

# **Rockville Environment Commission**

## **Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, March 7, 2019**

Mayor and Council Chambers, City Hall,  
111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland

### **Meeting Attendance**

<b>Commissioner</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Reason, If Given</b>
Chair John Becker	X		
Sy Garte	X		
Susan Koester	X		
Clark Reed	X		
Monica Saavoss	X		
Steve Sprague		X	
Pavitra Srinivasan	X		
Fedon Vayanis	X		

### **Council Liaison:**

**City Staff:** Lise Soukup (Staff Liaison); Mark Charles (Chief, DPW Environmental Planning Division); Craig Simoneau, Director of Dept. Public Works

**Guests:** Steve Cardon, Watershed Committee, Ted Stauderman, and Katherine Stauderman, Girl Scout.

### **Meeting Commencement**

The meeting convened at 7:03 p.m. by Chair Becker.

### **Approval of Agenda**

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

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Commission voted 7-0 to approve the January 3, 2019 meeting minutes, which were inadvertently not distributed to the Commission at the February 7 meeting. The Commission then voted 7-0 to approve the February 7 meeting minutes.

### **Community Forum**

Katherine Stauderman is a Girl Scout searching for a Silver Award project. She is interested in environmental topics and wanted to observe a Rockville Environment Commission meeting.

### **Update on City Ordinance for Plastic Straw Ban**

Mark Charles, Chief of DPW's Environmental Management Division, updated the REC on the City's proposed ordinance change. The current language that goes into effect on July 1, 2019, is considered too restrictive by the Mayor and Council and staff. Mr. Charles presented five alternative provisions to establish when a food service establishment might give a straw to a customer, plus the option to drop the straw ban entirely. At this point, staff endorses language from proposed Maryland House Bill 134.

The REC discussed the City's concerns (ensuring those who need a straw can easily get one, recognizing there is no budget/staff for enforcing a straw ban, and no recycling market for plastic straws). The REC voted 5-2 to have the REC further review language from other communities at the April 4 REC meeting and make a final recommendation to City staff.

### **Environmental Excellence Award Reviews**

The Commission had received and reviewed three nominations for the March meeting. Ms. Soukup noted that the Commission may award multiple Environmental Excellence Awards in a single year. The Commission briefly discussed the nominees and voted 7-0 to make the following awards at an upcoming Mayor and Council meeting:

- Amanda Aparicio – Outstanding Individual Environmental Stewardship – for her efforts as a past Environment Commissioner and a longtime and current volunteer on the REC's Watershed Committee.
- Steve Cardon – Outstanding Individual Environmental Stewardship – for his efforts as a past Environment Commissioner and a longtime and current volunteer on the REC's Watershed Committee.
- Larissa Johnson – Outstanding Environmental Education and Academic Achievement – for her efforts as a past Environment Commissioner and in forging a partnership between Montgomery County's Residential Energy Management program and Rockville residents.

### **REC Budget Allocations**

The REC discussed adjustments to its FY2019 expenditures to obtain requested materials from the Watershed Committee and finalize give-away items for spring outreach events. It voted 7-0 in support of the final allocations. Staff will order those items. The Watershed Committee needs to finalize a logo/image for the requested Brewshed stickers before these can be ordered.

### **Election of Environment Commission Chair**

Chair Becker's Chair term expired as of March, 2019. The REC held an election for the next 12-month period. John Becker was the only candidate to run. He was re-elected by a 6-0 vote, with one abstention (Becker). His Chair term will expire in March, 2020.

### **Environmental Commission Meeting Decorum Discussion**

Chair Becker spoke about inappropriate behavior and comments at the February 7 REC meeting, apologized to Ms. Soukup, and asked the REC commissioners to behave in a more professional manner. At the request of Commissioner Garte, Ms. Soukup described the problem behaviors. She shared a handout about guidelines for effective and professional meetings, which include respecting different opinions or positions. The commissioners were asked to follow these meeting standards, and remind other members to do so when needed. The commissioners were asked if they had any changes or additions to this list; none were voiced. The Commissioners voted 7-0 to adopt these meeting guidelines.

## **Committee Reports and Requests to REC**

### Watersheds Committee:

Steve Cardon reported that, in conjunction with the Croyden Creek Nature Center, the Watershed Committee has planned two more Brewshed events for local Rockville breweries to promote watershed information and outreach. These are:

- Meet-Up at Saints Row Brewing on April 13, following an REC stream cleanup that morning.
- Hike with a Brewer event on May 4. Event starts at the Nature Center and concludes at the True Respite Brewing Company.

The REC is requested to join the Watershed Committee for the annual stream cleanup at Maryvale Park on April 13 at 10 a.m. This event is sponsored by the REC.

The Watershed Committee asked for the City's help in publicizing its outreach events through multiple channels, including the City website/calendar, social media, online Rockville Reports, and the Spring Recreation Guide. Ms. Soukup said to continue submitting details to Shannon Philbin, EMD's Environmental Outreach Specialist, since she forwards these to the City Communications Team, in addition to putting it on the City web calendar and in the EMD quarterly email newsletter. The Communications Team decides what further advertising is feasible, based on available space, the target audience and topic, and submission deadlines.

Commissioners asked about perfluorinated compounds in Rockville's drinking water, whether the City tests for these, and if so, the results. Mr. Simoneau, Director of Public Works, responded that these are unregulated by U.S. EPA, so there are no standards or testing/treatment requirements. However, the City does do its own testing and the most recent results will be sent to the REC with the April meeting information.

### Climate Action Committee

In November, the CLAC had requested time for an REC climate action presentation at the Traffic and Transportation (T&T) Commission and the Planning Commission. Chair Becker arranged time with the Planning Commission for March 13 as a possible date, but this was cancelled since the REC has not yet provided the needed talking points to the Planning Commission. No date has been scheduled yet for T&T Commission.

