



“Envisioning Our Future”

Societal Growth – Part II

(Emphasizing impacts on air & water; planning; land conservation)

Session E on Wednesday, April 10, at 11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in Moody Hall, Activities Room

Environment Virginia Symposium 2013

Conveners: Amy Owens, DEQ Regional Director (Valley)

The Hon. L. Preston Bryant, Jr., McGuireWoods Consulting, Former Sec. of Natural Resources

Sub-issues suggested by stakeholders in previous interviews with DEQ staff:

- Increased land development with potential loss of critical habitat and pressure on land preservation efforts
- Loss of farms, forests (including forest fragmentation), and natural areas on which agricultural, fisheries, forestry, and tourism industries rely
- Greater demand for ground water and surface water
- Plans for growth corridors, including green infrastructure like parks, wetlands, trail, forest preserves
- Air-quality impacts of Virginia’s population centers
- Energy efficiency and sustainability
- Planning for additional uses of coastal waters, the ocean, and ports
- Managing fire
- Shifting housing patterns & ramifications thereof (revitalization of core cities, growth of exurbs, aging suburbs)
- Impacts not only of more people, but also of greater impacts per person
- Sustainability of growth-based economy (i.e., economic performance evaluated by growth & consumption, not on sustainability or other factors)
- Additional planning regarding where building should occur (gobbling up farm land & forests, long commutes, extension of public services)

If you have further ideas to contribute, please email them to carol.wampler@deq.virginia.gov.

Thank you for contributing to the dialogue on our FUTURE.

ENVISIONING: SOCIETAL GROWTH II CONVENERS

AMY THATCHER OWENS

Amy Owens is the Regional Director for Department of Environmental Quality's Valley Regional Office in Harrisonburg. The former Director of DEQ's Division of Enforcement and a former Chair of the Environmental Section of the Richmond Bar Association, she received her law degree from the College of William and Mary and her undergraduate degree from the University of Richmond. She is a 23-year veteran of Virginia state government, and spent part of her career as an economic developer with the Virginia Department of Business Assistance.

The Hon. L. PRESTON BRYANT, JR.

L. Preston Bryant, Jr., is senior vice president at McGuireWoods Consulting, LLC, in Richmond, Virginia, where he advises clients on infrastructure and economic development projects.

He served as Virginia secretary of natural resources in the cabinet of Governor Timothy M. Kaine from 2006 to 2010. In this position, he led the state's six environmental, recreational, wildlife, and historic resources agencies, a staff of 2,200, and a \$420 million annual budget. He also helped write Virginia's first-ever statewide energy plan, and he chaired the Governor's Commission on Climate Change.

Prior to joining the governor's cabinet, Preston was an elected member of the Virginia House of Delegates from 1996 to 2006, and he also was a partner in a Virginia-based civil engineering firm.

In 2009, President Obama appointed him to chair the National Capital Planning Commission, which is the central planning agency for all federal lands and buildings in the Washington, DC, area.

Preston received his B.A. from Randolph-Macon College in 1986, his M.Hum. from the University of Richmond in 1988, and his M.A. from Royal Holloway, University of London, in 1990.

REPORTER:

Tammy Stephenson, Department of Environmental Quality, Program Coordinator, Office of Water Supply

SESSION NOTES

Carol Wampler welcomed attendees on behalf of DEQ and introduced co-host of the Envisioning track, Tammy Stephenson, as well as the session conveners. She explained that the "Envisioning

Our Future” sessions are part of DEQ’s seeking stakeholder input regarding future environmental and energy priorities. The Virginia General Assembly formed DEQ in 1993 by joining four agencies – State Water Control Board, Department of Air Pollution Control, Department of Waste Management, and Council on the Environment, which was responsible for long-range planning. Now, at Environment Virginia, expert conveners will facilitate discussion among attendees to get information on how DEQ and other parties should plan for the next 30-50 years. The session reporter will capture comments. Summaries will be posted on DEQ’s and VMI’s websites and will form the basis of white papers to be submitted to DEQ’s Director and the Secretary of Natural Resources.

Convener Amy Owens began stating that this topic is very near and dear to her heart. In the Valley, they get more of everything each year - chickens, cows, people, NGO’s, industries. People are invested in making everything work. Neither we nor our constituents like regulation, but regulation is needed as we try to manage resources and stresses on the resources. We’re challenged on how to be more effective. She summarized where Virginia is ranked in water discharge compliance v. funding v. economic development. She turned it over to Convener Preston Bryant.

