

Rockville Environment Commission

Draft Minutes of Thursday, May 21, 2020

WebEx Meeting

Meeting Attendance

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

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

Councilmembers: Monique Ashton, City Council Liaison

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

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved with no changes.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: March meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Community Forum: No comments.

Updates

- Pepco is offering to install additional charging stations in Rockville. They proposed three more locations – at Twinbrook community center, F. Scott Fitzgerald theater, and Dogwood Park. Dogwood Park is the one that Parks staff is considering. The other two were ruled out due to proximity to electricity service lines, ability to tie-in, and staff wanting to avoid positioning the chargers in prime spots near community centers.
- Boards and Commissions will not meet in person until the City and County are in Phase 3 of re-opening (we are in Phase 0 as of this meeting).
- Staff submitted the City Hall's energy data to the County to comply with the Benchmarking law. City Hall's energy star score is now 38, an improvement from 2009 (30) but lower than the national median (about 50).

Discuss Parks and Open Space Plan Comments for the Mayor and Council

Commission members discussed the comments and made several slight changes involving consolidating some of the comments, and adding resource links. The final submitted comments are below.

Adjourn: Chair Becker adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Rockville Environment Commission Comments on Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan	
22-May-20	Section-specific comments
Page and Section Location in Strategic Plan	Comment
Pg. 5, Key Findings	Include language that expansion of parks, maintenance and repairs should follow environmental and sustainable practices
Pg. 27, first bullet	The city standard of having all residents living within a ten minute walk to a park should be maintained, especially in decisions regarding closure of parks (some closures were mentioned that would jeopardize these metrics in certain neighborhoods).
Pg. 52, Program priority	Number one program priority includes Farmers Markets. Based on several studies the expansion of local markets has a positive impact on how residents view their community and that it improves the economic life of a community. The city should take special care to expand farmer's markets in lower income areas of Rockville. (more below)
Pg. 65, Volunteer Management Activities	Continue to build a volunteer community around sustainability practices. As a way to promote sustainability, the city should consider working with MCPS on developing a volunteer program with students.
Pg. 75, Funding Sources	Many funding programs or grants suggested in the study are tied to private organizations and foundations, those that have specific criteria tied to the grants should pass sustainability criteria developed by the city.
Pg. 85	Parks and Facilities Conclusions: Include Environmental/Sustainable best practices in planning for maintenance, operations, and repairs. Reference policies in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
Overall Comments	
Comment Title	Comment
Integrate the Parks Plan with the Environmental Priorities in the Comprehensive Plan	The Parks Strategic Plan is disconnected from the context in Rockville. It should make reference to and follow Rockville's 2040 Comprehensive plan (which is progressing toward a final document). This policy should be adopted for the Parks Strategic Plan and all future planning contracts involving the City and the consultants they contract for any Plans.
Synchronize with Mayor and Council initiatives	We have entered the third decade of the 21st Century and all Plans considered by the City of Rockville should have a strong vibrant discussion of best practices related to the environment, sustainability, and follow Mayor & Council Initiatives.
Integrate Sustainability in Maintenance, Operations, and Capital Improvement Plans for Facilities	The Plan should include an environmental sustainability chapter that describes how parks facilities will be environmentally sustainable and incorporate renewable energy, energy efficiency in maintenance, repairs, and facility upgrades, etc. Additional resources: https://www.rockvillemd.gov/291/Green-Building

