

**Rockville Environment Commission**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, February 7, 2019**

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

**Meeting Attendance**

| <b>Commissioner</b> | <b>Present</b> | <b>Absent</b> | <b>Reason, If Given</b> |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Chair John Becker   | X              |               |                         |
| Sy Garte            | X              |               |                         |
| Alicia Hosmer       |                | X             |                         |
| Susan Koester       | X              |               |                         |
| Clark Reed          | X              |               |                         |
| Monica Saavoss      | X              |               |                         |
| Steve Sprague       | X              | Arrived late  |                         |
| Pavitra Srinivasan  | X              |               |                         |
| Fedon Vayanis       | X              |               |                         |

**Council Liaison:** Mark Pierzchala

**City Staff:** Lise Soukup

**Guests:** Steve Chesterton, Watershed Committee, and Stephanie Riddick, Energy Committee

**Meeting Commencement**

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

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Reed moved and Commissioner Koester seconded the motion to approve the February 7 meeting agenda. The motion passed (7-0).

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

It was realized at the February meeting that minutes from the January 3, 2019 REC meeting inadvertently were not distributed to the Commission. They will be distributed with the March meeting materials and approved at that meeting.

**Community Forum**

No speakers.

**Environmental Excellence Award Reviews**

No nominations have been received as of yet.

## **Maryland State Legislation – REC comments/endorsements**

Commissioner Reed presented a recommendation from the Energy Committee to ask the Mayor and Council to support Senate Bill 516 (cross-filed with a matching House bill), Clean Energy Jobs Act. Commissioner Reed had distributed a white paper on the benefits of this bill to the REC members as part of the supplemental materials for the Feb. 7 REC meeting. He gave a summary of the white paper and asked for an REC vote of support. Councilmember Pierzchala requested that any REC recommendations include the white paper and be submitted in writing ahead of the Feb. 25 Mayor and Council meeting where the State Legislative bills would be discussed.

The REC discussed the bill and brought up concerns from the 2017 version of this State bill regarding elements about chicken manure qualifying as an alternate fuel source (Commissioner Saavoss) and elimination of subsidies for incineration (Commissioner Sprague), which impacts waste disposal in Montgomery County and Rockville. Commissioner Koester confirmed that the 2018 version did not reference chicken manure. The incineration subsidies are eliminated in the 2018 version.

Commissioner Reed wanted the REC position to indicate unqualified support for the bill. After further discussion, the motion was made by Commissioner Reed and seconded by Commissioner Vayanis. The REC voted to recommend the Mayor and Council support this bill (6 – For; 0 - Against; 2 – Abstained).

- **Action Item:** The Chair will submit a letter from the REC to the City Clerk’s office in support of this bill in time for the Feb. 25 Mayor and Council meeting.

Commissioner Saavoss, Commissioner Koester and Commissioner Vayanis described several other bills they were interested in, but did not have recommendations at this time. The REC will discuss other bills at the March REC meeting. Councilmember Pierzchala asked that REC letters include a discussion of any costs to either City residents or the City government as part of bill recommendations.

## **Committee Reports and Requests to REC**

### Watersheds Committee:

In conjunction with the Croyden Creek Nature Center, the Watershed Committee has planned two more Brewshed events for local Rockville breweries to promote watershed information and outreach. These are:

- Meet-Up at Saints Row Brewing on April 13, following an REC stream cleanup that morning.
- Hike with a Brewer event on May 4. Event starts at the Nature Center and concludes at the True Respite Brewing Company.

The REC is requested to join the Watershed Committee for the annual stream cleanup at Maryvale Park on April 13 at 10 a.m. This event is sponsored by the REC.

The Watershed Committee requested that the REC allocated budget for small Brewshed stickers to give out and estimated roughly a \$100 cost. The REC approved that expenditure.

### Climate Action Committee

Chair Becker reported that he is arranging time for the REC climate action presentation at the Traffic and Transportation Commission and the Planning Commission, as requested at the November REC meeting. The Planning Commission offered March 13 as a possible date, pending receipt of the REC talking points by March 4. No date has been scheduled yet for T&T Commission.

- **Action item:** The REC should identify the time needed for the presentation and forward talking points to Jim Wasilak, staff liaison for the Planning Commission. Chair Becker will confirm date and time with each commission once talking points are ready.