- **Action item:** The REC should identify the time needed for the presentation and to Jim Wasilak and Daniel Seo, staff liaisons for the Planning Commission and the T&T Commission. Chair Becker will confirm date and time with each commission once talking points are ready.
- **Action item:** Commissioner Saavoss should forward talking points for these presentations to Ms. Soukup by March 28 to send to REC for approval at April 4 meeting.
- Commissioners Srinivasan and Koester reported that the CLAC and Energy committees discussed several State bills of interest at their monthly meetings, but recognized that further City comment will occur too late in the State Legislative schedule. The Commissioners agreed that in future years, the REC should formulate any positions starting in November/December and finalize them no later than the February REC meeting in order for the Mayor and Council to consider this input.
- CLAC wishes to host two events in the coming year. No dates or details have been proposed as of yet.
  - General public outreach for individual energy consumption
  - Public information session about possible local policy interventions for Climate Action planning

### Energy Committee

The Mayor and Council supported the Clean Energy Jobs Act in Maryland State Legislature, as requested by the REC.

In February, a member of the REC forwarded the EPA Energy Star draft resolution approved by the REC at the February meeting directly to Councilmember Pierzchala. Ms. Soukup reported that the REC's request was transmitted from Councilmember Pierzchala to the City Manager, who asked staff to provide an assessment and make a recommendation of this proposal. Staff is now gathering information and discussing the issues.

- **Action item:** Ms. Soukup asked that the REC provide staff the specifics about what actions or goals it expects the City to achieve if it joins the Energy Star program. Specifically, if Rockville continues with the level of energy tracking and improvements as described at the December, 2018 REC briefing, does this meet the Energy Star program's commitment standard? Commissioner Reed provided the EPA's standard list of expected commitments from Energy Star partners, which includes "protecting the environment through the continuous improvement of the City's energy performance". Mr. Simoneau said that staff needs to understand the REC's expectations for the City under this program, rather than EPA's.

Commissioner Reed said the EC has planned the kickoff for its Positive Energy Communities, an outreach program to engage 15-60 families in three Rockville neighborhoods in tracking their energy use and trying to implement improvements, in late April at the PEPCO center building. The committee members will contact residents in the target neighborhoods to recruit participants.

This will be an Energy Committee effort only, with welcomed assistance from REC commissioners.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Becker asked that staff continue using both City email and Dropbox to send REC agenda materials for now, while the commissioners acclimate to the Dropbox system. Commissioners Vayanis and Srinivasan requested printed meeting materials, given the volume of files, but Ms. Soukup explained that this would require a lot of paper and the commissioners would have to come pick the packets up at City Hall since they are ready for distribution only six days ahead of the REC meetings. As a compromise, she suggested a trial approach where she will provide two print copies of all materials at each meeting to see if that's helpful.

Chair Becker volunteered to submit the applications for a booth at Hometown Holidays and the Memorial Day Parade on behalf of the REC.

Chair Becker confirmed that he will be present at the March 25 Mayor and Council meeting for the annual Earth Day Proclamation and requested that other commissioners attend this, Mark Charles' talk on Rockville's Environmental Policies in April.

Discussion of the REC's draft resolution for the Mayor's Monarch Butterfly Pledge was postponed to a later REC meeting.

### **Environmental Management Division (EMD) Report**

Ms. Soukup confirmed that Commissioner Vayanis's term, which expired in February, is automatically extended until he is reappointed or a new commissioner is appointed in his place, per the City Clerk's direction. The REC has another vacancy after Commissioner Hosmer resigned in March.

City staff expects to brief the REC on the draft Comprehensive Master Plan at the April meeting. Staff will send out the link to the Public Hearing draft document prior to this briefing. Commissioners are urged to review the draft and come prepared to the April meeting with their questions and comments.

The City will introduce revisions to City Code Chapter 24, "Water, Sewers and Sewage Disposal", to the Mayor and Council in April. The draft ordinance will be sent by email to the REC members for comments near the time of Introduction.

### **Old/New Business**

New Business: Commissioner Garte requested that the REC form a new committee for Environmental Health. He cited several topics of interest, such as West Nile virus or other insect-borne diseases, air quality, and water pollutants. Commissioners Garte and Srinivasan have expertise in this area, and Commissioner Garte wants the DPW Environmental Management Division to take more action in setting policies about these matters.

Mr. Simoneau explained that these topics are not regulated or controlled by City of Rockville departments or ordinances, so these are not appropriate discussion topics for the REC, which is an advisory body to the Mayor and Council. Montgomery County and State agencies handle these topics within the City limits. The REC may not advise those agencies.

Commissioner Vayanis said that REC committees have reviewed environmental health topics when specifically requested by the Mayor and Council, such as when the REC and Watershed Committee researched a position in 2016 on banning fracking within the State of Maryland. The REC does not need to formulate a topic-specific committee to meet this directive. After further discussion, Commissioner Garte withdrew his proposal for a new committee.

Mr. Charles mentioned that April 2020 is the fiftieth anniversary of the Clean Water Act, and that he hopes the City and the REC will mark the occasion. Mr. Charles also foreshadowed changes coming to the City's recycling collection and disposal program, due to market changes in the value of recycling materials. As these develop in the next months, he will seek REC input and help with community outreach.

Commissioner Koester asked if the City would add food composting to its recycling program. Mr. Simoneau responded that residents currently may obtain this service from private companies. The City would need to find an affordable receiving site in order to provide this as a City service.

### **Adjourn**

The Commission adjourned by acclamation at 9:40 p.m.

### **Next Commission Meeting**

The next Commission meeting is scheduled on **Thursday, April 4 at 7:00 pm.**