

# Rockville Environment Commission

## Draft Minutes of Thursday, October 1, 2020

WebEx Meeting

### Meeting Attendance

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

**City Staff:** Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Erica Shingara, Environmental Management Division Chief

**Councilmembers:** Monique Ashton, City Council Liaison

**Guests:** Will Ollison

**Meeting Commencement:** Chair Reed convened the meeting at 7:05p.m. and welcomed attendees.

**Approval of Agenda and prior Meeting Minutes:** The agenda was approved with no changes. The September meeting minutes were approved unanimously with one change which is to add Hande Apaydin's last name to the comment attributed to her.

### **Community Forum:**

Bob Mann from the National Association of Landscape Architects shared his comments on the county Pesticide Law, noting that healthy plants and lawns are important to hold soil together and reduce erosion. Pesticides are needed to control mosquitos and other pests and protect property. Pesticide applicators are licensed by the state which requires careful study, ongoing education and experience. Companies are required to keep records, provide signage, and provide public notice. Landscape companies take great care not to over-apply fertilizers. When the law took effect in 2018, it impacted landscapers' ability to effectively do their business. Immediate implementation would unjustly impact and target licensed and certified landscape applicators, while retailers would continue to sell and homeowners would continue to apply. Golf courses, athletic fields, and other areas are exempt.

Janette Rosenbaum, Vice Chair of the Gaithersburg Environmental Affairs Committee shared that Rockville is the fourth city she has advised on adopting the Pesticide Law. She studied pesticides as part of her master's thesis. Many pesticides are not safe for people, pets, or the environment, even if they are sold, since many have not been explicitly tested. 95% of pesticides that have been tested are carcinogenic. In the US, there's an epidemic of cancer, which is the second highest cause of death. The Environmental Protection Agency sets only the bare minimum standards, so local governments can help fill this gap. Cosmetic pesticides

are not necessary for the health of lawns. Social science research shows that many people think their neighbors are using pesticides and use them too even when they worry about their safety. Sometimes landscapers end up applying more chemicals than needed so that homeowners believe they are getting what they paid for, so some limits would be helpful.

### **Chair Report**

Chair Reed requested 20 minutes on the November agenda to brainstorm Commission ideas and priorities for 2021.

### **I270 Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comment Letter**

Susan Koester provided an overview of the draft comment letter. Since cars create more pollution, the associated health issues and greenhouse gases run counter to the city's environmental values. Since the pandemic has increased telework, congestion is much lower, reducing the need for highway expansion in the first place. In the meantime, more investments should be made in transit.

Commission members discussed the impacts to quality of life and the environment of particulate matter if traffic volume increases after the expansion, especially near schools close to the highway. The pandemic has changed the calculus on the project.

The comment letter was accepted unanimously with changes that reflected the discussion, above.

### **Climate Action Plan Update and Open House Planning**

Staff presented to the Mayor and Council on October 1, and received positive feedback. Councilmembers recognized the extensive efforts of the Environment Commission in developing the plan framework. Leadership asked questions about electric vehicles, trees and forestry, and why Rockville's per capita emissions are higher than nearby communities (the answer is that additional transportation emissions from highways contributes to the city's emissions share). The climate change survey is still open and accepting responses through November 30th. Staff is presenting the Climate Action Plan briefing to the Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Recreation and Park Advisory Board, Traffic and Transportation Advisory Board, and the Human Services Advisory Committee. Staff is planning the virtual Open House scheduled for Tuesday, November 17, 7pm to 9pm. Clark Reed, Susan Koester, Scott Fazekas, Hande Apaydin, Monica Saavoss, and Ted Stauderman volunteered to assist in facilitating breakout groups if needed depending on the number of registrants.

Councilmember Ashton added that the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is developing a climate action plan and comments are due in November. She added that additional transit and smart growth can help curb the city's transportation emissions.

### **Staff Report**

- Pesticide law next steps – Parks and facilities developed a new policy that would align with the law. The Recreation and Parks Advisory Board will explore the issue at their Oct 22 meeting.

- City Hall energy audit – staff is still working through the details to gain internal approval to participate in the Pepco Building Tune-Up program.
- Tree giveaway October 10 (no volunteers needed); Volunteers are needed to lead the stream clean-up on October 10. Ted Stauderman agreed to attend.
- Energy Action Month – County trivia, LED giveaways, and more: <https://mygreenmontgomery.org/2020/trivia/>
- County activities this fall: climate innovation accelerator, climate and racial justice workgroup, governance work group. The county's climate projections and emissions goals in their climate action plan will all include Rockville. The plan will be out in November.
- Staff is hoping to distribute the Earth Day T-shirts to REC this month. Some can be distributed at the stream clean-up or the tree giveaway to REC members attending.

### **Committee Reports**

- Watersheds: The committee is planning the stream clean-up. They are requesting some clarification on communication processes between REC, staff, and the committee. Staff will respond next week. The committee has questions about levels of bromide in drinking water in the Potomac which is Rockville's water source.
- Climate Action: The committee has a few new members who discussed the climate action plan. Pavitra Srinivasan will be the new chair.
- Energy Committee: This committee has been conducting extensive outreach to various community groups, social media sites, and schools to get more people to complete the Climate Change Survey. Members have posted on Next Door, reached out to science teachers, and civic associations.

**New Business:** Ted Stauderman discussed how to reach out and monitor other city boards and commissions to find out if they are including sustainability criteria in their decision-making process.

**Adjourn:** Chair Reed adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m.