

# THE COLUMN

Newsletter of  
the Virginia Institute  
of Government

Summer/Fall 2014

Virginia  
Institute of  
Government



20 Years  
1994–2014

## INSIDE

Online Compensation  
Survey System

Call for Subscribers

3

### EBIS

Information Network  
in 18th Year

3

### ONSITE TRAINING

Customized Programs  
Delivered to  
Your Doorstep

4

### SEI & LEAD

Discounts for  
Institute members

4

## Norfolk's Sustainable Path

*Denise Thompson explains the city's  
energy management initiatives*

ANDREW CAMPBELL

*This interview has been edited  
and condensed.*

In a time when making the extra effort to be more environmentally conscious usually means spending more money (think solar panels or grass-fed beef), some plans can achieve environmental sustainability and cost savings simultaneously. The city of Norfolk is implementing one such plan. Headed by Denise Thompson, Norfolk's Environmental Protection Programs Manager since 2008, the city's sustainability program seeks to solidify Norfolk's reputation as an environmentally responsible locality that places stewardship among its top priorities. *The COLUMN* sat down with Ms. Thompson to discuss the city's plan.

**When did Norfolk first realize the need to move to a more environmentally sustainable model?**

The community has been moving toward sustainability for decades, with two priorities: wastewater treatment and safe drinking water. We [Norfolk] have some of the best drinking water in the country because we protect the watersheds that feed the reservoirs. Our sustainability plans continue to evolve.

**What has the city done recently?**

Guided by Mayor Paul Fraim, the city created the position of Environmental Protection Programs Manager in 2008 to lead sustainability and energy management initiatives. In 2011, the city council reassessed its priorities to ensure that they reflected the community's priorities, one of which was environmental sustainability. The aim was to help Norfolk become

*continued on page 2*



## Norfolk Receives Grant from 100 Resilient Cities Initiative

Last December, Norfolk was named one of the initial 33 cities worldwide (and one of only 11 in the country) to participate in the Rockefeller Foundation’s new 100 Resilient Cities Centennial Challenge.

This honor comes with a two-year grant, which will fund a new position, Chief Resilience Officer. Christine Morris, recently named to this role, will develop and

implement a resilience strategy— a long-term plan that will build the city’s capacity to maintain and recover critical functions in the face of natural and manmade shocks and stresses.

Norfolk’s energy efficiency and conservation initiatives support its environmental sustainability, which Norfolk recognizes is a critical aspect of a community’s resilience.

For additional information, please visit [100resilientcities.rockefellerfoundation.org](http://100resilientcities.rockefellerfoundation.org).

## Norfolk’s Energy Efficiency Plan Strategies

### 1. Assess performance

- Run energy audits of building space
- Establish benchmarks with Energy Use Index

### 2. Set goal for steady reduction in municipal energy consumption

### 3. Develop action plan

- Educate employees to create culture of sustainability
- Improve equipment and operations

### 4. Monitor and evaluate progress

- Implement EnergyCap software program

### 5. Recognize achievements

- Affirm and support actions of individuals and groups

*continued from page 1*

“a premier waterfront community that creates a positive, regenerative effect on its environment and thrives economically and culturally.”

**You stress the importance of aligning your office with city council priorities to ensure the successful integration of sustainable energy plans. How will you accomplish this collaboration?**

Along with environmental sustainability, another city council priority is a well-managed government, which means an efficient government. Reducing energy supports both of these priorities. Specifically, by being more energy efficient we are not only protecting the environment, we are also saving money. For example, carpooling to a job site or a meeting with four riders to a car means there are three less cars on the road. This reduces carbon emissions, is better for the environment, and also saves fuel costs.

**What is the Green Team and how does it fit into these plans?**

The Green Team is an interdepartmental group of employees who support sustainability efforts. The city manager started the Green Team in 2006. He pulled together a group of dedicated people from different departments, some of whom drafted the city’s original sustainability mission statement. A few members were tapped for Norfolk’s Energy Committee in 2009. They helped select and implement our current software program, EnergyCAP. The Green Team meets once a month to work on various initiatives, including an annual Earth Day project.

**How does using the EnergyCAP software translate into money saved and more sustainable energy?**

There is an old saying that if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it. EnergyCAP is a quick way to get an [energy usage] overview, as well as the details, for all of our buildings. For example, we can generate a report that shows us which are our most energy-efficient buildings and which aren’t operating as well. The program sorts buildings by type so we can view like buildings on one page. This simplifies the next step of generating reports for department directors.

For instance, a review of our libraries showed that one was registering as an outlier. Although the building operated on the same schedule as the other libraries, it was not as energy efficient. A quick call to the energy management control system at the central energy plant revealed that this particular library was not on the setback program and that while the lights were turned off on schedule, the HVAC was not properly adjusted. This was costing money, and once we got everything back on track, the energy bill dropped by 30 to 40 percent.

