



Environmental Quality & Public Works (EQPW) Committee

November 18, 2025

Summary and Motions

Chair Hannah LeGris called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Committee Members James Brown, Tyler Morton, Emma Curtis, Liz Sheehan, Lisa Higgins-Hord, Joseph Hale, Amy Beasley, Dave Sevigny, and Hil Boone were present. Vice Mayor Dan Wu, Council Members Shayla Lynch and Jennifer Reynolds were present as non-voting members.

I. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 7, 2025 COMMITTEE SUMMARY

Motion by Curtis to approve the October 7, 2025 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Morton. Motion passed unanimously.

II. WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT FEE INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

Alyssa Mackenzie, District 10 Legislative Aide, presented recommendations for the Water Quality Management Fee (WQMF) Incentive Grant Program, established by ordinance in 2009 and requiring that at least 10% of annual WQMF revenue be allocated to grants for stormwater quality improvements. Funding is distributed between residential (Class A) and non-residential (Class B) properties, with the majority allocated to larger commercial contributors.

The program supports a wide range of eligible projects, including stream restoration, green infrastructure (bioretention, rain gardens, and pervious pavement), stormwater retrofits, tree planting, neighborhood education, and the development of stormwater curricula for schools. Grants are offered across three main categories: neighborhood projects, education, and infrastructure, with application cycles typically in May and July.

In 2025, District 10 led a comprehensive review of the program, including past applications, internal processes, and stakeholder input. Based on this review, staff identified four primary goals: expanding the applicant pool, streamlining application and reporting processes, reducing change orders, and improving overall stormwater outcomes.

Key recommendations include improving accessibility and technical support through an online application system, office hours, and applicant toolkits; enhancing outreach and storytelling through videos, signage, and marketing materials; and modernizing reporting with an online reporting system, clearer timelines, and structured applicant feedback. Implementation of these improvements is planned for 2026, in coordination with the Divisions of Environmental Services (DES) and Water Quality (DWQ).

Motion by Sevigny to approve accepting the recommendations for the Water Quality Management Fee Incentive Grant Program as presented at the November 18, 2025 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee meeting and as set forth in the committee packet. Seconded by Curtis. Motion passed unanimously (as amended).

Motion by LeGris to amend the deadline of the Storytelling and Toolkits in the recommendations from June 2026 to December 2026. Seconded by Sevigny. Motion passed unanimously.

III. WASTE CONTAMINATION AND REDUCTION PLAN

Angela Poe, Public Information and Engagement Manager, provided an update on Lexington's efforts to reduce waste and recycling contamination, outlining the scope of the problem, operational impacts, root causes, early audit results, and next steps.

As of January 2025, contamination in both recycling and yard waste streams has created significant operational challenges. Impacts include:

- Safety risks for workers
- Equipment damage and inefficiencies
- Landfilling of recyclable and yard waste materials
- Double transportation costs when contaminated loads must be rehandled
- Limited processing options for yard waste due to the lack of sorting equipment, requiring full loads to be accepted or rejected

Internal causes include mixed loads, limited cart visibility before dumping, and incorrect cart collection. External causes are largely behavioral, including improper cart use, confusion about accepted materials, and "wish-cycling"—placing unacceptable items in carts in hopes they can still be diverted from the landfill.

The department has initiated both internal operational changes and external education efforts:

- Improved staff training, accountability, and facility tours
- Evaluation of supervisory structure
- Proposed change of yard waste cart lids to yellow to improve visibility
- Expanded public outreach through mailings, mass media, tabling, audits with personalized feedback, partner engagement, and removal of consistently misused carts

Early residential contamination audits (first two rounds) show:

- Persistent issues with plastic bags and wrap, including wrap still attached to cardboard. Some wish-cycling, though staff noted many currently unacceptable items are expected to become recyclable by fall 2026
- Use of a tagging system (Green = pass, Yellow = needs work, Red = fail) to provide direct household feedback

Next Steps include:

- A third round of residential audits beginning the week of December 1
- Simplified and consolidated messaging
- Redesigned and translated door hangers
- Integration of contamination tags into routine waste operations
- Continued staff training
- Expanded focus on multi-family properties and additional neighborhoods

Looking ahead to FY27, the program anticipates expanded outreach, refreshed print and media campaigns, partnerships with the Living Arts & Science Center for educational exhibits, and updates to the Materials Recovery Facility classroom to support public education.

The Committee discussed the scope of the waste audit, noting that it currently focuses on residential materials and that a future phase is planned to include businesses and other affiliates. Members reviewed recent reductions in contamination, and staff explained that improvements reflect active removal of contaminated materials both on the processing line and from loads on the tipping floor. Questions were raised about recyclable material categories and market availability, and staff noted that acceptance

depends on facility capabilities and available space, and that expansion options are being explored to support continued progress. No action was taken on this item.

IV. HALEY PIKE LANDFILL SOLAR PROJECT

Richard Dugas, Administrative Officer Senior, provided a status update on the Haley Pike Solar Project, a proposed solar installation on the capped Haley Pike landfill, responding to RFP 35-2025. Staff requested approval of a Letter of Intent (LOI) in November 2025 to allow Edelen Renewables to begin regulatory, fiscal, and interconnection coordination, with final lease approval anticipated in December 2025 or January 2026. Project development would occur through spring 2026, with construction targeted to begin in late spring or early summer 2026.

Changes in federal tax law under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA) modified eligibility deadlines for the 30% Investment Tax Credit (ITC). Failure to meet these deadlines could reduce project feasibility by up to 40%, particularly given the higher costs and risks associated with solar development on capped landfill sites compared to farmland.

The proposed project includes a mix of fixed-tilt and single-axis tracker panels, with non-penetrating, ballasted systems used on capped landfill areas to protect cap integrity. The developer outlined extensive environmental compliance commitments, including modifications to the landfill permit, water quality requirements, performance bonding, and coordination with LFUCG as the permitted entity.

The project includes a Community Benefit Plan to be developed in collaboration with LFUCG, community nonprofits, and schools, with goals related to workforce development, environmental education, sustainability outcomes, and alignment with the Imagine Lexington 2045 Comprehensive Plan, including significant greenhouse gas reductions.

Finally, the presentation addressed long-term obligations, including vegetation and erosion management, a detailed land management plan, and a fully bonded decommissioning plan that ensures the removal and recycling of solar equipment at the end of the project life would be the responsibility of the project owner, not LFUCG or the community.

The Committee discussed labor, land use, procurement, and long-term implications of the Haley Pike Solar proposal. Adam Edelen confirmed that labor unions will be allowed to bid on project work. Questions were raised about the project footprint, with staff explaining that 357 of the landfill's 687 acres are proposed for lease, including 158 acres of capped landfill and additional vacant land. The property is agriculturally zoned but is exempt under state law because it is publicly owned. Concerns were raised about the extent of development on vacant land and the need to align with broader solar policy discussions, including agrivoltaics. Discussion also focused on the non-binding Letter of Intent, with staff clarifying that it authorizes negotiations only and does not obligate LFUCG. No action was taken on this item.

V. DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY STORMWATER PRIORITY LIST

The Stormwater Priority List was included in the packet for informational purposes only.

VI. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No action was taken on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.