

Draft
Rockville Environment Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, July 12, 2018

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

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Chair John Becker, Sy Garte, Alicia Hosmer, Larissa Johnson, Clark Reed, Lea Rosenbohm, Monica Saavoss, Steve Sprague, and Fedon Vayanis.

Commissioners Absent: none

Council Liaison: Mark Pierzchala

City Staff: Erica Shingara

Guests: none

Meeting Commencement

The meeting convened at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Becker.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Becker requested the topic of outdoor lighting be added under new business. Commissioner Saavoss moved and Commissioner Sprague seconded the motion to approve the July 12, 2018 agenda with the additional lighting topic. The motion passed (8-0). Commissioner Hosmer was absent for the vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Saavoss moved and Commissioner Rosenbohm seconded a motion to approve the June 7, 2018 meeting minutes. The motion passed (6-0-2); Commissioners Johnson and Sprague abstained due to absence. Commissioner Hosmer was absent for the vote.

Community Forum

No speakers.

Committee Reports

- ***Watershed:*** Commissioner Vayanis reported the committee will meet at 6:15 p.m. on Thursdays before the Commission meetings and requested a different room be reserved. The committee discussed the Brewshed event on November 7th and plans for a speaker and tasting. They are also considering hosting a booth at Rocktoberfest. The committee reviewed a new opportunity to use environmental impact bonds for stormwater projects. Staff noted that the City has been fortunate to be working diligently over several years on strategic stormwater and stream restoration capital improvement projects to position Rockville favorably to meet permit restoration requirements. Grants from the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund have paid for a portion of these projects. While we don't have a suitable project for this program right now, we will keep it in mind as a potential tool. The committee also discussed plastic straw recycling/bans and dry cleaning chemicals.
- ***Climate Action:*** Commissioner Rosenbohm reported the committee continues work on a draft climate action plan. They are reviewing actions that focus on reducing emissions from the City's largest emissions sources: commercial energy consumption and transportation. They discussed

community engagement opportunities like an online community survey and hosting a town hall meeting. They also plan to reach out to relevant boards and commissions, such as the Planning Commission and Transportation Committee on potential climate actions.

- **Energy:** Commissioner Reed reported the committee reviewed the Ethics Commission written opinion, discussed researching climate actions items, and is following up with the Rockville Christian Church about serving as a potential solar host site.

Solar Crowdfunding

Commissioner Reed reported on the Ethics Commission's review process and the advisory opinion regarding the solar crowdfunding proposal. The Ethics Commission advisory opinion indicated that (i) "donations" are considered gifts under the Ethics Ordinance; and (ii) the solicitation of donations on behalf of a third-party by appointed officials while acting in their capacities as a City official is not in accordance with the Ethics Ordinance. He described a memorandum by the State Ethics Commission on the gift law that permits gifts to be solicited for "agency programs" and inquired if there was an opportunity to appeal. The Commission discussed the solar crowdfunding proposal, the Ethics Commission advisory opinion, and comments from the City Attorney's Office.

Councilmember Pierzchala suggested that the Mayor and Council could have a broader public discussion on City involvement in crowdfunding to determine if it could be a tool used by boards and commissions or the City to raise funds for certain projects.

- **Action Item:** Councilmember Pierzchala volunteered to bring the topic of crowdfunding up at the next Mayor and Council meeting to see if there is interest in broader public discussion.

Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Commissioner Hosmer distributed background information on the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, suggested actions to fulfill pledge requirements, and a draft resolution to support the pledge. She noted the Commission discussed this topic numerous times since 2015 and that Rockville has already undertaken at least four actions on the list and would only need to adopt a resolution to participate in the pledge. She indicated a desire to do more and reviewed a list of 11 potential new actions. She requested the Commission recommend the Mayor and Council approve a resolution in support of the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. Staff noted that the City Attorney's Office reviews all resolutions and would request additional details about the actions being recommended by the Commission. Staff recommended modifying their general statements in items #3 and #4 to clarify specific actions and responsible party to allow the City Attorney, Mayor and Council, and the public to understand the actions included in the pledge. Such actions could include, but are not limited to: the Environment Commission will develop education materials for Rainscapes, Rockville Reports and CCNC; the Environment Commission will communicate with garden groups about planting milkweed; the City will continue to host demonstration gardens at City Hall and Civic Center Park; the CCNC will continue to host a native plant sale; the Environmental Management Division and the Environment Commission will provide milkweed seed giveaways; or the City will continue to explore opportunities to encourage milkweed habitat. Commissioner Hosmer expressed concern that specifying these actions would be binding and may not allow for future flexibility to do more.

