

# Rockville Environment Commission

## Draft Minutes of Thursday, April 7, 2022

WebEx Meeting

### Meeting Attendance

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

**City Staff:** Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Erica Shingara, Chief, Environmental Management Division

**Council Liaison:** Monique Ashton

**Guests:** Scott Wilson, Cher Taylor

**Meeting Commencement:** Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:02 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

**Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:** The agenda was approved with one change – moving the Committee updates up to agenda item number 5. Prior meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

**Community Forum:** Mr. Wilson and Ms. Taylor introduced themselves.

### **Montgomery County EV Purchasing Cooperative Pilot Program**

Cher Taylor with the Electrification Coalition described the purpose of the first phase of the EV Purchasing pilot program – to expand outreach and education about the benefits electric vehicles. The program has several components to promote education and gauge interest in purchasing electric vehicles. The program hopes to garner 1,000 pledges from individuals that they are committed to their next vehicle purchase being an electric, and 50 pledges from company fleets. Joining the pledge requires no obligation to purchase. The program involves engagement and recruitment with regional electric vehicle dealerships who have been very supportive and joined the effort. This first phase is open through May 31. Phase 2 will involve pooling the interest in order to negotiate discounted group EV purchases with the dealers. Due to supply chain problems and increased demand, there is little incentive at the moment to offer discounts, but the County is hopeful that discounts could be possible in the future.

The Electrification Coalition also developed an online DRIVE Tool that assists planners in identifying EV charging needs and manages the Climate Mayors Electric Vehicle Purchasing Cooperative initiative.

Commissioners asked about the used EV market and whether the program was supporting it. Ms. Taylor said that some of the dealers in the pilot offer used vehicles. The Electrification Coalition has explored connecting old electric vehicles from fleets to low-income communities. Depreciation is high which makes it a challenge.

Members discussed how the City recently reduced permitting costs for EV charging stations and how that could be highlighted amongst the City's accomplishments. The City is working with the Climate Mayors on training and other aspects, but no deliveries are expected for the time being.

Ms. Taylor thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present. She asked about reaching out to the Rockville Chamber of Commerce, which was identified as a follow-up action. The final report on Phase 1 will be released this month.

### **Committee Reports**

**Watersheds Committee:** The Committee is helping host several stream clean-ups, including at Maryvale which will be held Saturday, April 9, 10am-noon.

**Energy Committee:** The Energy Committee shared their white paper on net zero building codes the benefits of net zero energy buildings, and the potential pathways that other cities have taken to implement net zero. The authors recommend that net zero buildings be established as a City priority, launching a net zero energy outreach and technical assistance component, and collaborate to enhance Pepco's energy efficiency programs and address integration between energy efficiency and renewable energy. New net zero energy buildings cost only 5 to 10% more to build. Renovating existing buildings is much more challenging since often a gut renovation is needed. Incentives will be needed to encourage existing building net zero conversions. The Energy Committee requested that the Commission discuss net zero energy buildings at the May meeting.

**Climate Action Committee:** No report.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Reed acknowledged the Mayor and Council Earth Month and Earth Hour proclamation and Commission participation in the successful "Go Electric" event which had 500 attendees and at least 120 Rockville environment engagements. Signups for the Farmer's Market and for the Hometown Holidays outreach events will be sent out soon.

**REC Budget:** The Commission discussed their budget for this year and ultimately decided unanimously to purchase one Environmental Excellence Awards plaque, a set of T-shirts, additional trash grabbers, 125 seed packets, and \$300 for salt testing supplies.

If any Commissioners are interested in being Chair, let Amanda Campbell know. Elections will be held in June.

### **Mayor and Council Report**

Councilmember Ashton thanked Chair Reed and the Commission for the testimony presented to the Mayor and Council at the April 4<sup>th</sup> Budget Public Hearing. The Commission can re-submit

comments before the April 18<sup>th</sup> funding discussion. Councilmember Ashton is hopeful that the budget will include the composting program and the energy efficiency requests. Already included in the draft budget is:

- Energy efficient streetlight replacement
- Electric vehicle chargers for the City fleet
- Flood Master Plan and mitigation grants
- Additional Rainscapes funds
- Sustainability Program Manager

Mayor and Council were also asked to identify potential projects for federal earmark funding which are due tomorrow. One proposal included Smart Meters for the water utility.

There are many Earth Month outreach events this Spring. The Climate Solutions Now bill (SB528) was passed by both chambers of the Maryland General Assembly and is on its way to the Governor's desk. Rockville submitted a letter of support for the bill.

