

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, March 4, 2021

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	X
William McClain	X		

City Staff: Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Erica Shingara, Environmental Management Division Chief, Heather Gewandter, Stormwater Manager

Mayor and Council: Monique Ashton

Guests: Steve Cardon, Paul Hlavink, Karl Van Neste, Anya Bijlani, Chuck Woolery, Jodi Rose, Will Ollison

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

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

Community Forum: Guests introduced themselves. Chuck Woolery shared a proposal for an initiative called “Bringing Nature Home”. The initiative would promote native plants and trees on public and private land to create more habitat, help provide environmental services to reduce urban heat island, reduce electricity use and fossil fuels, and address pandemic-related issue of loneliness through increased contact with nature and wildlife.

Road Salts and Water Quality

Heather Gewandter presented on Maryland’s and the city’s efforts to address salt in waterways that runs off after salt application in the winter. Many streams and rivers are considered impaired by sodium chloride concentrations including several in Rockville. State highways, Montgomery County, private, and Rockville-owned streets, sidewalks, and driveways use salt. Salt harms aquatic life and eventually finds its way into drinking water and contributes to salt ingestion. It is not feasible to remove salt from waterways or soils once it is dissolved. Maryland Department of the Environment recently updated the state’s Salt Management Plan for state highways and is creating a voluntary applicator certification that will involve training. The state has reduced its salt use by about 50%. Many localities are modeling local salt plans on the state’s.

The City of Rockville makes and uses brine to coat streets before the frozen precipitation arrives which helps cut down on the amount of salt needed. The city is also purchasing more

brine dispensers and using automatic spreaders and is planning to incorporate salt application training into seasonal snowplow training for operators. Commissioners and residents can help by educating local property owners about how to use only what's needed, store salt responsibly, and sweep up any remaining salt from sidewalks and driveways post-storm. The city participates in MDE's and COG's working groups on the issue to share best practices. Community education is needed in proper salt usage and to promote realistic expectations for how quickly streets and sidewalks can be realistically cleared for public safety reasons while also preserving the area's water quality.

Members discussed the potential for testing local streams using inexpensive kits as part of citizen science and reaching out to local homeowners' associations and businesses.

Mayor and Council Report

Councilmember Ashton thanked the Commission and staff for their work in supporting the three bills in the Maryland General Assembly Clean Cars Act, Community Choice Energy Act, and the Climate Solutions Now Acts which the Mayor and Council commented on.

Councilmember Ashton suggested that the Climate Action Plan highlight near-term actions. The Mayor and Council is holding a budget work session on March 15th and a hearing in April.

Chair Report

Chair Reed thanked everyone for their work to support the bills. Chair Reed asked for input on spending the outreach budget. Members suggested door hangers, social media promotions, and salt test kits. The Commission unanimously voted to allocate \$250 to flyers with Rockville environmental program links to be mailed with the Saving Nature Now booklets as part of nature center programming. Hande Apaydin, Pavitra Srinivasan and Justus Getty volunteered to present the Environmental Awards to the recipients at the virtual Mayor and Council meeting on April 26th if needed.

Committee Reports

Climate Action Committee: CLAC discussed environmental bills in the Maryland General Assembly, and how to reach more residents through the survey, such as reaching out to civic associations using paper surveys and continuing to offer foreign language surveys.

Watersheds: The Watersheds Committee had to cut their meeting short to attend a park pond retrofit project event.

Energy Committee: The energy committee discussed Maryland legislation, Sustainable Maryland topics, and completing the draft white papers on the net zero energy code and a leaf blower ban.

Sustainable Maryland

The Commission heard an overview of the Sustainable Maryland re-certification process and discussed how the Commission can play a part in writing sections of the report. Many items that the Commission has been involved in count towards recertification, including stream

cleanups, polystyrene ban, straw ban, the 2040 Master Plan comments, and outreach projects. The period of performance is June 2018 - June 2021. The report will also include future plans and goals for 2023. Members signed up for the additional sections needed. Each section will require a shorter blurb and a longer narrative and will include several attachments such as agendas or reports. A draft should be developed before May to reach a June 30 submittal deadline.

Staff Report

Project Updates

- [Climate Action Plan](#) – Staff met with Lincoln Park Civic Association Feb. 13. Survey closed Feb. 28. Staff is analyzing all feedback, coordinating internally, and working with the consultant on the cost benefit analysis.
- [City Hall Energy Building Tune-Up](#) – The RFQ closed and the city is processing applications.
- [Fleet Technical Assistance](#) – The city is expecting the draft report in the spring.
- [Solar and Microgrid Technical Assistance](#) – Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) is setting up the technical assistance for this pilot program.
- [EV charging stations](#) – The city is discussing additional potential charger locations with PEPCO.
- [Streetlights](#) – The proposed FY22 budget contains a Capital Improvement Project to upgrade the city-owned streetlights (over 3,000) to efficient LEDs. The city is also analyzing the Pepco support of LED streetlight conversion in its Multi-Year plan.

Outreach Campaigns and Events

- [Sustainable Maryland Equity Training](#) March 16, 1-5pm
- Earth Month Events
- Solar and EV charger Co-op 2021 will launch April 1!
- Maryvale Stream Clean-up – April 10, 10am - Noon

The Mayor and Council

- Pesticide Law and the 2040 Comprehensive Plan -- March 15th meeting.
- Earth Month and Earth Hour Proclamations – March 22

Present the Environmental Excellence Awards at an April 26th meeting.

Commissioner Corner

Chair Reed shared some details about his home renovations, for which he is seeking Energy Star, Net Zero Energy Ready, and EPA Indoor Air Quality certifications. The home will contain passive solar lighting, thick insulation, and tight air sealing to reduce energy use and be more resilient to weather extremes. Part of the renovation included electrification and replacing all natural gas appliances. Solar shingles were cost-effective since the roof needed replacement at the time anyway. Hande Apaydin shared that she is also renovating her home to become net zero.

New Business: No new business.

Adjourn: Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 9:13 p.m.