

**Rockville Environment Commission**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, Sept 17, 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 Sept. 17 meeting will not be counted towards attendance policy, due to this meeting being rescheduled from standard first Thursday date.**

**Council Liaison: None**

**City Staff:** Lise Soukup (Staff Liaison); Tim Chesnutt, Director of Recreation and Parks; Steve Mader, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities; Noel Gonzalez, Facilities Property Manager; Craig Simoneau, Director of Public Works; Erica Shingara, Sustainability Coordinator

**Guests:** Will Ollison, resident; Jennifer Seiler, resident; Donald Masters, resident.

**Meeting Commencement**

Chair Becker convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

**Approval of Agenda**

The Environment Commission voted 9-0 to approve the agenda, with the provision that the PROS Plan briefing be moved ahead of the City’s Energy Program briefing.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Commission voted 7-0 to approve the July 25 meeting minutes with two abstentions.

**Community Forum**

No comments.

### **Staff Briefing on Draft PROS (Parks, Recreation & Open Space) Plan**

The Director of Recreation and Parks, Tim Chesnutt, described the progress of the City's update to the PROS (Parks, Recreation and Open Space) Plan, which is expected to conclude with a report to the Mayor and Council in December 2019-January 2020. This plan was last updated in 2010. The City's consultant has finished a statistical assessment of users and demands for services, and is now benchmarking nearby local and national municipalities of similar size for comparison and ideas. 37% of the City's population actively use City parks, recreation opportunities or its open space, so the City wants to identify gaps in services for today and tomorrow.

The PROS Plan will help address population density variations across the City, where some areas are currently underserved for the number of users. Implementation of the Plan's recommendations will commence in Fiscal Year 2021 for programming or simple operational changes; CIP-level projects will be implemented starting in Fiscal Year 2022.

Mr. Chesnutt fielded questions from the REC. Commissioner Reed asked about the environmental focus. Mr. Chesnutt explained that this plan focuses on the human demands for park facilities, services and programs, and the Community Services Division support to residents, not the environmental needs of the City land, which are managed through other plans and programs. The City already has Forest and Street Tree planning reports, regulations and guidelines for park management, provision of new parks through development, forest and tree preservation, stream buffers and other environmental guidelines.

Commissioner Koester asked about how the PROS Plan fits with the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) recommendations. The PROS Plan is intended to be the next step after the CMP, as a stepping-stone to filling the parks and recreational needs of City users. Commissioner Saavoss inquired about the user surveys. These were mail and phone surveys, and had a very good response rate across a wide cross-section of the City's population. Commissioner Stauderman was interested in amending the scope of the PROS Plan to add more of an environmental focus, but Mr. Chesnutt explained that the study was almost completed, and any scope change would require additional funding.

### **Staff Briefing on City's Municipal Energy Management Program**

Erica Shingara, the City's Sustainability Coordinator, gave an overview of Rockville's energy usage for both the community as a whole and the subset of the City's municipal consumption. Using the City's new energy tracking software, she highlighted that 99% of energy consumption within City limits is by non-City government users, and 1% is associated with the municipal usage. The City's largest municipal energy uses are, in decreasing order, street lights and traffic signals; the City's wastewater treatment plant (located by the Potomac River, not within City limits); the Swim Center; City Hall; and the Police Department Facility. The City's energy costs can fluctuate, but have been dropping over the past few years, in part due to changes in energy billing by PEPCO and the City's ability to mingle electric or gas charges from different City sources for discounts.

Noel Gonzalez, the Facilities Property Manager, then reviewed the number of City-operated buildings, park shelters, and specialty facilities such as the Swim Center. These structures have

250 pieces of equipment to maintain, including pumps, heating and air conditioning units, lighting systems, etc., as well as roofs, parking lots and other infrastructure. Even with planned replacement schedules, managing the needs of aging, multi-use buildings that often are open for extended hours is a continual budgetary challenge. The Department of Recreation and Parks, which handles facilities services and improvements, strives to include energy efficiency as one of the criteria for replacing equipment.

Craig Simoneau, Director of Public Works, pointed out that the City's largest energy consumption is from street lights. The City covers PEPCO electric bills for these lights. Replacing the existing High Pressure Sodium (HPS) streetlights with light-emitting diode (LED) streetlights would be DPW's most valuable energy conservation measure. The HPS lights require more electricity, are billed at higher rates than LED lights, and require more maintenance.

Commissioner Reed asked about the City's Procurement specifications for Energy Star machinery and energy standards. Mr. Chesnutt and Ms. Shingara explained that this is not now part of the City's Procurement policies since it has not been financially supported through budget appropriations. Mr. Simoneau added that return-on-investment isn't part of the City's budgetary process, but that the City does consider cost-effective means to meet the needs at each facility. Mr. Chesnutt pointed out that the REC could help support developing a 'green procurement standard' with the Mayor and Council.

Several Commissioners suggested other ideas to reduce municipal energy consumption, such as value engineering to specify equipment for the new Taft Court office renovations, seeking LEED certification for new or retrofitted City facilities, or pursuing electric vehicles for the City. Staff described their energy improvements over the past three years. These include using an evaluation tool similar to LEED for choosing mid-range energy-efficient equipment for renovated facilities and a value engineering approach to Swim Center modifications. Mr. Chesnutt explained that the City improves its facilities by making a few needed changes per building rather than taking the entire building to, for example, a LEED Silver level. This allows the Department to respond in a more timely manner to many competing needs, such as leaky roofs, plumbing problems and parking lot paving, also need repairs or improvements.

