



Envision Arlington Standing Committee

Date: Wednesday, January 13, 2021
Time: 7:30 - 9:00 PM
Location: Remote participation via Zoom

Minutes

Attendees: Scott Lever, Greg Christiana, Alex Bagnall, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Juli Brazile, Sue Doctrow

Envision Arlington Task Group Chairs: Brucie Moulton, David White, Gordon Jamieson, Katell Guellec, Len Diggins, Tom Ehbrecht

Visitors: Beth Melofchik, Elisabeth Dray, Gina Sonder, Jennifer Susse, Rebecca Gruber, Susan Brau, Crystal Haynes

1. Introductions

Before the introduction, Scott invited attendees to mention any particular item they'd like to prioritize for the meeting. Elisabeth Dray expressed concern about the Annual Town Survey rollout and outreach and wanted to see a thorough framework to reach a wide variety of town residents.

2. Task Group Updates

Scott asked Task Group chairs to talk about what their groups are focused on, how they are functioning, support they'd like from the Standing Committee, and what's working or not working in the relationship between Task Groups and the Standing Committee. He also suggested that joint meetings should happen more regularly. This meeting was scheduled in advance of the February Advisory Board meeting so the Standing Committee would better know how the Task Groups are doing.

Each Task Group provided an update:

- **Fiscal Resources Task Group:** Gordon Jamieson, chair of FRTG, reported that the group looks at finances and related subjects in town from variety of perspectives and reports out on the Town website, the Advocate, and elsewhere. He cited the example of the recent article on property taxes article in the Advocate, which was authored by the group. They also regularly update the governmental primer, look at long range planning financial projections, provide feedback to Sandy Poehler. They consider how to make the town financially sustainable: state aid, keeping insurance budget down, and new growth. They are currently in the midst of a long term analysis with Sandy, Paul, and Director of Inspectional Services to see whether they might need more staff to do their work effectively. Additionally, they hold interviews with key members of Town leadership. FRTG has six regular attendees and would like the Standing Committee's help in doing outreach to attract more volunteers and participants.
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- **Diversity Task Group:** Katell Guellec, chair of DTG, reported that the group has had good attendance during the pandemic, regularly having 20-25 participants at a meeting. Her goal is to help DTG organize itself into some more structured groups, like the subcommittees under the Human Rights Commission, to give

people a chance to know where to plug into DTG's work. Katell stated that she would like to have more contact between the Standing Committee and the Task Groups. In the last 18 months DTG has focused heavily on how they coordinate with other major groups in town who are focused on diversity – town commissions, grass roots organizations – and would like the Standing Committee to be part of coordination. She also announced they have an appointment to the study committee for the Civilian Review Board – Carlos Morales.

- **Sustainable Arlington:** Brucie Moulton and Tom Ebrecht, co-chairs, reported that they are in the process of making a leadership transition, as Amos will be stepping down to focus on his dissertation. Tom has been attending for a while and was personally involved in Ecofest two years ago. He said he wants to learn more about what the Task Groups are doing and have deployed regarding social media and their online presence. Regarding activities: Sustainable Arlington was closely involved in Clean Heat for Arlington to bring a warrant article intended to limit the introduction of new fossil fuel infrastructure in new buildings, homes, and major retrofits; they collaborate with other groups like True Story Theater; they focus on any aspect of environment and climate that is relevant to town and town government, such as the Gas Leaks Task Force, Clean Energy Future Committee, and Mystic Charles Pollinator Pathways Group.
- **Reservoir Committee:** David White, chair of the Reservoir Committee, reported that the group is working on a Native Plant Garden and is very much focused on the Reservoir. They see themselves as a “friends” group of the Reservoir, with participants from Arlington and Lexington. The committee was involved in the Reservoir Master Plan process.

Scott asked if the Reservoir Committee is a separate non-profit 501c3. David reported that Envision Arlington has funded the printing of brochures, but the group primarily uses funds from the Land Trust for planting materials. Gordon added that in the annual budget there is money allocated for the water bodies to keep them clean of invasives. DPW takes care of that task in conjunction with Reservoir Committee.

Spy Pond Committee: Brad Barber, chair, was unable to attend. Brucie reported that the committee is very similar to the Reservoir committee, although they have only one work day each year where they do a major project along the shores. They also assist with invasives control. Elisabeth noted the distinction between the Spy Pond Committee, which is primarily concerned with the water body, and the Friends Group, which is focused on the park.

