

**Rockville Environment Commission**  
**Draft Minutes of Tuesday October 7, 2025, 7pm – 9pm**  
Black-Eyed Susan Conference Room, City Hall

**Meeting Attendance**

| Commissioner           | Present |  | Commissioner       | Present |
|------------------------|---------|--|--------------------|---------|
| Jen Hawse              | X       |  | Sasha Mushegian    |         |
| Deborah Landau         | X       |  | Clark Reed         | X       |
| Cindy McCabe           | X       |  | Pavitra Srinivasan | X       |
| William McClain, Chair | X       |  | Summer White       | X       |

**City Staff:** Amanda Campbell, Staff Liaison; Erica Shingara, Chief, Environmental Management Division, Rena Aggarwal, Chesapeake Bay Corps Member; Chris Dempwolf, Community Planning and Development Services

**Elected Officials:** Mayor Ashton, Councilmember Van Grack

**Guests:** Two guests joined the meeting in person.

**Meeting Commencement, Welcome Attendees:** Chair McClain convened the meeting at 7:01 pm and welcomed attendees.

**Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:** The agenda was approved. Prior meeting minutes were approved with one edit in the CLAC update.

**Green Building Code Updates (IgCC 2021 and NGBS 2020)**

Chris Dempwolf, with Community Planning and Development Services, shared an overview of the requirements included in the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and the National Green Building Standard (NGBS) and local amendments under preparation for Mayor and Council consideration. Currently adopted codes in the City are the 2015 International Green Construction Code (IgCC – for commercial properties), and the 2015 National Green Building Standard (NGBS – for single unit to up to four story residential). Staff is now proposing the 2021 IgCC and the 2020 NGBS with amendments.

As background, Mayor and Council approved significant amendments to the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) in May 2024. Amendments to IECC included EV-Charging Infrastructure, Solar-Ready and Electrification-Ready. Local amendments to IECC are more far-reaching than the requirements in the IgCC in many cases. The IECC applies to a broader set of projects, but the green codes have a broader set of criteria including sustainably-sourced materials, green roofs, waste management, and water conservation (note that water efficiency sections apply to structures with City water accounts, but not WSSC water accounts). One exception is that the new 2021 IgCC requires solar for new construction or substantial renovations, with exceptions for shade and other roof uses.

Proposed local City amendments to the green codes include:

- Third-party green verification will be required for all new residential structures – NGBS Certified
- Most residential structures regardless of size will need to meet the NGBS

- Flexibility in mandates for on-site solar installations, to incentivize both on-site and off-site renewable energy options (e.g. Community Solar Projects)
- Addition of EV-Charging Infrastructure requirements above those in the Energy Conservation Code

These building code updates in combination with the IECC adoption support several actions in the Climate Action Plan, notably C-03: “Progressively strengthen green/energy conservation building codes for new construction to reach net zero or equivalent.” Any marginal increase in construction costs are not expected to be a barrier and these actions will increase comfort and lower ongoing utility costs for residents of new construction and substantial renovations.

Next steps include finalizing the draft language of proposed amendments and launching a public comment portal this fall. With feedback from this commission and the public staff will complete any edits to draft language. The IgCC and NGBC codes and local amendments will be present for introduction and possible adoption tentatively at Dec. 15th Mayor & Council Meeting. Upon adoption, staff will begin implementation, including outreach to customers to notify them of changes.

The proposed codes do not apply to accessory dwelling units. As these have just been approved for construction in the City, ensuring they are easier to build help incentivize increased housing. Higher standards might be applied to ADUs in future code changes. When asked about the comparison of the green building codes to LEED certification, Mr. Dempwolf responded that they are similar and that LEED or several other green building certification standards can (Energy Star, Earth Craft, Passive House) be used in lieu of meeting the code. NGBS requires the blower door test and ongoing energy production and usage monitoring for certification. Staff confirmed with the County that there are sufficient certification staff among various companies to meet the demand. Eventually, Mr. Dempwolf shared that the City may consider serving as certifiers if additional staff are hired and trained to meet that need, which could reduce costs for applicants.

The City has two residential development projects in the pipeline with about 48 units each that must meet the IECC requirements, so the strengthened amendments do not seem to have dampened development.

Mr. Reed shared that his net zero certified home reduces energy costs up to \$2,000 per year and has improved comfort substantially, improving quality of life. These are great reasons to reduce drafts and increase insulation.

### **Bird City Network Certification Proposal**

Chesapeake Corps Member Rena Aggarwal shared the requirements of the Bird City Certification for Commission discussion.

Bird City Maryland is a community recognition program coordinated by the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership and the Maryland Ornithological Society. It recognizes communities that take action to protect birds, enhance habitats, and engage residents. The program is part of the national Bird City Network sponsored by the American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas. The Migratory Bird Days in 2026 are May 19<sup>th</sup> and October 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Certification Requirements**

- Complete 10 actions across 4 categories including two mandatory ones:
  - (1) World Migratory Bird Day event
  - (1) Bird City Maryland Resolution with initial application and every 4 years thereafter
  - (3+) At least 3 actions from Category 1 (Habitat)

- (3+) At least 1 other action in each: Category 2 (Threats to Birds), Category 3 (Education and Engagement), Category 4 (Sustainability)
- Application fee: \$200 (re-application every two years for the same price).

