

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, January 11, 2024, 7pm – 9pm

WebEx Meeting

Meeting Attendance

Commissioner	Present	Commissioner	Present
Susan Koester	X	Pavitra Srinivasan	X
William McClain, Chair	X	Ted Stauderman	X
Sasha Mushegian		Summer White	X
Clark Reed	X		

Elected Officials: Council Liaison Adam Van Grack.

City Staff: Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Heather Gewandter, Stormwater Manager; Meredith Neely, Principal Environmental Engineer; Erica Shingara, Chief, Environmental Management Division (EMD).

Guests: Jonathan Pollock, Sharon Spagnuolo, Steve Chesterton, Steve Cardon

Meeting Commencement: Chair McClain convened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes: The agenda was approved with one change: adding Committee Reports. Prior meeting minutes were approved.

Community Forum: None.

Flood Mitigation Program Updates – New FEMA Floodplain Maps

Heather Gewandter, Stormwater Manager, introduced the new FEMA floodplain maps produced for the City that delineate which properties are located within the 100 and 500-year floodplains. The new maps were produced with updated and more detailed LIDAR topography and flood modeling analysis for streams and rivers with at least 1 square mile watersheds. The maps are regulatory, meaning that properties located within the 100-year floodplain must purchase flood insurance and may be subject to additional building permits are restricted. Properties not located in a floodplain should also consider flood insurance, since homeowners' insurance does not routinely include it, and flooding could occur anywhere depending on precipitation intensity and drainage patterns or even caused by infrastructure failures. These maps are an update from 2006 maps. There are several properties that will be newly included in the 100-year floodplain and a few properties were removed from the floodplain with the new analysis. All affected properties, owners and renters, received a letter notifying them of the changes. Listening sessions will be held this winter. The City will gather and submit comments to FEMA. The City has additional regulations that apply down to 30 acre watersheds. FEMA does not consider future changes in climate change-related precipitation patterns.

Therefore, the City is also developing the Flood Resiliency Master Plan to evaluate potential flood impacts under current and forecasted conditions. Additionally, in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers the City is analyzing two small watersheds. Both efforts will identify potential projects needed to protect areas vulnerable to flooding. Look for public feedback sessions and status updates over the next year or two.

Commission members discussed the need to publicize information on how to look up floodplain information when buying a new property or home so that buyers are informed. Members also recognized the importance of informing residents of the need to purchase additional flood insurance in poorly drained areas even away from streams.

Chair Report

- Maryland General Assembly convened January 10.
- Environment Commission annual report is on Monday, January 22, 7pm, please attend if you're available.
- The Chair asked for a volunteer to accept Earth Day proclamation on March 19
- REC Budget – Chair McClain recommended that the Commission consider a vote for a one-time budget amount to cover a methane leak detection kit at the February meeting when updated quotes will be ready to share.

Committee Reports

- Energy Committee: The Energy Committee discussed potential legislation to come before the Maryland General Assembly.
- Climate Action Committee: Held a meeting in January with some new members and discussed how to encourage the City to use perennials instead of annuals for more sustainable landscaping, how to support the City and help implement the Climate Action Plan. Exploring alternatives to the City fireworks display on July 4 is a longer-term issue. Commissioner White reported that the City hosts one event and the current contract does not expire for two years.
- Watersheds Committee: The Watersheds Committee discussed requesting additional funding for citizen science and outreach and how to involve more volunteers. They requested a tour of a Northeast Park pond and stream restoration by City staff. City staff suggested August for the Commission's traditional tour time or last spring to allow the plant growth to be more established. Staff will contact the project managers to suggest tour dates.

Mayor and Council Report

Council Liaison Van Grack suggested that if the Commission desired additional funding, requests should be made soon since the City is working on the budget for FY25.

Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan – Draft Actions Preview

Staff provided a review of the following draft actions in the Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan thus far to hear early feedback from the Commission.

EV Ready Codes and Permitting: These actions detail updates needed in several City codes and ordinances and permit processes to provide clarity and streamlined experiences for installing charging stations in the City.

1. Develop a single EVSE application and guide to streamline plan review, permitting and inspections.
2. Update Chapter 5, Buildings and Building Regulations, to delineate minimum requirements for EVSE in parking spaces included in new construction and renovated buildings (e.g, EV capable, EV ready, EV installed) and ADA accessible charging requirements.
3. Update Chapter 10.5, Forest and Tree Preservation, to streamline and simplify the NRI/FSD process and provide guidance for tree protection measures for EVSE installations on previously developed areas.
4. Update Chapter 21, Streets, Roads, Rights-of-Way, and Public Improvements, to clarify requirements and processes for installing EVSE in public rights-of-way.
5. Update Chapter 23, Traffic, to clarify parking restrictions and parking enforcement for EV charging stations and permit the City to establish a pricing structure for EV charging at City-sponsored public stations.
6. Update Chapter 25, Zoning Ordinance, to permit EVSE as an accessory use and clarify EVSE requirements and allow for reduced parking minimums for retrofits that provide accessible charging.
7. Develop right-of-way EVSE implementation guidelines and a streamlined approval process to serve residents without access to garages, driveways or dedicated parking spaces.
8. Establish standards and guidelines for publicly accessible EVSE signage, striping, safety, wayfinding, lighting and accessibility in compliance with existing laws and consistent with best practices.
9. Maintain low permit fees for EVSE installations.
10. Advocate for federal, state and utility legislation, incentives, utility plans and programs, international building, fire and electric codes and standards to support safe, sustainable and equitable electric vehicle and e-mobility opportunities.

