

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, September 8, 2022

WebEx Meeting

Meeting Attendance

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

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

Councilmembers: Councilmember Monique Ashton

Meeting Commencement: Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

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

Community Forum: No comments.

Chair Report

- Parkland dedication fee comment letter: Chair Reed added a reference to the NESCS ecosystem services tool and defined ranges for Energy Star score discounts as discussed at the July meeting (discount for scores between 65 – 74; fee waived if 75 or higher). Staff will transmit the letter to the City Clerk and Recreation and Parks.
- Commission and committee volunteers at the Farmer’s Market spoke to 246 people about the Solar Co-op this summer – thank you to all who volunteered!
- Volunteer Appreciation Party is September 14, 5:30-7:30pm
- October’s meeting will consist of a Climate Solutions Speaker Series webinar for the first hour, “Electrify Everything,” with Larissa Johnson, Montgomery County.
- The I270 expansion, was approved by federal regulators to proceed. Rockville will continue to work to minimize impacts to the City.
- The Inflation Reduction Act, signed August 16th, will reduce national greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 40% and will expand many programs and incentives.
- Staff shared that the City plans to promote October Energy Awareness Month via Rockville Reports, social media, and Channel 11.

Climate Action Plan Progress Update

Highlights of Completed Tasks

- FY2023 budget includes more than \$4.2 million for climate actions

- Montgomery County adopted Building Energy Performance Standards (C-01)
- Opted into Montgomery County's point of sale home energy disclosure law (C-04)
- Supported 1,000 EV Co-op pledges and 337 Solar Co-op members (C-09, C-13)
- Distributed 300 native trees and 348 packets of wildflower seeds (C-17)
- Weed Warriors engaged 656 volunteers to remove invasive plants from parks (C-17)
- Converted 325 City Hall lights through Maryland Energy Administration grant (M-01)
- Completed City Hall building energy tune-up (M-01)

FY 2023 Work Plan Highlights

- Hire Sustainability Program Manager (M-01, M-04, M-05, M-06, M-07, M-11, C-26)
- Initiate updates of the building code and zoning ordinance (C-03, C-16)
- Develop Rockville EV Readiness Plan and start Fleet Charging CIP (C-11, M-06, M-07)
- Expand low-to-moderate income home energy program through partnerships (C-02)
- Draft Pedestrian Master Plan (C-15)
- Launch pilot food waste compost drop-off and education program (C-18)
- Launch Flood Mitigation Assistance pilot program (C-20)
- Initiate first phase of LED streetlight conversion CIP (M-02)
- Complete second phase of City Hall energy efficiency upgrades (M-01)
- Plan first solar installation at a City facility (M-04)
- Initiate Flood Resiliency Master Plan CIP (M-13)

The Inflation Reduction Act offers many grant programs and incentives for individuals. The Environment Commission can assist the City with its outreach plans to promote participation throughout the City. Most incentives become available in January.

This fall, the City will be conducting outreach around several initiatives: the Rainscapes program is currently open for applications. The Compost drop-off program and a Flood Mitigation Grant program will open soon. A Radon testing kit give-away and the Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan survey will also be available this fall. Building code and zoning updates are another good opportunity for Commission involvement.

Staff invited the Environment Commission to provide guidance on a set of metrics that the City can rely on to track implementation of the Climate Action Plan. One challenge is calculating actions within Rockville's boundaries, since not all Rockville addresses are located within the City of Rockville. Also, the zip codes overlap with the County. Some assumptions or methodologies might need to be defined for consistency. Committees will begin to discuss and identify a few key metrics that would help reflect the City's progress.

Committee Reports

Energy Committee: No report.

Climate Action Committee: No report.

Watershed Committee: The Watersheds Committee is planning two "brewshed" events with the Croydon Creek Nature Center: a hike on September 24 and a Campfire on October 14. The committee ordered additional salt testing kits for stream testing.

Environment Commission focus areas and Committees discussion

Members discussed committee topics for the year and the role of the Climate Action Committee post-Climate Action Plan adoption. Some CLAC members had asked about next steps after the Climate Action Plan was adopted. Next steps include many aspects of plan implementation to support the new policies, projects, plans, and engagement to encourage resident participation. Furthermore, developing the priority list of metrics will be needed.

Some members of CLAC were interested in exploring a biodiversity focus, air quality, or waste. A Green Space plan, environmental landscaping, and waste reduction are among the CAP actions. The new compost program and expanded Rainscapes programs are two examples of actions that are moving forward but could use additional outreach support. Many CAP actions will also help improve air quality. CLAC could help participate in Urban Heat Island measurements. Ms. Srinivasan suggested that CLAC members rotate the role of chair in exploring these or other interest areas.

Staff Report (Note: Climate Action Plan Action ID noted in parentheses for each project)

- The Compost Drop-Off program and the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program are planning to launch in the fall 2022.
- The City was awarded \$449,700 grant from MEA for the Phase 1 LED streetlight upgrades planned for FY2023 to replace 1,799 fixtures (M-02).
- SWM grants: City awarded \$2 million in grants for stream restoration from MD DNR. The City is also working with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on scoping the Flood Resiliency Master Plan as part of a 50 percent cost-share program (C-20, C-21, M-11, M-13).
- Rainscapes: Opened for applications on July 1 with increased funding (C-17)
- City Hall energy efficiency (M-01): The City is awaiting grant reimbursement for 2nd floor upgrades. The City submitted the project plan for 3rd floor lighting upgrades, window film and thermostats for MEA grant project approval.
- Staff continues to work with Pepco to install electric vehicle charging stations. Sites include Thomas Farm Community Center, Mattie Stepanek Park, and rights-of-way near City Hall, Falls Grove and Twinbrook Quarter (C-11).
- City staff is participating in a nature-based infrastructure for climate solutions workshop (M-09) an initiative develop through a partnership between Montgomery County and the Trust for Public Land.

Mayor and Council

- October 17 (tentative): Comprehensive Plan update; RedGate revised plan

Future Outreach Events (C-09, C-13, C-05, C-17, C-25)

- Volunteer Appreciation Party: Sept. 14, 5:30-7:30pm
- Climate Solutions Talks: Sept. 8 (Flood mitigation), Oct. 6 (Electrification), Nov. 3 (Waste)
- Fall Tree Giveaway: September 24
- Watershed Brewshed events: 9/24 hike and 10/14 campfire
- Potomac Watershed Stream Clean-ups - TBD

New Business: None.

Adjourn: Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.