### **City FY2023 Budget and Tax Duplication Funding Update**

Staff requested \$100,000 of tax duplication funds to go towards an Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan for the City that would be conducted with a consultant through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The plan is action C-11 in the Climate Action Plan, and would identify locations for charging needs, ordinance and permitting updates, funding opportunities, and special access considerations for low-income neighborhoods, multi-family properties, and residents without garages or driveways. The effort also includes identifying and assessing sites to serve the City fleet. The plan will help prepare the City to be more competitive to apply for various opportunities such as federal funding for electric vehicle infrastructure through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Maryland is receiving formula funding and the City is monitoring the state's electric vehicle plans and other opportunities as they evolve.

The Environment Commission can provide input on the EV Plan outreach and plan development process. Staff will likely need to solicit input from specific neighborhoods and from companies with fleets, for example.

Members asked about using funds for solar on city facilities. Staff said that a study from Maryland Energy Administration will help inform the city's next steps on solar for 6 Taft Court and the Gude Maintenance Facility. In response to questions about net zero city buildings, staff said that there were no plans at this time, although 6 Taft renovations will include energy efficiency.

### **Maryland Legislation Update**

The City submitted testimony in support of the Climate Solutions Now Act, which is headed to the Governor for signature.

### **May – Chair Elections**

Chair elections will be held in May. Anyone interested in running can provide a brief statement at that time.

## Staff Report

- **Rockville Community Electric Vehicle Readiness Planning:** Staff will be working with COG and a consultant to develop the plan to examine community and fleet charging needs and potential locations, permitting, City site electrical assessments, and code updates. This is CAP C-11.
- **Climate Action Plan:** Several new CAP initiatives are included in the proposed FY 2023 budget and staff is developing an action status tracking method (similar to the Comprehensive Plan). A Climate Solutions Speaker Series is planned for this Spring. Staff will be seeking Commission feedback on tracking and the webpage.
- **Building Tune-up** for City Hall: The contractor has completed the proposed tune-up measures to save energy.
- **City Hall energy efficient lighting update:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor upgrades are installed and undergoing adjustments. Staff expects to hear about the grant application to Maryland Smart Energy Communities for 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lighting upgrades, window film and thermostats soon.
- Staff met with Maryland and TA Engineering to discuss questions regarding the first draft of the 6 Taft Court and Maintenance Facility **solar/microgrid feasibility assessment**. A final draft is expected soon. Staff is identifying potential next steps.
- Staff continues to work with Pepco to identify suitable locations for **electric vehicle charging station** locations that will move to the next phase. Potential locations include King Farm, Falls Grove, Town Center, Twinbrook Community Center, and an additional fast charger at Thomas Farm as the current charger is getting a lot of use. Pepco plans to install stations by the end of 2022.
- Staff is working on a Maryland Energy Administration grant application to contribute to LED streetlight upgrades planned for FY2023 to replace more than 1,000 fixtures.
- Radon education: EMD staff is developing educational materials and a webpage on radon issues.
- The flood resiliency presentation was presented to the Mayor and Council on March 7. The City is applying for grants to help support flood resilience and is preparing for the release of new FEMA floodplain maps. A [flood resources webpage](#) includes a form to apply for flood damage assistance.
- The City is allowing in-person meetings. Commission members would be required to show proof of vaccination.
- **The FY 2023 Budget is in development.** The Annual Budget Survey link is found here: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/951/Budget-Financials>. Discussions on the tax duplication funds are planned for the April 18<sup>th</sup> Mayor and Council meeting.

## Other Events

- o Thursday, April 7: "[Sustainable Home Landscaping 101](#)", 7-8 p.m. Virtual.

- Sunday, April 24: Science Day, noon-5 p.m. at Montgomery College, Rockville
- Saturday, May 7: 20th Annual Spring Festival and Native Plant Sale, 10 a.m.-noon at Croydon Creek Nature Center.
- Thursday, May 12: "[Building and Living in Montgomery County's First Certified Net Zero Energy Home.](#)" 7-8 p.m. Virtual.
- Watersheds Committee requested a joint meeting with the Environment Commission to hear updates on stormwater management in the City. The Traffic and Transportation Board requested that environmental staff assist in a discussion of electric vehicle planning, which will also be a joint meeting. Staff will share scheduling options soon.

**New Business:** Staff shared that No Mow April in nearby College Park had sparked discussion if Rockville should evaluate a no mow program and whether any code changes would be appropriate. The City currently provides outreach and incentives for sustainable landscaping for year-round support of wildlife and pollinator habitat. The Environment Commission could consider discussing this topic in the fall.

**Adjourn:** Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.