Mr. Bryant said we are looking at air, water, and land today. Regarding some of the trends, challenges, how we’re impacted, etc. There’s a lot of work that’s been done in the last 20 years, but we shouldn’t think we still don’t have significant challenges ahead. Growth – just population growth, 1960, Virginia – 4 million; now we’ve basically doubled to a little over 8 million. He mentioned Loudoun County, some of the other fast-growing counties in the state. Seeing a lot of growth in areas we didn’t envision. In the Valley that Ms. Owens represents, if you look at aerials, you can see where the valley is just filling in. In Abingdon, you can see more and more growth along I-81. This is growth we wouldn’t have necessarily envisioned. How does this impact energy? Our energy supply is severely stressed. Just to keep up with growth in this decade, there is a 14,000 megawatt deficit. Water supply – Hampton Roads and everywhere east of Richmond coastal plains are severely stressed. About 40% of water needs come from ground water. As David Paylor has said, water supply is Virginia’s number one challenge. He said the coastal plain, from Richmond east, into northern Virginia, is drawing off of one multi-layer aquifer. You can’t put but so many straws in it. Two paper mills, Franklin (IP), West Point (Rock-Tenn), when they’re both pulling water, you can see the aquifer drop a foot. That’s not factoring in a lot of the other major water users. Growth is a challenge in a lot of areas. Land loss – Virginia loses between 35-40,000 acres of land each year to development. He’s not against development; we need it to keep things humming. Virginia has one of the nation’s premier land preservation programs. We need to talk about what we can do, plan for growth in the future. Focus on land loss, conservation; air; water. He opened the floor for discussion.

A local government representative -- responded to Secretary Bryant’s comments on growth and mentioned the loss of population in the more rural areas, where they have aging infrastructure

that must still be maintained, even though there are fewer people to utilize it. Aging society – age-way planning. The Northern Neck is one of the oldest communities, even though they're seeing growth. If we're looking at the future, we need to recognize that as well and how we address that. What do we do about these localities?

Another attendee -- asked about the case study on the Eastern Shore, talking about the wind project proposed in Cape Charles. There are aged transmission lines which were at capacity and weren't able to accommodate, so couldn't spur economic activity. Infrastructure needs have to be looked at up front to accommodate looking at something different. They had the ability to accept something different, but the infrastructure was not there to accommodate it. He's been watching what's been going on in the Eastern Shore communities since the 1970s.

Ms. Owens added that many of these communities have buildings that are never going to be occupied. She asked what we can do to help with reuse or converting back to greenfields, or shovel-ready brownfields.

A public-sector attorney -- said that many of these are at a statewide level. Is there something we can do as state agencies to partner with the private sector to brainstorm for solutions to these problems? The legislature would benefit from the results of such studies, statewide planning aspect.

A conservation group representative -- said he was following up on the preceding comments. He served on a commission some years ago, looking at "smart growth" as well as other issues. After results, nothing happened, even though other states were moving forward. He thinks we need regional incentives. We don't do planning well in the state, relatively speaking. Maybe there's a way to tackle on a regional level rather than statewide.

Secretary Bryant added that back in Governor Allen's days, there were regional cooperation grants and other programs to assist with regionalism. Virginia is the only state in the country that still has independent cities. North Carolina has elastic boundaries between cities and counties, divides responsibilities. He doesn't have any idea that Virginia would ever change the independent city structure, but it is a challenge.

A local government representative -- responded about the whole political environment. The term "planning" provokes a hostile reaction, possibly having an effect on upcoming elections. If you don't have support at the very top, there are problems. There are cycles to this, timing of idea presentation with regard to gubernatorial and other elections is critical. Support is not there to do a lot of things folks in this room would like to see done.

Another attendee -- added that we've been hashing through these same issues a number of times – we've been here before. We know the issues. We have a public that has become more separated from the value of the environment. How do we stay in the game? What are the mechanical and political issues that allow us to address these? What can we do this time to

break this cycle, so we can move forward on these things? There are all sorts of things that work against it. What are the strategies we need to move forward? That is the absolute quest.

A consultant -- said the example of the energy project on the Eastern Shore is an excellent one. If we're going to solve this problem, we have to identify how government can become more flexible and move faster, without picking winners and losers. How can they support a project without dropping something else?

A local government representative -- said he received an email from someone who is a potential candidate. The message included a statement that he/she is against "Agenda 21." This type of statement tends to be non-productive. Business needs to step up and be candid about what they need and support government to do.

A citizen from Virginia Beach -- said she is thinking about this from a planning aspect. Virginia Beach has several types of plans. City wanted to preserve the southern part of the city as green field, developed a "green line." Fact is, the city couldn't afford to put needed infrastructure in place to develop that part of the city. Green line still exists today. Maybe the state is reaching the need for this type of strategic planning. Look at where development happens in the state, etc., look at incentive programs. We all benefit from keeping forest lands, farms, etc. As a state, we need to be thinking more strategically. Instead of catching up with the needs, we're keeping up with them. Secretary Bryant agreed that we need incentives to farmers to maintain their farms.

