

**Draft**  
**Rockville Environment Commission**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, June 7, 2018**

Black-Eyed Susan Room, City Hall,  
111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland

**Attendance**

**Commissioners Present:** Chair John Becker, Sy Garte, Alicia Hosmer (via phone), Larissa Johnson (via phone for meeting introduction), Clark Reed, Monica Saavoss, Lea Rosenbohm, and Fedon Vayanis

**Commissioners Absent:** Steve Sprague

**Council Liaison:** Mark Pierzchala

**City Staff:** Erica Shingara

**Guests:** Steve Chesterton. Members from the Rockville Native Species Network: Michelle Wenisch, Anne Goodman, Sarah Salazar, Caryl McNeilly and Robert Williamson.

**Meeting Commencement**

The meeting convened at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Becker.

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Reed moved and Commissioner Garte seconded a motion to approve the June 7, 2018 agenda with an amendment to receive a presentation from the Rockville Native Species Network during Community Forum. The motion passed (5-0). Commissioner Saavoss, Johnson and Hosmer were absent for the vote.

**Community Forum**

Anne Goodman introduced members of the Rockville Native Species Network (RNSN) and their proposal to pilot a volunteer project to control invasive evergreen vines. Michelle Wenisch described the growing problem with evergreen vines (e.g., English ivy, Irish ivy and wintercreeper) that are harming trees and ecosystems in Rockville and throughout the region. Early European settlers introduced these non-native climbing vines to the region. The vigorous vine growth chokes out other plants on the ground and poses a threat to trees. The vines grow up trunks of trees, spread over branches, block sunlight, impair photosynthesis and eventually kill trees. Volunteer groups across the region are taking steps to control these invasive vines to save trees on public and private lands. The RNSN proposes a pilot project where certified weed warriors cut and remove a “window” of invasive ivy all around the trunks of three individual trees on Rockville public lands. They will also develop a brochure to educate the public about this issue. They requested Environment Commission input and support prior to presenting this proposal to the Department of Recreation and Parks for approval and tree selection. The Commission observed that ivy was a common problem throughout the city, noted education is important because the public may think that ivy is native, and inquired about possible locations for removal. Councilmember Pierzchala noted that these invasive vines pose a large problem to public lands and trees and inquired if they should submit a budget request for contractor management in the future. The RNSN suggested starting with a small project and building public education and support for broader management in the future.

- Commissioner Reed moved and Commissioner Vayanis seconded a motion to support the Rockville Native Species Network pilot project to remove invasive ivy vines around the trunks of three trees and develop education materials on this issue. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Garte moved and Commissioner Rosenbohm seconded a motion to approve the May 5, 2018 meeting minutes with an amendment to modify the chair election vote from unanimous to (6-0-1), with Commissioner Becker abstaining. The motion passed (6-0-1); Commissioner Vayanis abstained due to absence.

### **Committee Reports:**

- **Watershed:** Steve Chesterton provided an update on the Rockville Brewshed concept. The committee researched projects in Fort Collins, Seattle and Asheville. They discussed the concept with the Croydon Creek Nature Center and identified True Respite Brewing Company, 7301 Calhoun Place as a interested for an event on Wednesday, November 7th at 7 p.m. The Brewshed event would likely involve beer tastings, an overview of the brewing process, and an interactive watershed 101 overview of the Rock Creek watershed, water quality issues, and what one can do to contribute to a healthy watershed. Next steps include fleshing out event details, speakers, and promoting it at Roctobierfest and Rockville Reports. Commissioner Garte reported that this week is Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week. The committee also debriefed on HTH.
- **Climate Action:** Commissioner Rosenbohm reported the committee started to monitor the activities of other boards and commissions to see if there are topics of mutual interest. She noted that Commissioner Saavoss compiled climate action best practices for committee review.
- **Energy:** Commissioner Reed reported the committee is waiting for the Ethics Commission written opinion.

