

# **Rockville Environment Commission**

## **Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, July 25, 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		
Scott Fazekas	X		
Susan Koester	X		
Clark Reed	X		
Monica Saavoss	X		
Steve Sprague		X	
Pavitra Srinivasan	X		
Ted Stauderman	X		
Fedon Vayanis	X		

**Note – REC attendance for July 25 meeting will not be counted towards attendance policy, due to this meeting being rescheduled from standard first Thursday date.**

### **Council Liaison:**

**City Staff:** Lise Soukup (Staff Liaison); Heather Gewandter, Stormwater Manager; Ricky Barker, Director of Planning and Development Services; John Foreman, Planning and Development Services Manager

**Guests:** Mark Pierzchala, Councilmember; Amanda Aparicio, Watershed Committee representative; Will Ollison, resident.

### **Meeting Commencement**

Chair Becker convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. with seven REC members present.

### **Approval of Agenda**

The Environment Commission voted 7-0 to approve the agenda, with the provision that the Committee Reports be moved to earlier in the schedule.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Commission voted 5-0 to approve the June 6 meeting minutes. Chair Becker and Commissioner Fazekas abstained.

### **Community Forum**

No comments.

### **Overview of FAST (Faster, Accountable, Smarter, Transparent)**

Ricky Barker, Director of Planning and Development Services (PDS), and John Foreman, the new Development Review coordinator, explained the premise and implementation plan of the new FAST effort to make the development review and permitting process more efficient for City staff, applicants and the applicants' consultants.

The REC asked several questions. Commissioner Reed queried what percentage of the proposed changes are staff-level process modifications vs. Mayor and Council-approved changes. Mr. Barker replied that about 30% are changes at the staff level, which can be made quickly. The rest involve City Code revisions that require Mayor and Council approval. Many of these are to update very outdated chapters of the City Code for today's conditions and types of zoning, or to rectify conflicting language between chapters.

Chair Becker inquired about proposed exemptions from Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) requirements for small projects. Commissioner Koester asked how residents can find out if a City permit is needed; Mr. Barker said PDS staff answer these phone inquiries. The REC asked that any procedural or ordinance changes to the Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance be brought before the REC, and that pedestrian safety be carefully considered.

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

#### Watersheds Committee (WC):

Amanda Aparicio presented a new Brewsheds event, the Green Happy Hour, at True Respite Brewery on Wed, Sept. 18. This has already been advertised via the Nature Center through the City's Fall Recreation Guide. A discussion ensued about the Watershed Committee needing to get approval from the REC to schedule events before announcing them. Commissioner Vayanis voiced his disagreement with the Watershed Committee's emphasis on social gatherings. Ms. Aparicio explained that the WC believes these are useful for engaging a different, younger population in watershed protection, focusing on the theme of "Good Beer Starts With Clean Water".

Ms. Aparicio also noted that the REC has not assigned any duties for the WC recently, so the WC is creating its own work program. Ultimately, Chair Becker and Commissioner Vayanis agreed that Chair Becker will take over as the new REC liaison to the Watershed Committee. The REC voted to approve the Sept. 18 Brewshed event, and Chair Becker offered to attend it and man an REC information table.

**(NOTE: these next committee reports were presented later in the meeting after the Annual Workplan item)**

#### Climate Action Committee (CLAC):

Commissioner Saavoss announced that the CLAC discussed an Urban Land Institute presentation about suggestions for Rockville Town Center. CLAC supported ways to incentivize walking and biking in the area, as well as adding more bike paths into Town Center.

Energy Committee (EC):

Commissioner Reed presented a proposed schedule for doing an energy Treasure Hunt at a City facility, with the intent of executing the event in early January, 2020. City Hall was discussed as a possible venue for this. City staff asked Commissioner Reed for further details, including discussion about which facility might be best, what City staff would be needed, and time, costs and equipment needs.

This will be discussed further at the REC's September meeting when staff from Recreation and Parks, including the Facilities Manager, will be present. Staff will send Commissioner Reed a list of its questions to be answered ahead of the September REC meeting, so staff can better understand the scope of this proposed activity.

**REC Annual Workplan Discussion and Scheduling for FY 2020.**

Heather Gewandter of the DPW Environmental Planning Division facilitated this discussion and presented a preliminary table of suggested topics for the September 2019 – June 2020 period that was prepared by EMD staff. It included REC housekeeping items, topics of REC interest from the first half of 2019, and ongoing City staff work efforts that may be presented to the REC in this time frame.

