

Rockville Environment Commission

Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday December 11, 2019

Oriole Conference Room, City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland

Meeting Attendance

Commissioner	Present	Absent	Reason, If Given
John Becker, Chair	X		
Scott Fazekas		X	
Susan Koester	X		
Clark Reed	X		
Monica Saavoss	X		
Steve Sprague	X		
Pavitra Srinivasan	X		
Ted Stauderman	X		
Fedon Vayanis		X	

Council Liaison: None

City Staff: Amanda Campbell, REC Staff Liaison and Sustainability Coordinator

Linda Moran, Assistant to the City Manager

Erica Shingara, Chief, Environmental Management Division

Lise Soukup, Principal Stormwater Engineer

Marlaine White, Senior Assistant City Attorney and REC adviser

Guests: Will Ollison

Meeting Commencement

Chair Becker convened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. with seven REC members present. Attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Agenda

The Environment Commission voted 7-0 to approve the agenda.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Environment Commission members who had participated voted 7-0 to approve November 7 meeting minutes. The October 22 minutes (Steve Sprague attended) and the October 3 minutes (change to REC budget request wording) were approved with amendments noted.

Community Forum

No community members participated in the Community Forum.

Staff Briefing on 2020 State Legislative Session and REC role

Linda Moran, Assistant to the City Manager, provided an overview of legislative priorities that the Mayor and Council have adopted prior to the 2020 Maryland legislative session. Some of the priorities are coordinated with the Maryland Municipal League and others are Rockville-specific. The Maryland Municipal League has a membership of 157 communities throughout the state that coordinate on legislative and other issues, helping to give local governments a voice alongside the counties, which are often more influential. Delegates for District 17 are the key audience. The Council priorities consist of high-impact issues affecting the city, including:

- Public school construction funding
- No property being taken in the I270 expansion
- Funding for the West End wall barrier
- Funding for senior services
- Appointing an independent commission on redistricting
- Municipal highway user revenue focused on the city
- Preservation of municipal authority in the Siting and aesthetics of small cell communication infrastructure
- Funding for remediation needed after the Woodley Tower fire

The Mayor and Council would be interested in REC recommendations on one or two environmental bills. Often, only one-third of the bills proposed are passed, and it may take several tries before a bill is approved. Typically, in-person testimony is not needed from REC; in matters REC views as critical, they could request that Mayor and Council allow them to testify or could testify as a citizen (REC member would clarify that they are testifying as a citizen and not in their role as a REC member). All debate on legislation needs to occur in open meetings per the Maryland Open Meetings Act. The REC asked staff to provide more specific guidance on the process for compiling bill summaries.

Organize offline REC compilation of Environmental Content changes on City Website

Chair Becker asked commissioners to share any other webpage examples that they would like Rockville to emulate and send any additional comments to him. Further discussion on the topic was deferred to a future meeting due to time constraints.

Review of Standing Policies and Procedures for Boards & Commissions and REC

Ms. Campbell reviewed existing policies and procedures, duties and expectations, noting that some changes may occur after the recommendations from the Boards and Commissions Task Force are implemented. REC members asked for guidance on providing call-in capability at REC meetings. REC members asked staff for additional explanation on how to interpret the language contained in the first bullet on page one, section titled "Commission Function, Potential Activities, Areas of Involvement" in the REC policies. Ms. Soukup shared that members may be asked to participate in an in-person ethics training in the future.

Committee Reports

Watershed Committee – The Watershed Committee began researching information on bills to be proposed in this years' Maryland Legislative session and discussed the webpage.

Climate Action Committee – Commissioner Saavoss suggested the REC send the newly elected Mayor and Councilmembers a list of important environmental issues for consideration. The REC intended to work on this.

Energy Committee – Commissioner Reed said that the Energy Committee discussed the International Green Construction Codes (IgCC) and the urgency of reducing building energy use to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Staff shared that the City adopted the 2018 IgCC which takes effect in January 2020, and, in November 2019, several city staff consulted energy efficiency expert guidance and participated in online voting on the 2021 IgCC which is under development.

The Energy Committee also discussed the 50 for 50 action item proposal.

Chair Report

Chair Becker said that the REC submitted a support letter for the inclusion of energy projects in the FY21 budget, as the committee had agreed in September. Some commissioners asked for more detail about the projects and asked if it would be helpful to speak at the Council hearing on December 16th. One project involved leveraging about \$5K of city funds towards a \$60K building energy efficient lighting project, the balance of which would be funded by a Maryland grant and Pepco rebates. The other budget request involved LED streetlights, which several Commissioners agreed was a high priority. The Commission discussed future needs such as employee sustainability, green buildings implementation, and professional facility energy audits.

EMD Report

No additional items to report.

Old/New Business

Commissioner Stauderman presented a proposal for 50 actions for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day activity. The activity would be led by middle school teachers. If students completed the list of 50 activities, they would receive recognition by the Mayor and Council. Thus far, two teachers have expressed interest. He is exploring how activities could count towards service learning hours.

Staff clarified that the Public Information Office typically requires two to three months to review materials for publication, looking at phrasing, branding, and consistency. Training in providing SSL hours would be required. Montgomery County operates a green schools program and they may be able to use REC support.

The REC voted 6-0 in favor of adding this item to the workplan for further exploration.

Adjourn

Chair Becker adjourned the Commission by acclamation at 9:25 p.m.

Next Commission Meeting

The monthly REC meeting will be held at City Hall on January 9.