

# Rockville Environment Commission

## Draft Minutes of Thursday, January 6, 2022

WebEx Meeting

### Meeting Attendance

Commissioner	Present	Commissioner	Present
Hande Apaydin	X	Clark Reed, Chair	X
Scott Fazekas	X	Monica Saavoss	
Justus Getty	X	Pavitra Srinivasan	X
Susan Koester	X	Ted Stauderman	
William McClain	X		

**City Staff:** Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Erica Shingara, Chief, Environmental Management Division; Ricky Barker, Director, Department of Planning and Development Services; John Foreman, Development Services Manager; Shaun Ryan, Principal Planner - Landscape Architect; Dan Long, Development Review Supervisor.

**Council Liaison:** Monique Ashton

**Meeting Commencement:** Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

**Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:** The agenda was approved with no changes. The prior meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

**Community Forum:** John Becker introduced himself.

### **Proposed Tree per Lot Text Amendment to Subdivision Regulations**

Planning and Development Services staff introduced themselves. Mr. Barker said that the Mayor and Council and the Planning Commission have heard a presentation on the Lot Tree Amendment. The Lot Tree requirement is one aspect of the City's tree-related regulations, along with the Tree and Forest Conservation Ordinance, minimum tree cover requirements, and significant tree replacement.

The current ordinance requires one tree in the front yard and two trees in the rear yard for all residential lots, regardless of size or whether single family or attached dwelling units. Attached units are built on smaller lots with less space for trees. This requirement resulted in trees being planted without enough root space to grow and remain healthy. In many cases the requirement was not workable and waiver requests were numerous. On the other hand, larger detached units did not require any more trees than the minimum. The proposed amendment ties lot tree requirements to lot size. Many more attached units (534) than detached (30) are in the pipeline, which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. A more clear, flexible and sustainable approach is needed for varying unit types and lot sizes. The following summarizes the proposed changes to resolve these challenges:

Criteria	Staff Recommendation	Rationale
<b>Trees Per Lot Requirement</b>	1 Tree per 2,000 sf	-Promotes equity across lot types -Sustainable forestry outcomes
<b>Native Species</b>	Require 50% native species	-Increased survivability, wildlife and ecological interest/benefits
<b>Off-Lot Flexibility</b>	Allow off-lot planting at 2:1	-Flexibility to achieve standard -Encourages trees on the lot
<b>Supplemental Shrub Plantings</b>	Require supplemental plantings on lot	-Increased greenspace, increased wildlife/ecological interest/benefits
<b>Preserve existing trees</b>	Preserved trees are credited at 1:1	-Encourages preserving existing trees -Clarifies the standard
<b>Minimum planting area</b>	Establish minimum planting areas	-Supports sustainability
<b>Equitable standard for all lots</b>	All lots are subject to the same requirement	-Ensures all lots are fundamentally treated the same
<b>“Double Counting”</b>	Lot trees in addition to other required trees	-Produces greatest urban forest outcome, no “double counting”

Staff clarified that invasive species are not allowed. Commission members agreed with the rationale of the proposed changes overall. Members discussed in what cases non-native trees would be preferable to native. Staff responded that some cultivars are not technically native to this region but thrive in our grow zone such as juniper and crape myrtle. There has been interest in encouraging planting of food-bearing trees which may not all be native and recognizing the impacts of climate change. The Environment Commission voted 6 to 1 that the proposal be amended to require 100% native plantings.

**Maryland Legislation – process overview and bill support preview**

Linda Moran, Assistant to the City Manager, briefed the Commission on the process for recommending bills for Mayor and Council support and providing testimony. The session opens January 12, and all House bills must be filed by February 4, and Senate bills February 7. Mayor and Council must consider and vote whether to support or oppose bills in an open session. Any testimony must be submitted to the committee two days in advance. Mayor and Council may decide to submit written testimony, or in person, and may ask staff to deliver in-person testimony. Hearings are held virtually this year.

