered if rooftop solar at schools could be done with them, and whether we could get high school students involved in such a project.

*** Sustainability Award:** Sarah said that the first step would be to find out who is still open among the current award holders. Kerry noted that many restaurants have taken a big step back with carryout due to the coronavirus—using polystyrene containers, etc. Christi Carver suggested we just thank the ones that won the award last year and not focus on any steps back (i.e., don't be critical or punitive).

Amanda noted that Council will have to decide how to handle the Virginia bill allowing localities to tax plastic bags. She also suggested we try to spread the word that compostable carryout packaging is comparable in cost to plastic—though that's not true for straws at the moment. Diane Jones suggested educating folks on saying they don't need packs of dressing, plastic cutlery, etc. when ordering carryout.

Sarah suggested we wait to roll out this year's awards until restaurants are fully open. Christi noted that during Restaurant Week, there will be a way for restaurants to indicate they follow certain environmental practices. Then people can see that when they're choosing a place to eat. Amanda said that Fossil-Free Fredericksburg is planning to feature a page on their website noting businesses that follow sustainability practices.

*** C&G Initiatives for 2020:** Robert noted that, even with the effects of the coronavirus, we still want to stay engaged on the climate strategy. Kerry agreed, saying that while everybody is still in shock mode and the cuts to resources are real, we need to keep moving. There may be new kinds of opportunities in the new landscape—we'll all need to be looking for them.

Robert brought up C&G representation at FAMPO (Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization). They have subcommittees we can participate in. George Solley noted that FAMPO and GWRC (George Washington Regional Commission) get a lot of their mandates from the state, though they get to decide locally how to respond. So they may not be able to take much direction from local residents. Robert emphasized that it would still be good to get a seat at the table.

*** Committee Updates:** Not presented, due to inactivity resulting from coronavirus.

*** Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.**

Next meeting June 1, 2020.