



Construction and Facilities Management
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Board of Directors
Columbia Association

RE: Creation of a resident advisory committee focused on environmental sustainability

Columbia residents have recently proposed the creation of a new resident advisory committee focused on climate change. Columbia Association (CA) staff is excited about the increased interest in this issue, but would propose refining the scope of the existing watershed advisory committee to be focused on broader environmental sustainability issues with the community as a more optimal step. This is based on the following aspects: 1) it is difficult to maintain the viability of existing advisory committees; 2) CA's climate-related programming is already very mature and among the best in the region; 3) broader environmental sustainability issues such as waste management and procurement could use increased focus. Additional details on the above aspects supporting the creation of a broader environmental sustainability advisory committee are provided below.

- 1) It is difficult to maintain the viability of existing advisory committees:
 - There are currently 10 advisory committees in various states of operation; and
 - The watershed advisory committee has been consistently deficient in village representatives and is currently short three members; meetings have been shifted to bi-monthly to encourage participation.
- 2) CA's climate-related programming is already very mature and among the best in the region:
 - CA has reduced its carbon footprint by more than 50 percent, reduced its energy usage intensity by 20 percent, and has offset 100 percent of its electricity consumption with wind and solar sources; and
 - CA established an energy management plan in 2014 and is completing an update for 2018 – this document serves as a climate action plan in many respects.
- 3) Broader environmental sustainability issues such as waste management and procurement could use increased focus:
 - There are numerous aspects of CA's operations that have environmental impact and warrant the focus of the organization, for example, waste, recycling, procurement, and chemical usage;
 - A broader environmental focus could possibly be that next step to gain increased participation from the village level and provide a setting for further conversations and actions on topics, such as climate change; and
 - CA's watershed and energy managers already collaborate regularly on community engagement efforts (e.g., GreenFest) and would expand this effort through a sustainability focused advisory committee.

We believe that increased programming on climate change, especially with respect to engagement through the villages, would benefit the Columbia community. It is our recommendation that the most effective and results producing approach for a broader environmental sustainability effort would be to expand the charter of the existing Watershed Advisory Committee. Other activities, such as developing a plan for addressing climate change through the implementation of adaptation and resiliency strategies into the day-to-day operations at CA is a task that should take place independent of the activities of an advisory committee.