

Climate and Environment Committee Progress Report to Town Council–July 2014

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Climate and Environment Committee is to inspire and facilitate energy conservation and environmental stewardship by the Town and its residents through education, government policies, and incentives.

Approach to this year:

Create programming to address concerns and interests raised most prominently by residents in Committee's most recent survey (Spring 2013). Foster initiatives that emerge from those programs, whether they be Town-sponsored or private, seeking Town support when appropriate.

Programming - Completed (Feb 2014 to date)

- Ask the Energy Efficiency Experts. Topics included:
 - Measures you can take in your own home to increase comfort and save money
 - The town of University Park had a successful Energy Coach program that resulted in over 240 households getting audits and doing the recommended energy efficiency improvements. This is double the completion rate of our energy efficiency efforts several years ago.
- Rainscapes (in collaboration with Community Relations).
 - Pam Rowe from Montgomery County DEP presented on their program that facilitates design and provides rebates to individual homeowners for installing landscape controls to reduce the negative effects of stormwater run-off from their property.
 - 38 homeowners signed up for site assessments and 33 have been done by DEP so far.
- Our Town, Our Water
 - Following a short film on the Potomac River, a moderated panel discussion of three experts discussed what is in our tap water and how we can protect this precious resource.
- Garden Tour (assisting Community Relations)
 - Several gardens featured eco-friendly concepts including rainwater harvesting, native plants, permeable pavement, vegetable gardens, composting, and a raingarden.
- Car Talk and Other Transportation Options
 - Three Town neighbors and other representatives talked about electric vehicles. Afterwards everyone gathered around for an up-close view of the cars in the parking lot.

Completed tasks

- Committee webpage on Town website has a robust documentation of our programming with in-depth write-ups and videos.

Tasks that are underway

- Convening a tree subcommittee to respond to a Petition for Relaxation of the Tree Ordinance from several residents
- Developing several proposals for the Town as a result of our programming during the year including:
 - A program entitled RainScapes Technical Assistance and Rebate
 - A program entitled Energy Coach Technical Assistance and Rebate
 - A program entitled Land Conservation Pilot Project and Incentive
 - An ordinance entitled Pesticide Ban on Town Rights-of-Way
- Coordinating with 4-H center on possible environmental initiatives
- Participating in developing sustainable strategies for the Bethesda Sector master plan
- Completing Greenhouse Gas Assessment calculations with assistance from three University of Maryland undergraduate students in the Environmental Science & Technology Department
- Creating Zipcar spaces in the Lawton Center parking lot