

# **Environment and Energy Conservation Commission**

## Draft

Summary of March 23, 2015 Meeting  
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Azalea Conference Room

Members Present: Scott Dicke, Sarah Meservey, Christine Ng, Mike Hanna, Noor Khalidi, Claire O'Dea

Members Absent: Eric Schneider, Terry Whitehead, Patrick Kenney, Gabriel Thoumi, Alex Sanders

Guests: Irwin Kim, Greg Miller

Staff Present: Adam Segel-Moss (DES)

### **1. Public comment**

NA

### **2. Budget Update**

Scott Dicke noted that he provided comment on the County Manager's proposed FY16 budget. Scott noted that the Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) recognizes the fiscal constraints under which the County continues to operate. E2C2 supports the Manager's proposed budget and note that it holds true to County Board guidance to fund the core service of environmental sustainability.

The Commission discussed the issue surrounding the loss of dedication of utility tax revenue to the AIRE program. Scott noted that he spoke with County staff Richard Stevenson who clarified that there was never any legal dedication, but that it became common practice to equate the two. If the County Board exercises service option reductions that could mean the logic would be broken between utility tax revenue and AIRE program funding.

The Commission discussed the concern that there could be carryover funding that might be lost or future funds might be lost. Claire noted that it is important to keep the logic and remain whole at the level of the utility tax. There is a certain amount of backsliding that could occur from this action as future decisions are made. The Commission discussed the importance of funding the AIRE program to implement the Community Energy Plan and associated Comprehensive Plan elements.

Claire noted that the invasive species removal funding is being funded on a budget-to-budget basis. It would be very useful to modify this to an ongoing item. She also suggested that the Natural Resources Management positions be filled. Claire feels that these items should be included in the budget.

The Commission discussed the FAAC positions that were released. The Commission was not in agreement with the decisions reached by FAAC and felt that the supporting comments were unclear or incomplete. Comments by FAAC suggest a fee-for-service model for select AIRE outreach activities and Green Home Choice certification. The Commission felt that charging for those services could disincentive participation, work counter to County goals, and are now what best practices indicate.

Christine asked if there were any other Commission members that reached out about issues. Scott noted that he spoke with Dean Amel and Carolyn Haynes. They both expressed that land acquisition and program funding are insufficient. The land acquisition funding has been reduced significantly over time and does not allow for preservation or expansion of natural areas. The County will continue to be in the position of fighting over the use of land with more groups as more uses are needed and less land is available. Scott noted that this is an ongoing issue to be advocated now and into the future.

The Commission approved a letter to the Board unanimously.

**3. Meeting Summary Review – February 2015**

Approved as amended.

**4. Old/New Business**

Christine noted that the Abingdon planning process continues to move forward. Christine noted that the project and community are actively working to balance parking needs and spaces.