

Draft
Rockville Environment Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday, September 11, 2018

Mayor and Council Chambers, City Hall,
111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland

Attendance

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

Commissioners Absent: Monica Saavoss

Council Liaison: Mark Pierzchala

City Staff: Lise Soukup, Ricky Barker, Tim Chesnutt, Wayne Noll, Erica Shingara,

Guests: Donald Masters, Steve Cardon, Barbara Sears, Phillip Hummel, Rob Goodill, Amy Zou, and Todd Pearson

Meeting Commencement

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Becker.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Reed moved and Commissioner Garte seconded the motion to approve the September 11, 2018 agenda. The motion passed (5-0). Commissioners Hosmer, Johnson and Vayanis were absent for the vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Sprague moved and Commissioner Rosenbohm seconded a motion to approve the July 12, 2018 meeting minutes. The motion passed (5-0). Commissioners Hosmer, Johnson and Vayanis were absent for the vote.

Community Forum

Guests requested the opportunity to provide the Commission with an overview of two proposed redevelopment projects in relation to the proposed amendment to the Forest and Tree Protection Ordinance. Councilmember Pierzchala left the room for the community forum portion of the meeting to avoid ex parte communication and rejoined the meeting after the guest speakers finished.

- Ms. Barbara Sears from Linowes and Blocher LLP described the proposed Shady Grove Neighborhood Center redevelopment project located in the MXE zone. The property currently includes office buildings and surface parking without stormwater management and with very little tree cover. The project will provide mixed-use development that includes more stormwater management, open space and more tree cover than existing conditions, but it is dependent on an amendment to the City's FTPO (Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance). The amendment, which reduces required minimum tree cover from 15-10%, would allow the project to create 10% tree cover by planting 388 new trees and the dedication of 5% of the land for usable public park (20,000 sq. ft of usable space) in a central green and a stormwater pond. The FTPO amendment provides flexibility for redevelopment projects in the specified area to balance improvements to stormwater, tree

canopy and parkland in a mixed use redevelopment. If this City Code is not revised, it would be unlikely for this project to move forward.

- Mr. Todd Pearson from B.F. Saul described the Twinbrook Quarter project by Rockville Pike and Halpine Road as the City's first Champion Project located by the Twinbrook Metro. The site is currently 97% impervious with one stormwater management underground vault and approximately 51 trees. Modifying the minimum tree coverage requirement is important for the project to move forward because 32% of the site is already allocated for road right-of-way purposes to improve the street grid. The current minimum 10% tree cover (MTC) requirement does not give credit for trees in rights-of-way dedication. The MTC requirement is 230 trees. While the project will provide 233 trees, 40 trees will not count toward the MTC requirement because they are street trees planted along a State road (instead of trees maintained by City). As a Champion Project, it will provide SWM treatment volume for the entire site, green roofs, 1,865 units by a Metro station, 18% public open space easement in which they will maintain, and more tree cover than existing. Allowing this flexibility in urban zones provides an opportunity for net environmental benefits.

Forest and Tree Protection Ordinance (FTPO)

Tim Chesnutt, Director of Recreation and Parks introduced Wayne Noll, City Forester, and Ricky Barker, Director of Community Planning and Development Services. He noted that the Mayor and Council requested the Commission's feedback on two proposed amendments to the City's FTPO that were introduced on August 1 and are scheduled for public hearing on September 17.

As background, he described the challenge of balancing economic redevelopment opportunities, providing public parks and maintaining high standards for tree canopy cover. He noted that in 2002, the city established a 40% tree canopy goal. A 2014 aerial survey revealed that Rockville exceeded this goal and now retains approximately 50% tree canopy; which is one of the highest for Maryland cities.

Ricky Barker reviewed the two proposed changes to the FTPO:

1. Allow Champion Projects to reduce their minimum tree canopy requirement from 10% to 5% of the project area. Champion Projects are allowed in a 71-acre designated area near the Twinbrook Metro Station. Even with a 5% reduction in MTC, there would still be a net gain in tree canopy in this area compared to the existing developed conditions.
2. Allow projects within the Mixed Use Employment Zone (MXE) to reduce their minimum tree canopy requirement from 15% to 10%, provided that an additional 5% of the site is dedicated as usable parkland. The MXE zone currently includes 496 acres.

The MXE and Champion Project districts have already been established by the Mayor and Council, so these proposed FTPO amendments are part of the follow-through to enact these types of developments. Each individual project must qualify under these special district rules. If the Mayor and Council don't believe the net benefits of a project meet the intention of these districts, it may not approve the project.

In staff's opinion, the amendments would provide a net benefit for the city. They provide an opportunity to increase public parkland in dense mixed-use locations. The amendment supports the vision for mixed use development near transit centers, as envisioned in Rockville Pike Plan, to reduce car trips, support public transit, provide housing and support economic development. Redevelopment in these areas also provides an opportunity to plant more trees than currently exist and to improve stormwater management.