3. Discuss upcoming February Advisory Board Meeting

The group discussed the membership of the Advisory Committee. Juli reported that the Committee includes the Town Manager, Town Council, Moderator, Planning Director, a Select Board member (Len was designated), APS Superintendent, a School Committee member (Paul Schlichtman), an ARB member (Rachel Zsembery), and a Financial Committee member (Annie LaCourt).

Katell asked when the Advisory Committee meeting is going to be held. Scott reported that it has not yet been scheduled. There was no further discussion on this agenda item.

4. Envision Arlington's potential role with housing

Alex introduced Crystal Haynes from the Human Rights Commission (HRC), who has done a lot of work/research and education on housing. He would like the Standing Committee to do what they can to help and amplify that work and collaborate with HRC on it.

Crystal is the Events Working Group lead for HRC. Housing had come up several times in meetings over the last year, especially with Suffolk Survey that had come out. They started a series of forums talking about housing, especially after the Community Conversations series was held this summer. Because the topic of housing is so complex, they wanted to break down into pieces where people can be informed as a community and then discuss as a community.

Their first event was around what goes into thinking about equity in housing. The author of the Suffolk Survey explained how and why they did the research, and how they talk about equity when pitching developments. A lot of attendees wanted to jump in and tell the experts speaking that they were wrong. With this coming series, Crystal is looking to have a community discussion that is more informed in spring and summer.

Scott asked if Crystal and Alex had specific ideas about how Envision can help. The first opportunity to hold an event will be in March, after the Black History Month programming is completed. They do not yet have a date scheduled. Kelly will share the 2020 Town Survey report.

Crystal and Alex expressed interest in having the Standing Committee help with publicity and budgeting. Alex, Len, Kelly, and Crystal will carry on a discussion about this as a subgroup.

5. Discussion on the EA's nomination to the Police Civilian Review Board Study

The Standing Committee needs to make a nomination from among the Committee members to the Civilian Review Board Study Group. Juli reported that she had spoken with Doug Heim, and that there is no mechanism for creating an associate member right now. Such a change would require Town Meeting approval.

Elizabeth Dray said she is frustrated because she would liked to serve on the Study Group as the Standing Committee's appointee, but has not yet heard back on her application to the Standing Committee.

Greg's said he feels he does not have the bandwidth to give it the Study Group the attention it deserves. Len offered to connect the Committee's nominee to someone he knows who is an expert in criminology and criminal justice. Scott, Greg, Len agreed to discuss it later in the week.

6. Discussion on the Annual Town Survey

Sue and Kelly will be meeting to discuss a communication and outreach plan for the survey, and will share the plan back with the committee once it is complete. Kelly stated she would contact various Town staff and departments to ask them to share the information with their boards, committees, and social networks.

Elizabeth Dray said the Committee needs to focus on precincts that have lower response rates by reaching out in a non-traditional way. She suggested a big flyering

push at bus stops, laundromats, bottle return, parks, Housing Authority, community rooms, among other ideas. She also said outreach needs to be multilingual. Elizabeth asked what kind of town decisions are made with the data from the survey. Juli said that the survey town staff or committees understand community priorities, citing how the survey in a prior year asked about library services so the library could get feedback on how to adjust their schedule.

Scott said he would like the Town Survey to be a year round Standing Committee activity instead of something that kicks off in the fall. Now that he's seen what's involved with this he wants to get an earlier start.

Elizabeth said that attention has not been paid to the rollout, and that she advocated in August that two groups would be organized: one to focus on survey development, and one on the rollout.

Scott said he wants to have a frank discussion with the Advisory Committee about the role of the survey. He has concerns about the independence of the survey from the Town and Town officials, and did not appreciate the Town's request to modify some of the questions. He questioned the Town's motive for doing so. He asked if the Standing Committee should push to have the survey be done independent of the Town.

Katell and Elizabeth volunteered to post flyers around town.

7. Budget update

Budget was not discussed for lack of time.

8. New Business

Zoom account: Len asked about whether the Standing Committee could use part of its budget to purchase a Zoom account to use for precinct meetings to facilitate easier scheduling and management of the meetings. Len will report back on the cost and logistics of how this would work.

Candidates' Night: The League of Women Voters is planning to do a virtual event; and Elisabeth and Sue are helping organize it. They will have the same moderator as in prior years, and are looking into how this can be done virtually over Zoom and who should own the account.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.