Commissioners expressed general support for the pledge and the desire to bring this item to the Mayor and Council in the fall. Commissioner Saavoss offered to modify the resolution with an eye toward allowing the Mayor and Council to be able to sign off without the need for additional action.

This would provide the benefits of securing City support and increasing public awareness of the issue, and those who are interested can work on additional actions separately.

Commissioner Saavoss moved and Commissioner Johnson seconded a motion to support the Mayors' Monarch Pledge resolution with amendments to include the three actions identifying what the City is doing to meet the pledge requirements. The motion passed (9-0).

- **Action Item:** Commissioner Saavoss will add specific actions to the resolution and send it to the Commission for review.
- **Action Item:** Commissioner Hosmer requested commissioners review the list of potential new actions and solicited volunteers to support the individual actions.

Chair Report

Chair Becker provided the following updates:

- Reminded commissioners to send staff contact information to update the roster.
- Commissioner Rosenbohm's term ends in September. Commissioners inquired about the application and recommendation process for new appointments. Staff noted that the City Clerk's office holds applications on file for a year.
 - **Action item:** Staff will check with the City Clerk about applications and process.
- Each committee should develop a one-page description of their goal and objectives for the September meeting.
- On August 1, the Environment Commission will present their annual report to the Mayor and Council around 7 p.m. Commissioners are encouraged to attend the presentation.
- In lieu of the August monthly meeting, the Commission will host a social hour on Thursday, August 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Dawson's Market. No business will be conducted.
- All committees will not meet in August. Monthly committee meetings will resume in September.

Environment Management Division (EMD) Update

Staff reported:

- The City will launch its new mobile-friendly website on July 16.
- Potential fall events:
 - On July 30, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will host a light bulb exchange at the Rockville Safeway at 5510 Norbeck Road. Commissioner Johnson reported that residents can bring in old incandescent or CFL light bulbs and DEP will exchange them for up to 3 new LED bulbs.
 - To coincide with Montgomery County's Community Service Week, October 27 is tentatively identified as potential date for fall volunteer stream clean-ups.
 - **Action Item:** The watershed committee will evaluate the feasibility of hosting the Maryvale stream clean-up on October 27 and inform staff of the clean-up date to allow for planning and advertisement.
 - The Maryland Municipal League fall conference is in October. Staff noted that this is typically the time when jurisdictions receive Sustainable Maryland Re-certification.
 - On October 15, the Environmental Management Division will provide the Mayor and Council with a presentation on Rockville's new NPDES MS4 Permit and the stormwater program. Commissioners are welcome to attend.
 - The Brewshed event will be on November 7.

New Business

- **Outdoor lighting:** Chair Becker shared photos and expressed concern that several street and building lights continue to be on during the day in Town Center – wasting energy and money and generating unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions. He suggested action be taken to ensure lights are not on during the day and work with private property owners to turn off lights. Councilmember Pierzchala suggested that he bring this issue up at Community Forum.
- **West End Citizens Association (WECA):** Commissioner Sprague inquired if the Commission is interested in providing an environmental presentation to WECA in the fall. Commissioners expressed interest in the outreach opportunity.
 - **Action Item:** Commissioner Sprague will contact WECA on potential dates and environmental topics of interest to the community.

Adjourn

The Commission adjourned by acclamation at 8:58 p.m.

Next Commission Meeting

The next Commission meeting is scheduled on **Thursday, September 6, 2018 at 7:00 pm.**