### **Hometown Holidays (HTH)**

Commissioners debriefed on the HTH event. Commissioners noted the event was a good outreach opportunity; however, the weather conditions may have reduced attendance compared to previous years. Higher booth activity was observed in the afternoon with a decline in the evening due to rain. The water bottles, recycling crayons and coloring books were popular giveaways. Other observations included:

- The Watershed Committee noted that some watershed brochures were missing or misplaced.
- Several commissioners observed that giveaways were individually wrapped and suggested exploring future options that avoid unnecessary waste.
- There were several inquiries about the rain barrel raffle and whether it could be offered to residents outside the city. Staff noted the policy that the raffle items are limited to Rockville residents, while the smaller giveaways are available to the general public.
- Councilmember Pierzchala noted that there will be a city debrief of HTH and a Mayor and Council discussion on future opportunities.
- Commissioner Saavoss will respond to the Commission interest forms collected at the booth.
- Chair Becker and Councilmember Pierzchala selected raffle winners for the rain barrel and solar charger.

- Chair Becker noted issues with the crowded setup (1 tent, 2 tables and 4 chairs). He met with the Recreation and Parks Department to discuss the setup challenges. Next year they will request 2 tents, 2 tables, and 4 chair to be shared between the REC and HEC. He also suggested more signage to help vendors get into the event and an inclement weather policy.

### **Sustainable Maryland Certified (SMC)**

Staff distributed an updated SMC action plan. Write-ups for all SMC action items were completed and staff thanked members for submitting and reviewing materials. Rockville's 2018 application includes 34 actions; approximately 490 points, and a variety of innovative actions (e.g., backyard hens, community engagement and diversity, solar co-ops, electric vehicles and charging stations, etc.). In-lieu of distributing paper copies of the write-ups for 34 actions in the SMC application, all commissioners received an email with links to the SMC online application. Commissioners noted the extensive scope of programs and content included in the application.

- Commissioner Garte moved and Commissioner Saavoss seconded the motion to approved the SMC Green Team Action Plan for submission. The motion was approved (7-0).

### **Annual Report**

Chair Becker distributed a draft annual report and requested additional information to finalize edits.

- Commissioner Saavoss moved and Commissioner Reed seconded the motion to approve the document with minor edits to be made by Chair Becker. The motioned passed (6-0-1); Chair Becker abstained.
- **Action Item:** Chair Becker will make final edits and submit the materials to Environmental Management for review and to schedule the presentation at the Mayor and Council meeting.

### **Mayor's Monarch Pledge**

Chair Becker noted that he will coordinate with the Commissioners Hosmer, Saavoss and Garte about updating and discussing this topic next month.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Becker provided the following updates:

- Commissioner Rosenbohm's term expires in September. She reported that she has served two terms and does not intend to renew. She will continue to serve on the Climate Action Committee.
- Given the July holiday, the Commission decided to postpone the July 5<sup>th</sup> monthly meeting until July 12, pending staff confirmation of room availability.
- The Commission discussed August options (e.g., tour, recess, social hour). Commissioners suggested holding a social event in Town Center in lieu of a meeting.
- He inquired if the City Clerk has provided the term dates for the chair position.
- The new fiscal year begins in July. Committees should develop their goals, objectives and program budget for the upcoming year.
- He inquired about the status of the Forest and Tree Protection Ordinance. Councilmember Pierzchala noted that it will be coming back to the Commission for review.

**Environment Management Division (EMD) Update**

Staff reported:

- Maryland re-issued the NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Phase II General Permit. In October, staff will brief the Mayor and Council on the new permit. The Commission may also receive a briefing on the new permit this fall.
- The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments shared the final results for Rockville's 2005, 2012 and 2015 community greenhouse gas inventories. Rockville's emissions decreased 19 percent between 2005 and 2015, despite a 12 percent population growth. Leading drivers of change include a switch in fuel sources for electricity, decreased VMT per person, and decreased on-road emissions per mile. In 2015, energy consumption from residential and commercial buildings accounts for 61 percent of emissions and transportation and mobile sources accounts for 34 percent.

**New Business**

- Councilmember Pierzchala noted that he attended the Horizon Hill Park art dedication ceremony. He shared a photo of the carved Sycamore tree.

**Adjourn**

The Commission adjourned by acclamation at 8:50 p.m.

**Next Commission Meeting**

The next Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled on **Thursday, July 12, 2018 at 7:00 pm.**