Commissioners posed a variety of questions and provided feedback:

- Inquired about the definition of usable parkland, whether the new park areas would be maintained by the City, and the type of park amenities that would be required. Parkland must be usable and meet size and minimum slope requirements. Staff noted that amenities would be situational and may include walking trails, benches, playground, connections to other city parkland, landscaping, etc. The City would maintain the parkland.
- Inquired if there are proposed changes to the size and location of the MXE zone and Champion Project areas. The current areas are not expected to change in the near future, and there are many constraints to expansion. The boundaries could be modified through changes in zoning that would require a public process.
- Inquired about the causes of tree loss in Rockville and inquired if there are any heat island studies in Rockville. Staff said there are no such studies. Staff indicated that tree cover acreages are dynamic, in part due to tree losses from infestations or other natural causes. Over time, some areas like King Farm and Fallsgrove experience net gain in tree cover. Other areas, such as Tower Oaks will experience a net loss in tree canopy. The City uses fee-in-lieu to replant trees and replace street trees.
- Noted the challenge of understanding the complete impact of the amendments without seeing the net environment effect, which is specific to each site. It would be important for projects seeking this flexibility to provide the Mayor with Council with justification that demonstrates the net environment impacts (changes to tree canopy, parkland, stormwater, etc.) Staff said this information is part of the staff report provided for each development to the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Council.
- The Commissioners expressed general support for the FTPO amendments. Staff thanked the Commission for the feedback and noted that a public hearing will be held at the September 17th Mayor and Council meeting.

Committee Reports

- **Watershed:** Commissioner Vyanis reported the committee discussed hosting the Maryvale Stream Cleanup on October 13 from 10 a.m. to noon. Staff inquired about the event promotion schedule and cleanup supplies. Steve Cardon reported the committee plans to host an outreach booth at Rockobierfest on October 6 from 11 to 5 p.m. to promote watershed education and the Brewshed event. The committee requested watershed brochures, tablecloth, give-aways, pet waste bags, water bottles, prize wheel, watershed model, rain barrel and a watershed map. Commissioners are encouraged to volunteer at the event. On November 7th, the committee will partner with Croydon Creek Nature Center to host the Brewshed event at True Respite Brewery. The event includes watershed presentations, taste tests and watershed trivia. The committee requests digitized watersheds/stream adoption map on poster board.
 - **Action Item:** Commissioners will contact the Watershed Committee on a volunteer schedule.

- **Action Item:** Watershed committee members will contact EMD staff to review schedule of supplies for each event.
- **Climate Action:** Commissioner Rosenbohm reported the committee is working on a draft climate action plan. They will distribute the draft for the Commission to review. They sent staff several questions about the timeline and process to develop the plan. Commissioners Rosenbohm and Sprague also attended the One Montgomery Green Climate Action Summit in August. A public briefing on the summit will be held on September 12th in the County Council Office Building.
- **Energy:** Commissioner Reed reported the committee did not meet in August.

Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Commissioner Hosmer requested the item be postponed until the next meeting when Commissioner Saavoss will be present for the discussion.

Chair Report

Chair Becker provided the following updates:

- On April 11th, the Peerless Rockville Speaker Series will feature a presentation on Rockville's Legacy of Environmental Protection by Mark Charles, Chief of Environmental Management.. Commissioners are encouraged to attend.
- Commissioner Rosenbohm's term ends in September. The vacancy has not been advertised on the website or Rockville Reports yet.
 - **Action item:** Staff will check with the City Clerk about the advertisement and process.

Environment Management Division (EMD) Update

Staff reported:

- October is Energy Awareness Month. On October 2, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will host a light bulb exchange at the Twinbrook Library. Commissioner Johnson reported that residents can bring in old incandescent or CFL light bulbs to exchange them for up to 3 new LED bulbs.
- To coincide with Montgomery County's Community Service Week, EMD is planning to host a the Twinbrook volunteer stream clean-up on October 27.
- The Sustainable Maryland Certification program typically recognizes jurisdictions at the Maryland Municipal League fall conference. As members of the Green Team, Commissioners are welcome to join the SMC recognition event on October 12 in Annapolis. Additional details will be provided.
- 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. Staff is also available to provide the Commission with a stormwater update at the October meeting.
- The Rockville Brewshed event will be on November 7 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. While the event is free, registration is required. For more information and to register online, please visit: <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/Calendar.aspx?EID=5934&month=11&year=2018&day=7&calType=0>
- Lise Soukup was introduced as the new Commission staff liaison from the Environmental Management Division. She has previously worked with the Commission on a variety of

stormwater and watershed issues. She will be attending future meetings and helping with minutes and agendas. Please remember to include her in all future Commission emails.

New Business

- Commissioner Sprague noted that the Volunteer Appreciation Party is scheduled for Thursday, September 13 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Social Hall of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre.
- Councilmember Pierzchala noted that there will be a deer presentation at the September 17th Mayor and Council meeting.
- Commissioner Reed inquired if the Mayor and Council will discuss crowd funding. Councilmember Pierzchala noted that summer recess limited their meeting schedule and that he will look for an opportunity to suggest the topic at a September meeting.

Adjourn

The Commission adjourned by acclamation at 8:49 p.m.

Next Commission Meeting

The next Commission meeting is scheduled on **Thursday, October 4, 2018 at 7:00 pm.**