Councilmember Ashton serves as the President of the Montgomery County delegation to the Maryland Municipal League. Ms. Moran and the City's lobbyists also follow bills that may impact the City. The City also communicates with District 17 delegates. Climate change continues to be a priority at the City, MML, County, and state level, especially following events such as Hurricane Ida. The Commission is encouraged to identify only a few high priority bills in order for the City's advocacy to be the most effective. A few environmental bills expected to be introduced this year include: Climate Solutions Now Act, Producer Responsibility Act, Safe Sealant Act (coal tar ban), and Sustainable Maryland funding bill.

Chair Reed said that one strategy can be to focus on the bills supported in previous years and update their associated white papers.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Reed asked Mr. McClain to share what he learned about the Parkland Dedication requirements at the information session in December. Mr. McClain shared that some comments involved tree protection needs and set-asides. More information is found in the Mayor and Council agenda packet for December 20, 2021, beginning on p. 345:

[https://www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\\_12202021-6441](https://www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_12202021-6441)

Chair Reed shared that the Electric Vehicle Buyers Co-operative Purchase will be announced at a virtual event in coordination with the Washington Auto Show in January. More information will be coming soon.

### **Mayor and Council Report**

On January 10<sup>th</sup> for the Climate Action Plan presentation, Councilmember Ashton reminded the Commission to submit testimony or sign up to speak in Community Forum by 10 am Monday. The Mayor and Council is scheduled to hear a presentation and discussion on the tracking and implementation for Comprehensive Plan actions, including environmental actions at the same meeting. The Electric Vehicle Resolution will also be considered for adoption. She shared that Transportation Secretary Buttegieg visited the nearby Takoma Park electric 'gas' station. City Hall re-opening is delayed due to COVID-19.

### **Committee Reports**

Energy Committee: The Energy Committee is working on white papers on net zero building codes and leaf blower bans. The Committee discussed environmental Maryland bills to watch for in the 2022 session including the Climate Solutions Now Act and the Climate Crisis in Education Act.

Climate Action Committee: CLAC discussed relevant climate-bills that are expected to be introduced in the Maryland General Assembly, including the Producer Responsibility bill. CLAC discussed tabling at the MCPS Youth Climate Summit on March 5<sup>th</sup>.

Watersheds Committee: No report.

### **Staff Report**

Project Updates

- **Building Tune-up** for City Hall: Staff is working with the contractor to implement the proposed measures to optimize energy use.
- **City Hall energy efficient lighting update:** Work will begin shortly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor upgrades. Staff expects to hear about the grant application to Maryland Smart Energy Communities for 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lighting upgrades, window film and thermostat in the spring.
- The Maryland 6 Taft Court and Maintenance Facility **solar/microgrid feasibility assessment** is expected soon.
- Staff is continuing to work through design considerations for several free **Pepco EV charging stations** and evaluating potential additional sites.
- **The FY 2023 Budget is in development.** The Annual Budget Survey link is found here: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/951/Budget-Financials> Surveys close in April.
- Post-event analysis and near-term mitigation activities in response to **Hurricane Ida flooding** continues. The Climate Action Plan contains several items related to hazard mitigation and preparedness including a comprehensive hydrologic study which would identify areas of concern and strategies to address them. A new [flood resources webpage](#) is activated and includes a form to apply for **flood damage compensation**.
- Montgomery County Green Bank is launching a low-moderate income solar financing program beginning in January.
- Environment & Sustainability Newsletter: tips on green gifting, recycling, yard waste updates, protect your pipes, wise salt use, get out and hike!

#### Outreach Campaigns and Events

- Croydon Creek [Bird Seed Sale](#) January 3 through January 31
- Environmental Excellence Awards – please [nominate/share](#) by end of February
- Montgomery County “Go Electric” Expo – March 19, 2022
- Montgomery County [Energy Summit](#) – April 5-6, 2022
- Spring Stream Clean-ups

#### The Mayor and Council

- January 10: Climate Action Plan – review responses to comments, redline draft, and possible adoption resolution and EV resolution
- February 7: RedGate Park site plan concepts presented

**New Business:** No new business.

**Adjourn:** Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 8:54 p.m.