

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, February 3, 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; Tim Chesnutt, Director, Department of Recreation and Parks

Council Liaison: Monique Ashton

Guests: John Becker, Anne Goodman, Chuck Woolery, Steve Chesterton, Deborah Landau, Wayne Breslyn

Meeting Commencement: Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes: The agenda was approved with no changes. The prior meeting minutes were approved with no changes, with one abstention from Ted Stauderman who was not in attendance.

Community Forum: Guests introduced themselves.

Planning the Future of RedGate Park

Mr. Chesnutt shared an overview of the three Concept Plans produced by the consultant Mahan Rykiel. The Concepts contain variations in scale and configuration of the 10 amenities: trail network, natural habitats, botanical garden/arboretum, picnic pavilions, playgrounds, outdoor amphitheater/community event space, dog park, outdoor recreation fields, multigenerational community center, outdoor play spaces. The amenities list resulted from the statistically significant community sample survey conducted for the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Strategic Plan, and community survey on the Future of RedGate. The internal planning team included representatives from Recreation and Parks, Public Works, and Planning and Development Services. The Concepts provide a high level overview.

First, the consultants mapped existing features and buildable land area. Building on this information, Concept 1 features: the smallest amphitheater (1,500 seats; 250 fixed), the smallest community center (18,000 square feet), one sports field, the largest lawn, most amenities accessed from Main Entrance, and 4.25 miles of paved trails. Concept 2 features the largest amphitheater of the three designs (3,500 seats (1,000 fixed), the largest community center (30,000 square feet), two sports fields, two entrances, a gated connecting road to the

amphitheater for events, and 3.5 miles of paved trails. Concept 3 features a mid-sized amphitheater (2,500 seats; 500 fixed), a mid-sized community center (25,000 square feet), two sports fields, the smallest lawn, two entrances, dog park separated from other amenities, gated connecting road for events, and 4 miles of paved trails.

The Mayor and Council will discuss the Concept plans on the 7th. It is likely that there will be several additional rounds of public input throughout the planning process which the Environment Commission would be involved in.

In response to questions, Mr. Chesnutt said that the Concepts aim for the minimum level of on-site parking needed to serve visitor's needs and integrating pervious surfaces where feasible. Concept 2 with the larger amphitheater would likely involve shared off-site parking, or a shuttle service, for example.

One member asked about whether a habitat assessment would be conducted. Mr. Chesnutt responded that they will be protecting habitat while trying to find a balance. The Mayor and Council Agenda contains more details.

Ponds will not be changed other than to add a fountain or viewing access. Maintenance of the lawn will follow the City's pesticide policy. The need for a larger multi-generational community center was identified in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. New buildings would intended to be built to LEED standards and the consultant plans to aim to minimize impacts. There may be too much shade from trees to incorporate solar. Contingent on Mayor and Council guidance and funding availability, once concepts are agreed upon, the project would move into the design phase. It is likely that any construction would occur in phases depending on the outcomes of the planning process.

Chair Report

EV Co-operative Purchase Program – the EV Co-op received 250 pledges within a day or two after the launch in January. The goal at first is to a) get pledges, and b) educate consumers about electric vehicles. Discounts are not yet feasible due to a chip shortage and supply chain issues. The current deadline is in May but that may be extended. Outreach could focus on Next Door and other online forums for now.

Climate Action Plan – the CAP was adopted on January 10th. Congratulations to all. Rockville Reports included an article on the CAP. The Mayor and Council introduction of the FY2023 City Budget is on February 28th and is something to monitor for CAP implementation.

Electrification ordinance – Chair Reed expressed interest in doing a white paper on legislative steps toward natural gas bans adopted elsewhere for consideration in City of Rockville and Montgomery County. The paper could take a ten-year approach to enacting a ban with training, technical support, and incentives along the way. Staff clarified that the County's CAP focused on incentives after discovering that enabling legislation would need to be passed to initiate a natural gas ban. Councilmember Ashton highlighted Takoma Park's grants for electrification posted to their webpage, and the need for more education of HVAC contractors on heat pumps. Members suggested building on incentives first and on what actions the state takes,

and watching technological advances in fuels and storage to preserve the City's flexibility to adapt. Will McClain volunteered to research the paper with Chair Reed.

Mayor and Council Report

Councilmember Ashton asked for input on the priority implementation aspects in the Comprehensive plan, and the Parkland dedication fee. She noted that the Pepco charger project had only identified one site.

Staff elaborated that that site is the location of a future bike lane, so a charger is not feasible for the City at that location. The Pepco chargers need to be near a transformer; streetlight power tie-ins are not feasible. Any chargers installed at shopping centers are determined by private enterprise, not the City. A new Electrical Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan is proposed in the FY 2023 budget to support City fleet electrification and some publicly accessible charging. Federal infrastructure funding may be another possibility.

