

# Rockville Environment Commission

## Draft Minutes of Thursday, June 2, 2022

WebEx Meeting

### Meeting Attendance

Commissioner	Present	Commissioner	Present
Hande Apaydin	X	Clark Reed, Chair	X
William McClain		Monica Saavoss	X
Justus Getty	X	Pavitra Srinivasan	X
Susan Koester	X	Ted Stauderman	X

**City Staff:** Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Erica Shingara, Chief, Environmental Management Division (EMD); Sarah Campbell, Intern

**Guests:** Jim Wasilak

**Meeting Commencement:** Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. and welcomed attendees.

**Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:** The agenda was approved with no changes. Prior meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

**Community Forum:** Sarah Campbell introduced herself. She is an EMD summer intern sponsored by Maryland Municipal League.

### **Parkland Dedication Impact Fee**

Jim Wasilak shared a presentation on options for Parkland Dedication and Impact Fees. The proposal was presented to the Mayor and Council on May 23. They recommended the proposal move forward with public review and Environment Commission input.

There is not much land left for new development or for developing new parks in Rockville. Most projects will be redevelopment, yet as population grows, parks and recreation needs also grow. The City Manager asked staff to research development impact fee models for parkland funding. A study was conducted in 2018. Staff are recommending a hybrid program of parkland dedication or fee-in-lieu for development projects over 5 acres in size, along with a per-unit impact fee for all new projects. The Recreation and Parks Department has not yet created well-defined criteria for what constitutes acceptable land for dedication. The funds will help meet park and recreation needs as defined in the Park Strategy plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

The Commission also discussed that parkland dedication needs to be proportional to the development impact and community needs. In some cases due to the nature of larger developments, dedications may not be located in the neighborhoods that most need parkland amenities. Recreation and Parks also expressed a desire to avoid plots of land that are smaller than 0.5 acres which would not be worth the resources needed to maintain them.

Projects over 5 acres would be required to dedicate at least 10% of their site to parkland or pay a fee-in-lieu. The fee would equal 10% of the assessed value of the land area in its *predeveloped* state. The revenue generated from this policy must be used in the general vicinity of the development site (within one mile) and any fee-in-lieu funds must be used within 7 years of acquisition or be returned to the developer. The fee schedule would be based on the marginal park facilities cost per capita. The fee would apply to new residential units only, while MPDUs and projects with 3 or less units would be exempt. Mr. Wasilak noted that the fee schedule has not yet been created.

Concern was raised about social equity and how low-income neighborhoods would be impacted. Commissioners discussed whether the developer could pass on the cost of this policy to low-income residents, even if the MPDU units were technically excluded from the calculation. Mr. Wasilak stated that this is controlled by MPDU policy.

Commissioners discussed the concept of a credit or waiver system based on the GHG impact of the building. Commissioners asked if parkland dedications or purchases could be located near wildlife corridors to link natural spaces. This could reduce the cost of maintenance and be more environmentally friendly in the long run.

The commission unanimously supported drafting a memo recommending Mayor and Council support for the proposal with comments, including asking the City to draft a list of criteria for land acceptable for parkland dedication for review, describing and mitigating any impacts to low-income development, and suggesting including rebates or credits for development projects that include green building elements. Commissioner Stauderman agreed to write the draft to review in July. Commissioners were asked to send him any additional comments.

### **Chair Report**

The Chair noted that a doodle poll for July's Commission meeting date will be sent out soon.

The Chair attended the farmers market to table for the solar co-op and talked to about 25 people. Chair Reed encouraged everyone to sign up for time slots.

Chair Reed shared that a citizen had reached out to him regarding the possibility of doing a campaign on No Mow April or No Mow May. The goal of the campaign is to encourage residents not to mow their lawns to give pollinators a chance to access the clovers and dandelions that might grow in less-mowed lawns. Discussion noted that this might not be the most effective method for helping pollinators or keeping a healthy lawn since growth is much faster in the US than in the UK where the campaign started, but members liked the concept.

Erica Shingara noted that the Backyard Wildlife Habitat program is another campaign already underway in the city and county focusing on native plants and creating native habitats for pollinators in people's yards. Chair Reed said that he would respond to the resident with information about the program.

### **City Code Updates – Energy Disclosure and Radon**

Staff introduced two proposed code changes, both of which are centered on home point-of-sale, with the responsibility of documentation falling on the seller. For the energy disclosure, the seller must provide at least 12 months of utility bills to the buyer and share information

about energy efficiency resources in the form of a handout provided by the county. Adopting the county's energy disclosure requirement is an action in the city's Climate Action Plan.

