

## **Environmental Affairs Committee — Annual Report for 2015-2016**

During the past year, the Environmental Affairs Committee lost its long-time Chairman, Joe Pelton. Previously, during 2014-15, the Committee also saw the departure of Scott Dicke (currently Chairman of Arlington's Environment and Energy Conservation Commission), and Sharon Jolley. The Committee now consists solely of John Seymour (Chairman), and Miriam Gennari. Additional members are, of course, welcome.

### Year-Round Yard Waste Collection

In the fall of 2015, the Committee provided an update on the status of Arlington's Year Round Yard Waste Collection Program (November 2015 newsletter). The Committee noted that the program had been delayed because of various contract protests, but was scheduled to begin in the spring of 2016. The goal of the program is to remove yard waste from the incineration waste-stream and increase Arlington's overall recycling rate. The program is also intended to develop useful products for re-use as soil amendments.

During its 2014 consideration of the program, the Civic Federation had approved a resolution in which it requested representatives of the program to report to the Civic Federation, on the first anniversary date of the program, to discuss implementation issues, recycling rates achieved, environmental costs and benefits, and issues relating to the potential expansion of the program to include food waste. Because the program began in April/May 2016, the Civic Federation may wish to invite Solid Waste Bureau staff to make a presentation to the Federation at a late spring 2017 meeting.

### Coordination with County Staff:

During 2015-16, Committee staff continued to meet with Carol Mitten (Deputy County Manager responsible for energy and environmental matters) as well as Greg Emanuel (Director of Arlington's Department of Environmental Services) to discuss developments and initiatives in the areas of environmental management. These sessions have proven useful in obtaining status updates on various programs and providing preliminary Committee views on those programs.

### Environmental Sustainability Presentation

In June 2016, representatives from the County's Office of Sustainability and Environmental Management gave a presentation to the Civic Federation outlining the challenges faced and progress made in achieving environmental sustainability in areas of solid waste, drinking water delivery, stormwater management, wastewater treatment, and energy conservation.

Arlington's solid waste initiatives promote sustainability in waste management through investments in waste-to-energy infrastructure, efficient recycling of many of Arlington's waste streams, and waste minimization. Stormwater compliance faces an aging infrastructure, increasing storm water releases from private development, severe and continuing erosion of local streams, and strengthened requirements for preservation of the Chesapeake Bay and local water quality standards. To reduce stormwater runoff and improve its quality, Arlington is continuing to invest heavily in storm water treatment measures through sewer system improvements, flood projects, stream restorations, and watershed retrofits, among other initiatives.

Wastewater management also faces major challenges because of an aging infrastructure at the Water Pollution Control Plant. Major investments are planned over the next decade to ensure thorough and sustainable management of waste water.

Energy conservation efforts are directed at mitigating the impacts of global climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Arlington's programs to promote energy conservation and reduce air pollution include investments to promote energy efficiencies in both residential and non-residential structures, increase the number of renewable energy sources, expand Arlington's transportation infrastructure (particularly for walkability, cycling and mass transit), and educate Arlington residents on ways to reduce energy usage.