



Interview with Eric Kopstain, Vice Chancellor for Administration, Vanderbilt University (April 2020)

Q: What are you are working on as part of the Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Committee?

A: I am humbled and honored to be co-chairing the Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Committee with Linda Breggin. The advisory committee has been split into six subcommittees – energy, green buildings, mobility, natural resources, waste reduction, and resilience/adaptation. As a co-chair of the full committee, I see my role as providing support to the important work of each of the subcommittee chairs and their groups. We are thankful for the many subject matter experts and community leaders who have agreed to serve from across various industries, and I look forward to continue to help propel Nashville forward by providing input on the City's climate action plan. So much of this important work aligns with the efforts we have underway at Vanderbilt University, and I am thrilled that we can continue to work together on this important set of topics.

Q: How/ why did you become passionate about sustainability?

A: I first became passionate about sustainability many years ago in grade school when I had a class in fourth grade called Ecology. We learned about the environment and the water cycle, how the earth works, and about recycling. It just seemed to make obvious sense to try to co-exist with the planet in a healthy and respectful way. I also remember learning in grade school about the Iroquois principle of the seventh generation and taking the long view about decisions. That was all a long time ago now, but those early lessons have shaped me as a human. I have always loved the outdoors growing up and find solace in nature. How to create a sustainable and resilient culture, now more than ever, is the most important topic for our planet.

Q: What is your top sustainability tip for others?

A: I will echo Linda's response here and say that it truly takes all of us to push our thinking and actions. Yes, small actions may not have a huge impact individually, but overall, if we engage with one another and do what we can, those actions will begin to add up.

Q: What is your vision for a more sustainable Nashville?

A: I have lived in a number of great cities – Chicago, Boston, and now Nashville. I love Nashville and would love to see the city embrace sustainability and become a leader in the Southeast on sustainability issues. Our city is growing rapidly, and I think there are ways we can invest and make smart choices as it

relates to livability, walkability, transportation, green space and public health during this unprecedented growth. Much great thinking and planning has already occurred and now more than ever I think making progress is critical to our future.

Q: How are you celebrating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day?

A: Typically, in the past, I have enjoyed celebrating Earth Day through various campus events at Vanderbilt. However, this year is much different. I expect it will be much simpler – probably a walk or bike ride with my son.