

Rockville Environment Commission

Minutes of Thursday, March 5, 2020

Black-Eyed Susan Conference Room, City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland

Meeting Attendance

Commissioner	Present	Absent	Reason, If Given
John Becker, Chair	X		
Justus Getty	X		
Scott Fazekas	X		
Susan Koester	X		
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

Guests: Danniell Belay, Will Ollison

Councilmembers: Monique Ashton, Rockville Environment Commission City Council Liaison

Meeting Commencement: Chair Becker convened the meeting at 7p.m. Attendees introduced themselves, including new members and Councilmember Ashton.

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved with one change of moving item #6 to just after Agenda approval (9 ayes).

Chair Elections: Recognizing that his term as chair ends in April, Chair Becker asked the Commission about continuing serve as Chair through June, the end of the fiscal year. Chair Becker added that the Commission could request an annual report presentation to the Mayor and Council in June. Commissioners unanimously agreed to table the discussion until the April meeting, with Mr. Becker continuing to serve as Chair in the meantime. Any Commissioners interested in serving as Chair were asked to send an email to the rest of the Commission.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: December meeting minutes were approved (7 ayes, 2 abstentions). February 6 meeting summary was approved with one change, fixing a sentence fragment (7 ayes, 2 abstentions). February 14 meeting summary was approved with a correction to a typo ('councilmember' in place of 'commissioner') (7 ayes, 2 abstentions).

Community Forum: Danniell Belay and Will Ollison introduced themselves. Mr. Belay said that many younger residents are not aware of the role local government plays in addressing environmental issues. It was difficult to find information on the City website on how to be involved. He suggested an app or other community outreach and engagement is needed.

Councilmember Ashton added that involving schools, places of worship, Next Door, and other avenues could be developed to reach those that are not already engaged.

Chair Report

Chair Becker shared that the Mayor and Council sent letters of support for the two bills, the Clean Cars Act of 2020, and the Community Choice Energy Act, to the Maryland General Assembly. Chair Becker suggested that the Commission could include in their recommended legislative bills a request to testify on behalf of the City in person. Councilmember Ashton noted that the Mayor and Council would need to vote to approve of Commissioners testifying in person at the Maryland General Assembly. She also shared that the Mayor and Council testified on the I270 widening, highway user fees, and the streetlights bill that Delegate Carr sponsored.

Councilmember Ashton provided updates on the City Budget process, noting that the budget survey did not include sustainability or climate change, although the environment was rated a priority as shown through other related options. The Mayor and Council will be discussing the budget as well as RedGate at the March 23 meeting. The Commission may participate in the budget survey, submit written comments or speak during Community Forum. Ms. Shingara added that there may be unused snow funding that could be reallocated towards additional climate action plan work, LED streetlights, and City Hall energy audit projects.

Chair Becker invited the Commission to attend the Mayor and Council meeting on March 23 for the presentation of the Earth Day Proclamation [Note that this was moved to March 30 via online streaming due to the COVID-19 situation].

Montgomery County Pesticide Law

Ms. Travaglini explained that Rockville would need to opt in to have the County's pesticide ban apply to private property, although as written the ban does not apply to municipal property. The ban disallows any non-organic pesticides on lawns, playgrounds, mulched recreational facilities, and child-care facilities. There are many exceptions, including municipal property, schools, athletic fields, golf courses, cracks in the sidewalk, shrubs, for biting and stinging insects, on noxious weeds, etc. The county has had 11 municipalities opt in and 10 others have either opted out or are still considering the ban. If the City of Rockville opts in, the County staff would coordinate education, outreach, and enforcement. The County is providing a long lead time for landscaping companies and private property owners to comply and emphasizing education for the first several months. Local retailers are still able to continue to sell pesticides but must provide signage about the ban. Rockville is going to be included in the \$400,000 outreach campaign launching this spring and summer since many companies and property owners operate across boundaries. Montgomery County is the first major municipality to pass such a ban and now other counties in Maryland are looking into it too. Pesticides have been shown to harm human health, pets, and the environment, including pollinators.

Ms. Campbell added that the City parks and facilities staff are already using least-toxic methods consistent with integrated pest management. Many lawns, such as the one adjacent to City

Hall, are not treated, allowing ‘weeds’ such as dandelions and clover to grow. These practices save on costs. Parks staff had no issue with the ban applying to private lands, but if it needed to be applied to municipal lands, they acknowledged that it could probably be accommodated without too much extra expense or disruption.

To dispose of pesticides, the city has a drop-off station at the waste transfer station for household hazardous waste, or arrange for a pick-up.

The Commission agreed to research the ban and compile a list of questions for discussion at the next meeting.

Environmental Excellence Awards

Several applicants were considered for Environmental Excellence Awards. The Commission agreed on Award recipients to be acknowledged at a future Mayor and Council meeting.

Several members discussed the awards guidance, and, concerned that some of the criteria was vague, agreed to review the criteria for a future agenda item.

FY20 Environment Commission Budget

The Commission agreed to purchase \$350 worth of tote bags and four additional award plaques. The watershed committee will share how many signs they need for RedGate cleanup.

Committee Reports

Watershed Committee – The WS committee inquired about restroom availability at RedGate.

Climate Action Committee (CLAC) – The CLAC is recommending to the Environment Commission that the RedGate master plan include an environmental management plan, frequent and reliable transportation, and consider minimizing additional parking. CLAC also shared that the Montgomery County Climate Action Planning process has an open survey online if anyone would like to review the draft measures or comment.

Energy Committee – The Energy Committee reviewed some of the county’s climate measures.

New Business

Chair Becker requested that the Commission consider an action on the I270 widening and the RedGate master plan in a future workplan item.

Staff Report – written report

- Climate Action Plan high-level themes, early input from EC
- Redgate planning process: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2311/RedGate>
- Staff attended building energy management training Feb 19-20.
- Earth Day 50th Anniversary events: www.rockvillemd.gov/earthday50

Adjourn: Chair Becker adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.