Commissioners discussed adopting more stringent energy efficiency disclosure requirements such as energy audits and developing an Energy Yardstick score, and ultimately decided that it would be prudent to align with the county to minimize cost and effort. The Mayor and Council would likely ask for a white paper on it. The city lacks an education and enforcement mechanism to back up any additional requirements. Any current enforcement through the County is complaint-based. Commissioners agreed that in addition to being consistent with the County, it would be beneficial to identify additional consumer touch points for energy efficiency education.

Radon testing is a public health issue and codifying testing requirements would be consistent with the rest of the County. Staff said it would be helpful if this code is in place by January to time an outreach campaign with Radon Awareness Month.

The Environment Commission unanimously recommended that the City adopt Montgomery County's point of sale radon testing and energy disclosure requirements and reference them in the City code, while encouraging the City to continue to explore additional policies, outreach, and programs to educate and encourage residential energy efficiency for all homes.

### **Climate Action Plan – Webpage Input**

Erica Shingara shared that the City hired a new webmaster and that staff is looking for ideas on how to update the CAP page to be more engaging and dynamic. She requested the Commission consider ideas for how to create interactive ways to display CAP goals and projects, how to show the city's plans to accomplish them, and show progress.

Chair Reed noted that Philadelphia has an excellent interactive energy map and maps of their climate projects. Erica Shingara noted that connecting to Montgomery County's sustainability and energy connections page could be useful. Commissioners noted that it would be useful to show a trendline or graph showing progress towards goals and/or greenhouse gas numbers. Staff requested the commission consider ideas for further discussion at the next meeting.

### **Committee Reports**

Energy Committee: EC is updating their Net Zero Buildings white paper with information from the new New Buildings Institute policy. One example they found is Washington state requiring heat pumps in new buildings.

Climate Action Committee: CLAC asked about the agenda for the July electric vehicle planning meeting. Staff responded that the meeting will describe the purpose and need of the upcoming Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan for discussion and feedback, and we will hear updates on the County's EV initiatives. Committee Chair Srinivasan requested 15-20 minutes on a future agenda to discuss the future of CLAC and whether it needs to exist or change direction after the Climate Action Plan is completed. A new Chair is sought if it continues.

Watershed Committee: They continue to conduct their water testing and found elevated levels of salt in Rockville streams.

**Staff Report** (Note: Climate Action Plan Action ID noted in parentheses for each project)

- **City FY23 Budget:** City funding was approved in the FY23 budget for \$1M for Phase 1 LED streetlight upgrades to replace 1,799 fixtures. Staff applied for an MEA grant to offset the costs and is working to finalize the official Pepco rebates pre-approval paperwork. (M-02). FY23 Budget also includes a Sustainability Program Manager, Flood Resiliency grants and Master Plan (C-20, C-21, M-11, M-13), Compost program (C-18), fleet electric vehicle charger Capital Improvement Program (M-06 and M-07), stormwater upgrades (C-20), and additional Rainscapes funding (C-17).
- **REC budget:** Staff was able to get discounts by purchasing in bulk a set of 10 Environmental Excellence Awards, \$400 worth of wildflower seeds, and 12 trash grabbers. Two salt kits were requested which could be purchased with FY23 funds.
- **Rockville Community Electric Vehicle Readiness Planning (CAP-11):** The paperwork is nearly finalized to begin work with COG and a consultant to develop the plan to examine community and fleet electric vehicle charging and permitting processes. The July commission meeting with transportation will help inform first steps.
- **City Hall energy efficient lighting update** (M-01): The 2nd floor upgrades are complete and reimbursement paperwork is in progress. Rockville was awarded the grant application to Maryland Smart Energy Communities for 3rd floor lighting upgrades, window film and thermostats. The Grant Agreement will go to Mayor and Council for approval and a city funding request for the project upfront costs will be submitted as an FY23 budget amendment this summer.
- **6 Taft Court or Maintenance Facility Solar:** Staff has received and is reviewing the final version of the report for the 6 Taft Court and Maintenance Facility solar/microgrid feasibility assessment. Staff has made progress identifying contract mechanisms for solar once technical site assessments confirm feasibility (M-04).
- Staff continues to work with Pepco to install electric vehicle charging stations. Site reviews are being finalized (C-11).
- The city was invited to join an electrification workgroup (C-06) and a nature-based infrastructure for climate solutions workgroup (M-09) with Montgomery County.

Future Outreach Events (C-09, C-13, C-05, C-17, C-25)

- Several Solar Info Sessions planned: 6/17 at Noon; 7/14 at 6pm; 8/18 at Noon. Access Solar is a new low-moderate income solar financing program offered by the Green Bank.
- EV Co-op info Sessions: 1st Wednesday of each month
- The next Environment & Sustainability Newsletter will be published in June.

**New Business:** None.

**Adjourn:** Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 9:11 p.m.