Secretary Bryant called on a conservation group representative to talk about land use, conservation that has occurred over the last few years. She said that much of what drives growth is interest. Transportation drives it as well. There was thought of managing transportation, where growth should go, minimize incentives to maximize the effect when it's around developed areas. She doesn't know what the result has been. Secretary Bryant said the most aggressive, progressive land use action Virginia has done for years.

An attorney -- said he thinks what's happened in the last three years is that it has gotten vogue to hate government and anything government does. When you look at the people in these government agencies that do the things we're talking about, they do this even on Saturday and Sunday. They know what they're talking about, know how to do these things. Tying in with the Council on the Environment, there was a small group of people that were a SWAT team for local governments. The Virginia Association of Counties worked with them, sent them into localities that needed them if they didn't know how to start a project they needed. It was an information resource. We need to stem the tide that everything government does is wrong. Does growth control land use, or does land use control growth?

A PDC representative -- said that regarding Hampton Roads, a lot of times we're going to have a hard time convincing folks to embrace a big plan. It might be more effective to provide the

analysis. Cost savings is never going to be unpopular. This might be more where we need people to make these decisions. Sharing services between localities is going to primarily be driven by money. Not sure that DEQ is going to weigh in on that, though. Let each locality look at the pros and cons. There's still a role for the state to have an opinion and a priority, but not sure the state can solve the problem.

A conservation group representative -- asked if there is a way for the state to incentivize regional and cooperative planning. There should be a way to encourage them to want to work together. There are a lot of things to discourage them from working together, such as the economy. It's very rare that the state would say no to a local plan. Often the local developers are the ones that say no to a local direction, such as where roads go. Can we support transportation hubs and growth in that way? She thinks it's good to celebrate successes. A great program in the coastal program is funding for green infrastructure plans, but just for the coastal zone region. If you could expand that type of program, provide guidance documents to others. Show the importance of the green space. It would be a great way for the state to show, educate people, the importance of sustainability.

Secretary Bryant asked the group to come up with a few takeaways.

An attendee -- said he grew up in steel mill town; people had cancers no one had ever heard of. What about proposing questions like, what if you had to find your own water, provide your own food, etc.? If we could propose these, maybe people would think more about what the government does and not embrace the Agenda 21-type stance.

A conservation group representative -- said he echoes an earlier comment about Council on the Environment's planning function. A unit within the Council on the Environment that served a valuable function was the "Local Assistance Planning Unit." They provided the local governments with expertise they did not have. This would be a good take away, bring life back into that. Following up on the comment regarding the private-sector role, there should be ways to move this forward.

A local government representative -- talked about cities and revenues, regarding revenue sharing, taxes and revenues at the local level. They're having discussions with Chambers re: BPOL (Business Professional Occupational License) taxes. If they're taken away, what will replace it? Will the legislature adopt tax reform? Will there be incentives for localities to revenue share?

An industry representative -- added that with public/private partnerships, his company would be receptive to looking at these types of things, looking at redeveloping areas, using his materials in there. They have ideas re: mitigation of quarries, mining. If there are ways his company could partner with municipalities, it works out well.

Ms. Owens said she wished we could have looked at current incentives that are actually in place. Also, looking at the barriers that are there keeping these from moving forward, looking at them to see if they're actually working.

An attendee -- added that everyone is talking about incentives. The other side of the coin is penalties. There's a carrot and a stick. Why doesn't it cost too much for someone to develop where they shouldn't? He thinks it's important to look at the big picture, not just one side of the coin. Government needs to provide a leadership role, but also accountability.

An attorney -- said there are certain programs the agency has, such as the brownfields programs, etc. Those are processes in place that can facilitate growth in certain areas. If there are choices, it'll be the least expensive alternative/project.

Ms. Owens added that we create incentives, but don't look to see if they're operating on an optimal basis.

An attorney -- said he's anxious to see how the State Water Resources Report will look at opportunities for collaboration on developing water supplies. He's anxious to see how it shakes out in the next year or two. There's an opportunity there that will help, but you need to look at minimizing the other obstacles.

Secretary Bryant said that the water supply planning process that David Paylor led was daunting, no one gave it a snow ball's chance of succeeding. It has worked out famously.

A public-sector attorney -- said regarding the SWAT team, her earlier comments weren't to mean the state developed a master plan to give to localities, but to work with them.

Secretary Bryant thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing comments.

One of Cabell Brand's books was awarded as a door prize.