Incorporate Sustainable Land Management Practices	<p>The Plan needs to incorporate sustainable practices in updating the parks, specifically, there is currently no mention of use of indigenous plants or pollinator-supportive plants in the updating of parks. There should be some specific guidelines stipulating that all updates to open spaces in Rockville include consideration of sustainable practices and support of the local habitat. Prioritize native plants in landscaping. Strategy to reduce mowed areas and manage invasive plant. Use perennials rather than annuals. How will water bio retention be addressed? These aspects will be important in the future discussion of Red Gate park.</p> <p>Additional resources: https://www.rockvillemd.gov/831/Conservation-Landscaping and https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/green-stormwater-infra-structure-in-parks-report/ and https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/conservation/climate-resilient-parks/</p>
Construct trails using environmentally sensitive methods	<p>Use environmentally-sensitive designs and construction in the implementation of walking trails and paved paths. Currently, 30% of federal transportation funds are required to be put towards motorized transport infrastructure. Look into ways of making this work more sustainable, such as permeable pavement.</p>
Metrics	<p>Use key performance indicators such as energy efficiency, water use, total park acreage, % paved roads, increase indigenous plants, host and nectar plants for pollinators. to show sustainability targets and progress.</p>
Identify viable funding sources for environmental improvements	<p>The list of grant opportunities for funding includes several high-quality grants that promote environmental improvements, but there is no distinction between those that help meet specific environmental goals/policies from the Comprehensive Plan (e.g. the WWF innovative grants promotes Policy 13 under Goal 6 in the Environment section of the Comprehensive Plan) and those that have no environmental conditions. It is a missed opportunity not to highlight these opportunities, and to identify highest quality funding sources with limited negative hang-ups. Potential additional sources: https://www.guidestar.org/NonprofitDirectory.aspx?cat=5&subcat=30&p=738</p>
Comment about Outdated/no longer available grants	<p>External funding sources under Section 5.1.4 includes outdated and no-longer available grants, e.g. the Coors Pure Water 2000 grant (cannot find any new information about this since 2001, the 2001 article included information that the grant was being used in EPA action to counterbalance pollution by Coors. Adolphus Coors Foundation currently has no environmental grants, focuses only on Colorado, and priorities policy that promotes free market solutions, limited government, and "traditional American values"). The American Greenways Eastman Kodak Awards also seems to no longer be in operation, although the Conservation Fund still offers other funding sources.</p>
Erosion in detailed park summaries and detailed capital improvement plan	<p>The capital improvement plan and detailed park summaries include several references to severe and worsening erosion, but cannot determine if erosion repair and prevention is included in detailed capital improvement plan found in Appendix H.</p>
Additional Big Moves and Implementation Recommendations	

<p>1. Open Streets Initiative</p>	<p>The following 3 comments address the top 2 programs w/the highest number of households that had unmet needs, as determined by the citywide surveys: Adult fitness & wellness programs/activities – 5,100. Open Streets improve the quality of life for people by providing communities with accessible, free recreation, leading to improve public health. They are exercises in social integration, connecting neighborhoods and allowing all residents to meet in the street as equals. Local businesses are provided the opportunity to showcase their wares to new potential customers, without the outside vendors that often accompany street festivals and events.</p>
	<p>In 1965, Seattle started Bicycle Sunday, the first documented Open Streets initiative in the world. The idea spread slowly across North America, as cities began to open their streets to people. Now there are over 100, in cities and towns of all sizes. In 2013, new initiatives popped up in San Diego, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, and Buffalo.</p>
	<p>Open streets should not be confused with block parties or street fairs like Home Town Holidays because the core objectives are fundamentally different. While street fairs provide positive community benefits, they do not explicitly support physical activity or the broadening of transportation alternatives. Additionally, street fairs are usually one-off events whereas open streets are part of a broader ongoing municipal effort (e.g. Bicycle Sundays) to promote and extend the benefits of associated with active participation.</p>
	<p>Possible Next Steps: Rockville could create a citizen task force to examine the best organizational model for an Open Streets initiative in our city. Explore potential routes that meet the needs of key stakeholders. Develop a marketing strategy, and work with partners and volunteers to increase capacity.</p>
	<p>https://www.msn.com/en-us/lifestyle/lifestyle-buzz/seattle-to-permanently-close-20-miles-of-streets-to-cars-to-encourage-residents-to-get-healthy/ar-BB13Off0?li=BBnb7Kz</p>
	<p>For more information see www.openstreetsproject.org</p>
<p>2. Expand Farmers Market</p>	<p>Move the Farmer’s Market to Town Center and expand the number of vendors allowed to include arts and crafts. Make it easy for residents to get access as a seller.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Increases the economic activity of Town Center stores
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Expands attractiveness of farmer’s market to beyond food
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More space for the market allows the expansion of vendors and opens new opportunities to local artisans and musicians.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More parking options than current site allow people to stay longer.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A more vibrant farmer’s market strengthens ties to local farm communities, giving them a larger market. It also gives city residents another food option when national supply chains are shrinking due to the pandemic.

3. Urban Food Forest	Existing city parks could have a portion of them planted with an edible landscape including tree fruits, berries, and vegetables. London, Seattle, Ashville, Glendale OH, Madison WS, Boston, LA, Philadelphia, and Austin have urban food forests.
	www.resilience.org/stories/2014-08-01/20-urban-food-forests-from-around-the-world/