Further energy savings have resulted from the recent switch for the City's Fleet Services from vehicle purchasing to leasing. This leasing program provides vehicles on a 5-year replacement cycle instead of the lengthy 15-year replacement cycle under the purchasing system. This alone is bringing down fuel consumption, and as electric vehicles become more available through leasing, this will assist the energy reduction goal. Mr. Simoneau said that the market for alternative-fuel vehicles is evolving so fast that the City benefits from simply leasing rather than committing to purchased vehicles. Steve Mader, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities, also said that the LED light replacement project is underway for City parking lots and sports fields, and that the City's new energy tracking software is highlighting other opportunities for staff to explore.

Staff concluded with their top two recommended energy savings projects:

1. LED Street Light Replacement project (under Department of Public Works CIP budget)
2. City Energy Improvement Program – conduct a phased series of energy audits for high-usage facilities, and implement the most cost-effective improvements through a CIP project.

Staff asked for the REC's support of these two efforts in the upcoming FY2021 budget deliberations.

Chair Becker encouraged the staff to highlight the City's energy reduction efforts through public announcements that might encourage local businesses to follow suit. Commissioner Reed asked how and when the REC might send its support to the Mayor and Council in time for FY2021 budget inclusion. Chair Becker intends for the REC to submit this support in October in time for the staff's first draft of the budget to the City Manager. Staff suggested that the REC write or email by early November to both the City Manager and the Mayor and Council about these projects, and also attend the Spring budget hearings.

Ms. Soukup then brought up the REC's previous request (a proposal from the Energy Committee presented at the July meeting) for staff to engage in an EPA-designed Energy Treasure Hunt at City Hall. The goal is to find operational opportunities to save energy, many of which could be low-cost or no-cost efficiency improvements, as opposed to high-cost capital upgrades.

A 6-member team would spend roughly 15 hours per person evaluating all parts of the building over two days, during both regular business hours and a night or weekend shift. The teams would interact with City staff throughout the building to encourage them to make their existing equipment and office conditions more energy efficient. City senior staff might be asked to consider making energy savings a part of employee or department performance evaluations.

The Treasure Hunt Team members would include staff knowledgeable of maintenance and building systems, as well as people external to the City organization who don't know the building and non-engineers to provide fresh perspectives and questions. Likely team members are the City Facilities Manager, the Sustainability Coordinator, and another City staff member, plus at least two external participants (such as an Energy Committee volunteer, PEPCO rep), and the REC Lead, Commissioner Reed. Involved City staff would also invest substantial time outside of the 2-day Treasure Hunt in arranging logistics, compiling building energy records, preparing materials, training team members and analyzing the results. Follow-up implementation of any recommendations were not included in this exercise.

Commissioner Reed and Ms. Soukup gathered more details about this proposal before the Sept. 17 meeting, including a list of questions and answers about roles, responsibilities, number of staff and non-staff participants, and an estimate of the number of staff-hours required per task. The Directors of Recreation and Parks and Public Works both expressed concern with the total estimate of 66 hours per involved staff member to complete this effort. This equates to almost nine days per staff member of time, which is not feasible given the many other duties of the Facilities Property Manager and Sustainability Coordinator, two key members.

City staff suggested to the REC that the proposed City Energy Improvement Program proposed for FY2021 budget consideration would result in a more complete building assessment than the Treasure Hunt model. It would also be more feasible from a staff time perspective. Staff also pointed out that the Mayor and Council would need to direct staff to engage in this lengthy exercise as part of the FY2021 workplan.

Staff asked if a stripped-down version could be done that reduced staff involvement to 10 hours or less per person, perhaps by evaluating operational energy-savings ideas gleaned from previous office building Treasure Hunts for similar aged and sized buildings as City Hall. Some Commissioners championed the Treasure Hunt approach because it presumably would empower

City employees to make changes at their workplace. Several Commissioners suggested that the Treasure Hunt be an alternative proposal to the Mayor and Council if the staff's proposed City Energy Improvement Program isn't funded in the FY21 budget. The REC debated this approach, but tabled the discussion for another REC meeting due to time.

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

#### Watersheds Committee (WC):

No report due to Watersheds Committee not meeting in August or September. Chair Becker, who is now serving as the WC's liaison from the REC, mentioned that he is investigating an environmental non-profit mechanism that may be helpful for the REC committee outreach efforts. The WC is hosting a Brewsheds event at True Respite Brewery on Sept. 18, which will have information tables from several County environmental groups.

#### Climate Action Committee (CLAC):

No report due to CLAC not meeting in August or September.

#### Energy Committee (EC):

The Energy Committee worked on providing details about the proposed Energy Treasure Hunt.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Becker expected to circulate a draft of the FY19 annual report and FY20 proposed workplan to the REC by Sept. 27 for electronic review and comments. The REC is asked to attend this report's Oct. 28 presentation at the Mayor and Council meeting.

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

Ms. Soukup noted upcoming items on the REC's fall agendas and relevant dates. The REC was asked to be prepared to discuss expected needs for the annual budget at the Oct. 3 REC meeting.

The REC's briefing to the Mayor and Council on its FY19 annual report and FY20 proposed workplan is now scheduled for Oct. 28. The REC will need to review approve its report no later than the October 3 REC meeting in order to keep this date.

The Environmental Management Division invites the REC to volunteer at the Sept. 28 Energy Roadshow at the Lincoln Park Community Center, a multi-agency outreach event to showcase energy efficiency ideas for City and County residents. Please email Erica Shingara, Sustainability Coordinator, if available to help with this event.

### **Old/New Business**

None.

### **Adjourn**

Chair Becker adjourned the Commission by acclamation at 9:20 p.m.

**Next Commission Meeting**

The next monthly Commission meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 3 at 7:00 pm in the Black-Eyed Susan Conference Room at City Hall.**