### Energy Committee

- Commissioner Reed and Lise Soukup updated the REC on the status of the Energy Committee's proposal to create an Electric Vehicle Buyer's Co-op to help private individuals purchase electric vehicles from local car dealerships. Ms. Soukup said the City forwarded the proposal to Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and County Department of Environmental Protection for consideration, since the City government does not engage directly in facilitating private purchases. Both agencies are looking into procurement rules and exploring the feasibility.
- Commissioner Reed put forth a draft resolution for the Mayor and Council to have the City join the EPA Energy Star program. Commissioner Reed described the benefits of the program, which also had been discussed at the October REC meeting. Ms. Soukup explained that DPW staff is already participating in several other energy programs to help the City improve energy efficiency; those programs come with grant and additional staff training opportunities. The City also gets advice on this from other sources, including MWCOG. Therefore, staff does not believe that this additional program is necessary.

Councilmember Pierzchala asked the REC what came out of the City facility energy usage information that staff delivered at the December 2018 REC meeting. Commissioner Reed said he felt staff didn't want to do the City Hall Treasure Hunt he suggested with an energy consultant, so he didn't follow up with Erica Shingara. The REC discussed how well-known the Energy Star program is. The REC voted to recommend this resolution to the Mayor and Council (8 – For, 0 – Against).

- **Action item:** Ms. Soukup will give the proposed resolution to the relevant City staff in the Department of Public Works and Department of Recreation and Parks for evaluation.

Commissioner Sprague then voiced a concern about staff's unwillingness to support this and stated that he believed that Ms. Soukup would not appropriately present this proposal as promised. Councilmember Pierzchala pointed out that Rockville staff are professionals, will process REC requests according to City procedure, and will give the proposal a fair evaluation.

Commissioner Reed discussed another Energy Committee proposal for Positive Energy Communities, an outreach program to engage 15-60 families in three Rockville neighborhoods in tracking their energy use and trying to implement improvements. He stated that this will be an

Energy Committee effort only, with welcomed assistance from REC commissioners, and would not require any support or resources from City staff. He requested the REC allocate \$500 from its budget towards this program, to be used for food at program events, rental costs for meeting locations, yard signs, etc. Chair Becker suggested using City community centers for meetings to be closer to the proposed neighborhoods.

### **Budget Discussion**

The REC then discussed its remaining FY 2019 budget and allocated:

- \$250 from the FY 2019 budget towards the Energy Committee's Positive Energy Communities. The REC may choose to allocate another \$250 after July 1 from its FY 2020 budget for this program.
- Roughly \$100 for Brewshed stickers for the Watershed Committee
- Roughly \$100 for solar chargers to be raffled off at Hometown Holidays in lieu of the rain barrel that has been raffled in previous years
- The remainder of the available budget would be spent on assorted give-aways. Commissioner Saavoss was asked to work on selecting the split of items with Ms. Soukup.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Becker asked that staff continue using both City email and Dropbox to send REC agenda materials for now, while the commissioners acclimate to the Dropbox system.

In response to an inquiry from Chair Becker, Ms. Soukup reported that the City Clerk had directed the Chair appointment is only for a 12-month period, so the REC will need to have its Chair election in March, rather than in June.

Chair Becker submitted written testimony to the Mayor and Council for the Adequate Public Facilities Standards Public Hearing per the REC's direction at its January meeting.

Chair Becker volunteered to submit the applications for a booth at Hometown Holidays and the Memorial Day Parade on behalf of the REC.

Chair Becker confirmed that he will be present at the March 25 Mayor and Council meeting for the annual Earth Day Proclamation.

### **Environmental Management Division (EMD) Report**

Commissioner Vayanis's term expires in February, and he has applied for reappointment.

Ms. Soukup reported back about new direction regarding the REC interviewing prospective candidates for its vacancies and sending a recommendation to the Mayor and Council.

According to the REC Charter, the Mayor chooses and nominates a candidate to fill a vacancy, then the Council confirms or rejects that candidate. The Mayor said that REC interviews are not part of her method for deciding on the nominations she makes to Council. Therefore, the REC does not need to interview candidates, although they are still encouraged to attend several REC

meetings beforehand. Councilmember Pierzchala objected to this and said the REC may interview as it wishes, regardless of whether it is part of the nomination decision. Ms. Soukup expressed her desire for the Boards and Commissions Task Force or the City Clerk's office to clarify protocols in writing.

City staff expects to brief the REC on the draft Comprehensive Master Plan at the March meeting. If the draft must be substantially rewritten based on Planning Commission comments, this may slide to April. Staff will send out the link to the Public Hearing draft document prior to this briefing.

The City will introduce revisions to City Code Chapter 24, Water, Sewers and Sewage Disposal to the Mayor and Council between February and April. The draft ordinance will be sent by email to the REC members for comments at the time of Introduction.

As promised in the REC action log from a discussion at the November REC meeting, the REC will receive an update at the March 7 meeting on the City's proposed revisions to the ordinance regarding a plastic straw ban.

#### **Old/New Business**

None.

#### **Adjourn**

The Commission adjourned by acclamation at 9:30 p.m.

#### **Next Commission Meeting**

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