Maryland Legislation

Environment Commission committees examined the Climate Solutions Now Act, the Salt Applicator Certification program, and the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act.

The Salt bill involved training to receive a certification but did not involve liability waivers. The Watersheds committee opined that the bill did not go far enough in reducing salt runoff.

The Climate Solutions Now Act had some similarities and some differences from last year's version. Montgomery County supports the bill. The bill sets the state's greenhouse gas goals at achieving 60% reduction from 2006 values by 2030. It contains more provisions in fostering equity, including supporting a Just Transition with a Justice Corps and job retraining. Many building and fleet requirements apply to state buildings and state vehicles. The bill would require buildings of 25,000 square feet or more to comply with a performance standard that would reach net zero over time and reach net zero by 2040. New buildings of 25,000 or more would need to be electric, EV-ready, and solar-ready, with provisions to apply for variances. The state would step up state building energy code requirements to meet the 2018 IgCC by 2023 and adopt the most recently published codes within 18 months. The bill creates a technical assistance hub and establish a Climate Catalytic Capital Fund to provide grants and incentives.

Chair Reed shared that the Energy Committee discussed the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act. The Act provides a market-based incentive to reduce GHG emissions in the form of a fee on fossil fuels used for transportation and other energy sources except for those derived from electricity generation. For non-transportation fuels, this fee would start at \$15/ton from July 31st, 2022, increasing incrementally each year until it reaches \$60/ton by 2032 and beyond. For transportation fuels, the fee would start at \$10/ton from July 31st, 2022 and increase each year to \$37/ton by 2032. It would establish funds that would offset the burden of proposed emissions pricing for the most disadvantaged socioeconomic households. A second fund would provide monies for clean energy, energy efficiency, and decarbonization projects at the municipal level. Because half of the projects are required to benefit 'historically disadvantaged communities', the Act would further serve the City's most vulnerable residents. The Act also

aligns with several goals in the City's Climate Action Plan and would also significantly bolster the City's decarbonization strategies.

Staff added that the fiscal policy notes are not yet published.

The Commission voted 6 in favor of recommending that the Mayor and Council support both bills, SB528 and HB171/SB135, with one abstention.

The Commission discussed the Producer Responsibility Act (HB307/SB292) which would establish a state framework for dealing with packaging and establish a revenue stream that would benefit local refuse and recycling operations. Montgomery County, Howard County, Prince George's County, and Ann Arundel County support this bill. Four Commissioners recommended Mayor and Council support for the bill with three abstentions. One in support switched to abstention after further discussion. Commissioners asked for clarification on procedures for majority vote if some members are absent.

Committee Reports

Energy Committee: The Energy Committee is working on white papers on net zero building codes and leaf blower bans. The Committee discussed environmental Maryland bills in the 2022 session including the Climate Solutions Now Act and the Climate Crisis in Education Act.

Climate Action Committee: CLAC discussed relevant climate-bills that are expected to be introduced in the Maryland General Assembly, including the Producer Responsibility bill. The group discussed the need for additional public trash and recycling receptacles and is working on a white paper on that topic.

Watersheds Committee: The committee examined the spikes in salt content in Rockville watersheds. The group is looking for ways to increase interest and asked about crafting an article for the newsletter, which staff encouraged to be considered by communications staff.

Staff Report

Project Updates

- On January 10, the Mayor and Council adopted Rockville's first Climate Action Plan and the Resolution to Transition the City On-Road Fleet to Cleaner and More Efficient Fuel Sources.
- Building Tune-up for City Hall: Staff is working with the contractor to implement the proposed measures to optimize energy use.
- City Hall energy efficient lighting update: Work will begin shortly on the 2nd floor upgrades. Staff expects to hear about the grant application to Maryland Smart Energy Communities for 3rd floor lighting upgrades, window film and thermostat in the spring.
- The Maryland 6 Taft Court and Maintenance Facility solar/microgrid feasibility assessment is expected in the next few months.
- Staff and Pepco continue to review site conditions for electric vehicle charging stations in City rights-of-way to identify potential feasible locations.

- The FY 2023 Budget is in development. The Annual Budget Survey link is found here: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/951/Budget-Financials>.
- 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.

Outreach Campaigns and Events

- Environmental Excellence Awards – please [nominate/share](#) by end of February
- Montgomery County “Go Electric” Expo – March 19, 2022
- Montgomery County [Energy Summit](#) – April 5-6, 2022
- Spring Stream Clean-up – April 9, 10 am-Noon at Maryvale

The Mayor and Council

- February 7: RedGate Park site plan concepts presented
- 3/7, 3/21 and 4/4: FY2023 Budget public hearings

New Business: No new business.

Adjourn: Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.