Community EV Charging Network Support: These actions describe ways the City can work with partners to encourage and facilitate additional chargers throughout the community.

11. Coordinate with commercial properties, businesses, institutions, and non-profit entities to leverage federal, state, and utility incentives and programs to facilitate deployment of both EVs and EV infrastructure for workplace, fleet, and destination charging.
12. Coordinate with Montgomery County to support expansion of the EVSE network on County properties (offices, schools, libraries) within Rockville.
13. Continue to coordinate with Pepco's EVSmart Program to expand Pepco-sponsored public chargers in Rockville rights-of-way and at city facilities.

14. Coordinate with multiunit property owners, HOAs, civic associations and neighborhood associations to facilitate access to funding opportunities for EVSE installation for residents and their guests.
15. Facilitate and channel grant and other funding opportunities in partnership with community and regional organizations to fund installation EVSE in priority gap locations on city property.
16. Coordinate with Pepco to identify grid capacity barriers and advocate for service improvements.
17. Facilitate and support other e-mobility opportunities, such as e-bikes, e-scooters, EV ride-hailing, or EV car-sharing services.
18. Adopt a policy/resolution that identifies clean fleet- or transportation-related GHG reduction goals and/or aligning with broader, collaborative initiatives at the regional, state, or national level.

Rockville Fleet: These actions support fleet transition.

19. Complete and adjust fleet assessment and recommendations for light-, medium- (sedans, SUVs, pickup trucks, vans, etc.), and heavy-duty vehicle electrification (e.g., transit buses, refuse trucks, etc.) and EVSE expansion to serve the fleet.
20. Implement the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (CIP GA23) to support phased electrification of light-duty and heavy-duty fleet vehicles that aligns with the vehicle replacement schedule and duty cycles and supports public and employee charging where feasible.
21. Seek opportunities to address barriers to police fleet electrification (take-home vehicle charging, leased parking, duty cycles, mileage, and equipment power needs).
22. Coordinate an interdepartmental EV team to support electric fleet users including staff training, charging management, code enforcement, safety, fire prevention, and enabling external fleet charging.
23. Identify and pursue outside funding and resources to support the purchase, operation, and maintenance of municipal Fleet EVs and EVSE.
24. Utilize appropriate procurement mechanisms (RFPs or cooperative purchasing contracts) to lease, procure, install, manage and/or maintain, or access public or private charging infrastructure to serve the City fleet.

Community Outreach and Engagement: These actions increase awareness of the basics of EV ownership and charging infrastructure, identify community needs, and monitor and report progress.

25. Coordinate with community partners to conduct an inclusive public education and engagement campaign on electric vehicles and charging infrastructure.
26. Monitor and report plan progress and metrics such as community EV ownership and charger installation through the Climate Action Plan annual report.

Commission members noted that existing publicly available chargers are often out of service and that there should be a mechanism to ensure reliable service. Regarding curbside charging in residential neighborhoods, some pointed out the risks of snow plows or damage from

landscaping equipment to EVSE installed near the ROW. It was acknowledged that there are many competing uses of the space between building frontage and the streets, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, driveways, stormwater management, refuse carts, the need for accessibility, trees, and more. All these things will factor into street space constraints especially if curbside charging is added.

Maryland Legislative Preview

The Energy Committee discussed a bill to empower Maryland reform to remove gas appliance rebates and focus on electric, one on all electric construction, and a bill to remove waste to energy incinerators from the renewable portfolio standards. Another bill that was mentioned would create a more thorough state invasive species list and program.

Staff Updates

- Pepco began installing new public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in the right-of-way (ROW) at three locations in December 2023. Level 2 chargers are planned to serve on-street parking spaces in Falls Grove, by City Hall and Twinbrook Quarter. Pepco and the City will plan public outreach for when the stations are available. The next step is to complete permitting for EV chargers at Thomas Farm Community Center and Mattie J.T. Stepanek Park, which will require additional site review.
- DPW staff is continuing intensive work to plan and coordinate internally on the infrastructure impacts and permitting processes for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and Solar systems included in a Power Purchase Agreement for solar canopy and rooftop solar at 6 Taft Court and the Rothgeb Maintenance Facility. These planning tasks are also informing recommendations for the EV Readiness Plan and other code updates.
- Staff is providing feedback to COG and Maryland as they develop their Priority Climate Action Plans for submittal to EPA in preparation for applications to the Climate Pollution Reduction Act. Rockville's list of potentially fundable projects was submitted to both. The grant applications are due April 1, 2024.
- Community Budget Priorities Survey <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/951/Budget>
- EMD received registrations for the last 35 free radon test kits within two days and distributed them to Rockville residents.
- EMD Outreach staff are coordinating spring outreach and Climate Solutions Talks
- Staff will share Sustainable Maryland section sign-ups soon.
- February's Meeting: The City's Equity Coordinator will join the Commission to discuss integrating environment and equity initiatives.

Events

- January 22 – Environment Commission Annual Report to Mayor and Council
- February 10 – Floodplain Maps Outreach Public Meeting
- February 17-19 – Maryland Energy Star Tax-Free Weekend
https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/divisions/comp/Shop_Maryland_Energy/Shop_Maryland_Energy_FAQs.pdf
- March 19 – Tentative – Earth Day and Earth Hour Proclamation at Mayor and Council
- April 29 – Tentative – Climate Action Plan Annual Report at Mayor and Council

New Business: Commission members voted unanimously to request the additional funds for the Environment Commission annually for the purposes of salt testing, and outreach materials for a total annual amount of \$1,400. They will develop a detail budget request.

Adjourn: Chair McClain adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.