The table also showed outreach or other events outside of the monthly meetings and estimated times for all events to give the REC an idea of their commitment. Finally, the table identified ongoing work efforts that the REC has previously committed to, as well as one pending work effort.

Some discussion of the workplan ensued. In response to Commissioner Reed's question about getting the City to start an Electric Vehicle Buyer's Cooperative, Ms. Gewandter explained that staff is not able to carry out REC requests unless the needed resources (such as staffing, funding, legal authority) already exist or staff anticipates getting access to those resources. The REC should plan on a year's preparation to ask the City Manager via staff, then the Mayor and Council, for City resources, permissions, etc. Throwing new requests out to staff for action in the next few months is not realistic because of how long budgeting, staff allocation and workplanning takes at the City government level.

Ms. Gewandter asked Councilmember Pierzchala for advice on how the REC would make a budget or new program request. Councilmember Pierzchala said that the REC first asks staff for a recommendation, an assessment of the pros and cons, and needed resources. If the staff cannot agree to the request or it is turned down at some point in the staff hierarchy, then the REC may communicate directly with the Mayor and Council via email, memo or an in-person meeting to present its viewpoint and ask for Mayor and Council allocation of the needed resources.

Ms. Gewandter emphasized that EMD's staff is far from the top of senior management, so there's many layers above the technical staff that must agree to a new project or program. Because of that, it is more helpful when the REC and staff can agree that a proposed program is appropriate for the City, so both can argue for more funding or staff support.

The REC agreed that discussion would take longer than time allowed during this meeting. Therefore, the members agreed to first electronically edit (via Google Sheets) the table as a shared document where Commissioners would fill in additional suggested topics, then vote their level of interest for each topic. Finally, the REC agreed to hold an extra meeting on Thursday, September 5, for the sole purpose of completing the annual workplan.

### **Chair Report**

Due to the late hour, Chair Becker did not give a Chair Report.

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

Ms. Soukup polled the members to determine the best date for the September monthly REC meeting. Staff has arranged to give a briefing on the City's current and planned energy projects, but the necessary staff are not available for the scheduled Sept. 5 REC meeting date; therefore, the Commission agreed to move this monthly meeting to Tuesday, September 17, 7-9 p.m. Staff will send out information and updated status of City energy projects ahead of the Sept. 17 meeting. The Directors of Recreation and Parks and Public Works will both attend this meeting, along with their staff members in charge of energy-related projects.

Ms. Soukup gave the status of the Draft Comprehensive Plan review by the Planning Commission. The REC's comments were submitted to the Planning Commission in June and staff from the Department of Planning and Development Services have drafted its responses, then forwarded these to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is reviewing comments on the Land Use, Transportation, and Recreation and Parks chapters, among others, are under discussion in July and August. The Environment and Water Resources chapters will be discussed in September. REC members are welcome to attend any of the Planning Commission's work sessions on the Plan.

Ms. Soukup reviewed the current Commissioners' attendance records since November, 2018. All members are in good standing with the City Code provisions to attend 25% of the monthly meetings within the previous 12 months.

Ms. Soukup proposed an ad-hoc attendance rule that REC meetings rescheduled from the standard 'first Thursday' dates would not count towards attendance records, due to short notice to Commissioners. This occasionally happens because of staff availability or conflicts with other events. The REC voted 8-0 to approve this rule. It will apply to the July 25 meeting and to the September 17 meeting, both of which are outside of the standard 'first Thursday' date. This rule may be rescinded by the City Clerk's Office, at such time as the City's formal attendance policy is clarified.

Ms. Soukup announced that the City's Volunteer Appreciation Party will be on Thursday, Sept. 12 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Glenview Mansion. Commissioners will receive an invitation in August.

Ms. Soukup also announced that the Chief of the DPW Environmental Management Division, Mark Charles, is retiring from the City effective August 30. Chair Becker proposed that the REC

award Mr. Charles the City's Environmental Excellence Award in recognition of his service to the City, its residents and the environment. The REC approved this motion 8-0. Councilmember Pierzchala also supported this action and asked that it be scheduled for the Mayor and Council's August meeting. Staff will arrange it for the next available date.

### **Old/New Business**

None.

### **Adjourn**

Chair Becker adjourned the Commission by acclamation at 9:28 p.m.

### **Next Commission Meeting**

The September monthly Commission meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 17 at 7:00 pm.**

Additionally, the REC voted to hold an **extra meeting on Thursday, September 5 at 7pm** to complete its annual workplan. No other business will be conducted at this September 5 meeting. Both meetings will be in the Black-Eyed Susan conference room at City Hall.