

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, April 1, 2021

WebEx Meeting

Meeting Attendance

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

City Staff: Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Clark Larson, Principal Planner

Guests: Jenna Lessans

Meeting Commencement: Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:01p.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.

Rockville 2040 Master Plan Approval Process

Clark Larson stated that the Comprehensive Plan approval process includes a hearing scheduled for April 12 and a work session for the Mayor and Council with the Planning Commission on April 19. The close of comments may be as soon as April 23, but it may well be extended. The Mayor and Council have 150 days to take an action on the plan after its transmittal which was March 15. An action could be to adopt it, adopt with revisions, extend the comment period, or not adopt it, for example. The plan contains two components – the 10 citywide elements, which includes an environmental element, and the small area plans, projects, and studies. Public engagement began in 2015. The development of the plan has been an iterative process that the Environmental Commission contributed to by reviewing and commenting on the Environmental Element in detail. Some changes were incorporated, although the plan usually reduces the use of wording such as ‘shall’. The plan is overarching policy guidance that influences capital improvement plans, development review, and other departmental plans across the city.

Members discussed the Environment Commission feedback and comments on the plan which could include emphasizing microgrid development and water and electricity infrastructure resilience to help vital services remain operational especially during emergency circumstances.

Chair Report

Chair Reed thanked Will McClain and Scott Fazekas for their work in support of the Pesticide Law adoption. The panel presentation and discussion at the March 15 Mayor and Council meeting went smoothly. The city is likely to opt-in.

Chair Reed discussed outreach for the Solar Co-op and how the Environment Commissioners can all assist. The students who created the solar co-op video plan to update it for use this year. Commissioners can help spread the word. Commissioners agreed that tabling at the Farmer's Market would be beneficial and five members volunteered to do so. Following the equity discussion, below, members agreed that several of the Farmer's Market dates could be switched to community centers, neighborhood association meetings, or grocery stores to reach more diverse neighborhoods.

Chair Reed asked for input on spending the outreach budget. The Environment Commission unanimously agreed to spend \$250.00 on solar co-op outreach magnets.

Committee Reports

Climate Action Committee: CLAC discussed the Sustainable Maryland write-ups. Some committee members are also on the bicycle or pedestrian committees or members of Weed Warriors which will prove helpful. Chuck Woolery discussed his proposal of linking wildlife habitat.

Watersheds: No report.

Energy Committee: The energy committee discussed the potential for placing ground-mount solar on RedGate, potentially in areas of lower soil quality, and all energy committee members agreed. The energy committee also discussed the solar co-op.

Sustainable Maryland – Equity Training Re-Cap and Application

The Commission discussed the Sustainable Maryland re-certification process. 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. As Sustainable Maryland is updating their website, blurbs should be saved in Word and not copied into the website until after the website launches on May 1st.

Clark Reed, Pavitra Srinivasan, Chuck Woolery (on the CLAC) and Amanda Campbell attended the Sustainable Maryland Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training on March 16. Trainers provided a very thorough overview of the history of environmental justice. Many programs are aimed at individuals and organizations that are seeking out environmental opportunities and these may fail to reach those who could benefit the most. Community engagement styles can involve anything from informing and consulting to collaborating and empowering. Empowering communities to help make decisions that affect them is an ideal to aim for even though it can be challenging. Some ideas shared included going to where people are instead of expecting that they will be able to come to your event, utilizing translators at zoom meetings, working with trusted leaders in the community, reaching children who can share opportunities with their families, and consider a community ambassador program.

Commission members discussed drafting a statement on equity and ways of engaging a broader set of Rockville residents such as by ensuring that the solar video contains diverse participants, engaging the Twinbrook weed warriors groups, or adopting an additional stream in another lower-income neighborhood. The Commission agreed to discuss the topic further at a future meeting.

Staff Report

Project Updates

- Climate Action Plan – Staff will meet with the consultant and COG on the cost benefit analysis next week. Staff is working on the equity and resilience analysis.
- City Hall Energy Building Tune-Up – The city met with the consultant and is initiating the project application process.
- Fleet Technical Assistance – The city received the draft report and provided the consultant with feedback which they plan to incorporate in the final report.
- Solar and Microgrid Technical Assistance – Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) sent the city an award agreement letter for technical assistance for this pilot program and it is being routed for signatures.
- EV charging stations – The city and Pepco are analyzing additional potential charger locations including several on-street locations and may be able to bring stations for Mayor and Council approval by summer.
- Streetlights – Staff is working on draft comments on the proposed Pepco-owned streetlight LED conversion in its Multi-Year plan.
- Pepco Rebates – The city is applying for an energy efficient lighting rebate from Pepco to offset \$22,000 of energy efficient lighting upgrade costs at the Dogwood Park.
- Sustainable Maryland – Re-certification application is underway.
- City Hall Lighting Grant Application – City is waiting for grant awards to be announced.

Outreach Campaigns and Events

- Complete RedGate Survey: Survey direct link: <https://engagerockville.com/redgate-park> RedGate Park project page: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2311/RedGate-Park>
- Solar and EV charger Co-op 2021 launched today, April 1!
- Maryvale Stream Clean-up – April 10, 10am – Noon
- Many other Earth Month activities, virtual and in-person, are planned as listed in the Environment & Sustainability Newsletter and on the City Calendar.

The Mayor and Council

- 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan Virtual Public Hearing, April 12
- Pesticide Law – next steps
- Present the Environmental Excellence Awards at April 26th meeting

New Business: No new business.

Adjourn: Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.