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Spotsy outlines path to eco-friendly future

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by Jonas Beals
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Spotsylvania supervisor Hap Connors, who was endorsed by the Sierra Club in last year's election, says Spotsylvania's government is taking actions to become eco-friendly.

Connors, speaking to the club at its Feb. 14 meeting, outlined the formation of a Regional Green Government Commission.

Last fall, the George Washington Regional Commission announced the formation of the Green Government Commission as a way to help localities implement energy-efficiency measures.

Connors is co-chair of the commission, along with Marv Dixon. They are seeking members to get the commission up and running next month.

"We want to place this on the public agenda," Connors said. "We want to build a coalition of like-minded individuals who have the passion and expertise to help create some innovative solutions."

Connors hopes the commission members will educate themselves and the public on topics like green building, green products, energy efficiency, alternative energy, green vehicle fleets and improved land-use policies.

The Green Government Commission is, in part, a reaction to a lack of federal support for environmental initiatives.

"The federal government, over the last 7 years, has been slow to respond, so many state and local officials are pushing these issues to the forefront," Connors said.

Connors emphasized public-private partnerships, and voiced his hope that the area could become a leading center for effective environmental policies and practices. Beyond replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents or buying hybrid government-fleet vehicles, Connors envisions the region becoming a research and development hub for green initiatives.

Scott Howson of the Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club said he was happy to see a local politician participate in the meeting.

"Local governments are finally becoming aware that energy is a manageable resource, and that measurable benefits can be achieved by paying attention to the ways energy is used," Howson said. "Local governments can play a very important part in educating the community to the positive results of wise energy management."

"Green" government initiatives have moved from the fringes of political discourse as topics like global warming have gained mainstream acceptance. Financial problems have also pushed environmental issues to the fore, where "green" options can provide long-term benefits by lowering energy costs.

"We will always need to demonstrate that being green is not only the morally right thing to do, but it makes good business sense when you look at these innovations stimulating economic development opportunities and the long-term savings in our budgets," Connors said.

To reach Jonas Beals: 540/368-5036

Email: jbeals@freelancestar.com

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