**Have other localities contacted you about Norfolk’s best energy-saving practices?**

Yes. We’ve been a part of a regional energy group started by Virginia Beach. We learned how to operate EnergyCAP from Newport News, then passed it on to Richmond and a couple of Northern Virginia localities that have also shared many energy-saving practices.

*continued on page 3*



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## VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

### Compensation Survey System (CSS)

#### *Localities encouraged to tap into resource*

The Institute's Compensation Survey System (CSS) is a subscription-based, online database of local government salary and benefit information. CSS now has 80 Virginia subscribers and is available to all Virginia localities and quasi-governmental agencies. It is the only compilation of salary and benefits data of its type in the state. Institute members receive a 10 percent discount on the already low annual subscription fee.

Subscriptions to CSS have understandably fallen in recent years due to generally stagnant salaries and benefits. However, we anticipate increased participation as local governments review pay plans and reestablish annual COLA's in an improving fiscal environment.

The CSS was developed and is operated by Technology Net in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Institute serves as the marketing and fiscal agent for the Virginia program.



Contact Tedd Povar at 804/371-0202 or tep3e@virginia.edu.

### EBIS Turns 17 with 3700 Topics

It's hard to believe that the Email Broadcast Information Service (EBIS) is in its 17th year. This service was created to satisfy one of the core functions of the Virginia Institute of Government: to provide technical assistance to member localities. Since its inception, EBIS has become part of the fabric of local government in Virginia.

With current Institute membership totaling 190 localities, EBIS is a reliable source of quick answers to many routine and complex questions related to Virginia local government. EBIS relies on collaboration among the state's local governments, linking individuals with questions to colleagues with answers on particular topics.

A database that now includes over 3700 topics (that's over 225 inquiries a year) reflects the success of EBIS and its value to Institute members.



Contact Tedd Povar at 804/371-0202 or tep3e@virginia.edu.

*continued from page 2*

#### **What topics do you cover when teaching employees to create a culture of sustainability?**

One facet is the employee's individual responsibility. We ask them to consider questions like: Do you use your blue recycling bin? Do you know what items are recyclable? Do you turn the lights off when leaving a room? Are you supportive of things like carpooling, or taking light-rail between buildings instead of driving? The city helps out with a bicycle program, which allows city employees to check out and use bikes for trips to local meetings.

"Part B" of this education deals with the responsibility of city leadership: making decisions about using alternative forms of

energy like compressed natural gas for fleet vehicles or timed thermostats and lights in offices, libraries and community centers around Norfolk.

#### **What can the average household do to conserve resources and save money?**

Lighting is important. Larger family homes do really well with occupancy sensors in the basement or attic. Insulation is also critical, so installing crawl-space and attic insulation is recommended. People should avoid common mistakes, like buying a new energy-efficient refrigerator for the kitchen and then putting the old one in the garage where it continues to consume energy.

*continued on page 4*

**TRAINING**

**ONSITE OPPORTUNITIES**

The Institute can deliver programs to your locality designed to meet the professional development needs of your employees.

You can even partner with other localities in your region to develop customized programs and share the costs.

For course descriptions, visit [coopercenter.org/institute](http://coopercenter.org/institute).

Contact Billie Easton at 804/373-0202 or [bee2u@virginia.edu](mailto:bee2u@virginia.edu)

**COOPER CENTER'S 2014 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

at the University of Virginia  
*10% Discount for Institute Members*



**SEI**

**(Senior Executive Institute)**

2-week residential program for senior local government managers  
July 20 – August 1

Contact Molly Harlow at 434/982-5514 or [mjh3a@virginia.edu](mailto:mjh3a@virginia.edu)



**LEAD (Leading, Educating, and Developing)**

1-week residential program for department heads and senior staff

August 17 – 22  
September 28 – October 3  
November 16 – 21

Contact Carmie Rodriguez at 434/243-5031 or [carmie@virginia.edu](mailto:carmie@virginia.edu).

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*continued from page 3*

Walking, carpooling, or using light rail whenever possible can also make an important difference.

**How did the Green Team observe Earth Day this year?**

We teamed with the Norfolk Animal Care Center for a project called “Earth Day Undercover” and focused on the three R’s: reduce, reuse, and recycle. In only two hours, the Green Team collected 52 clean and gently used towels, blankets, throws, quilts and duvets for the cats and dogs in the animal care shelter. We also had six kittens in city hall that folks could adopt, reinforcing the shelter’s message that there are many great adoptable pets out there.

**What are Norfolk’s sustainability plans for the coming year?**

Our key priorities for the next year are to stabilize resources and improve and maintain services. We need to make sure we are saving all the energy and money we can, in small and big ways.

For example, we will add photosensors to outdoor lighting in areas like library parking lots. The sensors adjust the lights automatically as needed, saving about eight cents per kilowatt-hour.

On a larger scale, we will create a new position — Chief Resilience Officer — to lead our resilience initiative. *(See box on page 2.)*



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