

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, June 3, 2021

WebEx Meeting

Meeting Attendance

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

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

Councilmembers: Monique Ashton

Guests: John Becker, Shruti Bhatnagar, Emily Curley, Anne Goodman, Stan Edwards, Laura Espinoza, Abdias Irizary, Will Ollison, Lindsey Shaw.

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 one change: the Forest and Tree Protection agenda item was postponed to a later date due to changes in the outreach schedule designed to ensure a more deliberate and thorough input process. The Environment Commission will be provided an opportunity to review this proposal at a future meeting. Prior meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

Community Forum: Guests introduced themselves. Members of the Sierra Club shared that the Maryland state chapter has worked to engage cities and towns to join the Clean Energy pledge for 100% renewable energy. Renewable energy helps save money, create jobs, protect health and foster equity. She encouraged the commission to recommend that the city take the pledge. Members asked whether the pledge was for municipal and/or community energy use; what types of energy are included (electricity, natural gas, heating oil, gasoline/diesel), and whether renewable energy credits count towards the 100% and whether green power purchases count. Chair Reed said that the Energy Committee could investigate it. Councilmember Ashton said that it could be part of the climate action plan and the comprehensive plan.

Montgomery County Proposed Building Energy Performance Standards

Commissioners were briefed on the proposed standards that would require increased energy efficiency over time in existing commercial and institutional buildings over a certain number of square footage. Rockville has already opted-in to the Benchmarking law – this would be additional requirements. Staff are proposing a framework, although some aspects of the level of energy efficiency and timelines will need to be further defined through the outreach process and

with the County Council. The proposal phases in buildings down to 25K square feet, and adding multifamily properties of more than 25,000K square feet. Metrics will be based on weather normalized site energy use intensity to capture site-specific conditions and improvements. The standards will allow for flexibility in meeting the standards and waivers in certain cases, although waivers will apply to a narrower set of uses. A Building Advisory Board will help guide the process, and a contractor is assisting in developing the standards. About 110 properties in Rockville could be newly covered by the standards. The county is working to lead by example with a proposal soon headed to the County Council to upgrade the County Office Building to net zero with electrification.

More information is available at:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/green/energy/beps.html>

In response to questions, Emily Curley and Stan Edwards clarified that keeping housing affordable in multi-family units is a focus area. Some solutions could involve financing options and the county's Green Bank. In reference to single family home energy efficiency, the per unit costs of upgrading are higher and the available tools wouldn't necessarily address this sector very efficiently. The county only engages with single family homes at the point of sale or if a permit is needed. Eventually all buildings will need to be energy efficient one way or another to meet the county's climate goals. Comments on the BEPS are due July 15. Chair Reed said that the Energy Committee could examine the proposal in more detail.

Rockville 2040 Master Plan

The commission reviewed comments from the Climate Action Committee (CLAC) and discussed submitting comments or testimony on the draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Ultimately Commission Members voted 7 in favor, 1 abstention to empower Pavitra Srinivasan and Ted Stauderman to draft a short set of comments involving the top three high-level observations from CLAC – the need for more specific accountability, more specific targets, and more focus on climate resilience on behalf of the Commission and for Commissioner Srinivasan to be empowered to draft and present verbal testimony on these items on behalf of the Commission.

Mayor and Council Report

Councilmember Ashton shared that the 2040 Comprehensive Plan is slated to be approved by August. The Mayor and Council is planning to review Transportation elements on July 6th. She would like to see electric vehicle updates by the fall to time plans with the next years' budget. The City Hall audit was completed on May 26th. The Mayor and Council approved of a comment letter to the Maryland Public Service Commission regarding Pepco's LED streetlight proposal.

Chair Report

Chair Reed asked members to sign up for timeslots to the Farmer's market as part of Solar Co-op outreach. The new magnets will be available soon.

The Chair participated in a meeting to discuss solar installation on Rockville Housing Enterprises properties. Staff added that there are several challenges including lack of ability to access tax incentives and financing. Researching and identifying grant funding sources, including federal sources, might be the mostly likely solution.

The Commission discussed the Sustainable Maryland re-certification process. Draft narratives would be appreciated by June 11.

Montgomery County, working with COG, anticipates launching an electric vehicle buyers cooperative purchase this fall and winter to coincide with the winter buying peak.

Committee Reports

Climate Action Committee: The Climate Action Committee discussed the 2040 Master Plan, developing Sustainable Maryland narratives, and the wildlife corridor project.

Energy Committee: The Energy Committee is working on talking points for the Commission for the Farmer's Market outreach.

Watersheds: The Watersheds Committee discussed the logistics of the citizen science program which will test three Rockville streams for salt.

Staff Report

Project Updates

- City Hall Lighting Grant Application – The city was awarded up to \$35,000 from MEA to upgrade City Hall lighting. Staff is working on budget approval and next steps.
- Intern -- The city is working with an intern, Samantha Maglinao, to assist with the Climate Action Plan, Sustainable Maryland, and other projects.
- City Hall Energy Building Tune-Up – The consultant conducted an energy audit of City Hall and next steps are pending.
- Fleet EV Evaluation Technical Assistance – With the technical report in-hand, staff is developing a vehicle replacement implementation plan proposal for an initial set of a few dozen vehicles, including examining placement of chargers, training, and other challenges. A new city fleet manager was hired.
- Solar and Microgrid Technical Assistance – The city received Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)'s award for solar technical assistance and signed the data sharing agreement. The project will be initiated this summer.
- EV charging stations – The city and Pepco identified six potential charger locations including several on-street locations and plan to request authorization for license and maintenance agreements for Mayor and Council approval June 14th.
- Streetlights – The city submitted comments on the proposed Pepco-owned streetlight LED conversion plan regarding important Rockville community considerations.

Outreach Campaigns and Events

- Solar and EV charger Co-op is underway. There are fifty-nine Rockville sign-ups so far! 2021 Co-op closes August 31.
- RedGate Park – Help the city envision RedGate's future. Register and join the conversation: <https://engagerockville.com/redgate-park>
- Rockville Solar Co-op Info Session July 15, 12-1pm.
- Draft Climate Action Plan Update planned for Thursday, July 22, 7-8:30pm

The Mayor and Council

- Additional 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan hearing scheduled for June 14.

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- October 4: Rockville Climate Action Plan briefing.
- COVID update: masks are no longer required indoors at city facilities for vaccinated individuals with some exceptions. The first in-person Mayor and Council meeting is planned for September 13th.

New Business: No new business.

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