#### Benefits of Certification

- Official recognition (signs, banner, plaque, website listing).
- Alignment with Rockville's Climate Action Plan and sustainability goals.
- Positive branding and materials to use in community education and outreach to residents, businesses, and visitors.

Current Maryland Bird City Communities include Frederick County, Salisbury, La Plata, Middletown, Havre de Grace, and Westminster.

Staff clarified that to make the program practical, the Commission may need to consider funding the application fee and assisting staff in completing the application. Members discussed the programs that the City already participates in such as Sustainable Maryland, Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City, National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat Certification, and many programs that support bird habitat such as RainScapes, reforestation grant programs, promoting conservation landscaping, Weed Warriors program, and more. The City also uses dark-sky compliant outdoor lighting in streetlight upgrades. The Committee liaisons agreed to examine the program more closely to determine a course of action. Staff will also look for ways to incorporate bird-friendly concepts in City initiatives.

#### Chair Report

- The Environment Commission annual report was submitted on time
- Remember to sign up for the October Farmer's Market outreach dates
- The REC Budget request for a new Watershed Poster was approved
- Members agreed to discuss potential Awards program changes at upcoming meeting
- Sasha Mushegian is stepping down from the Commission due to her relocation plans. Everyone thanked her for her service.

#### Mayor and Council Report

Councilmember Van Grack shared that leadership is considering the plastic bag ban and reminded those attending that they are welcome to express environmental issue opinions to leadership or testify. Guests asked about whether recycling plastic bags is a sufficiently environmental option. Unfortunately, half of plastic bags placed in receptacles at grocery stores may not be recycled due to contamination, market dynamics, or logistics. Furthermore, many people place plastic bags in recycling containers when typical municipal recycling does not accept them.

#### Committee Reports

- **Energy Committee:** The Energy Committee confirmed that October 11 will work for Farmer's Market outreach. The curbside charging agreement is being reviewed by the safety and risk staff.
- **Watersheds Committee:** The next stream clean-up will be on October 19. Some members participated in RedGate Day with bird walks, invasive species removal, and nature walks. The group discussed snow removal and salt application. One idea discussed was having volunteers help remove snow for neighbors so that less salt could be applied. Staff shared that the City does have a volunteer program. Apply here: [Snow Removal | City of Rockville](#)

- **Climate Action Committee:** CLAC reviewed the memo summarizing research on the environmental impacts of fireworks that Recreation and Parks staff shared. Next year the group plans to survey residents at July 4<sup>th</sup> events for their opinions on fireworks or other options. CLAC will meet on the thirteenth at 8pm and all are invited to join.

### Recent Initiatives and Staff Update

Staff shared that the plastic bag ban may be considered at the Mayor and Council soon. Ms. Aggarwal, the Chesapeake Corps member, is researching water bottle filling station options that could be deployed at special events. A water fountain and bottle filling station inventory shows that most community centers and staff offices either have pantries with water dispensers or water bottle filling stations and additional ones are planned. Staff reviewed the schedule for the City budget development process. More information and the Budget Priorities Survey is available here: [Budget | City of Rockville](#)

### Program Updates

- The Environmental Management Division gave away 400 native trees to Rockville residents on September 27, 2025. The event was extremely popular.
- DPW staff submitted 4 additional sites to the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection for Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Grant public EV Charging Station consideration (in addition to the 6 awarded).
- Lighting retrofits will commence at the Rothgeb Maintenance Facility, Thomas Farm, and Croydon Creek in the coming weeks once materials arrive.
- DPW promoted the Flood Resiliency Master Plan including the website ([www.engagerockville.com/floodplan](http://www.engagerockville.com/floodplan)) which has an interactive map for residents to note flood prone areas and a survey. Two open houses are planned.
- CPDS launched SolarAPP+ which automates plan review and permitting for residential solar.
- The Climate Solutions Speakers Series featured “Rain Ready: Sustainable Solutions for Rockville Residents” in person program on October 5th.
- Rockville’s Climate Action Plan Dashboard was featured in the MWCOG 2030 Climate Action Plan draft Mid-course review presentation.
- The Rockville JEDI Strategic Plan RFP received 23 responses. Application review is underway. EMD is serving on the Evaluation Committee.
- Progress continued in developing guidance curbside charging. Staff met with Montgomery County and is internally reviewing a draft city-resident agreement.
- The city was awarded \$240,000 through the MDOT Carbon Reduction Program to study and design a shared use path on Research Boulevard from W. Montgomery Ave. to Shady Grove Rd.
- Energy tax credits wind-down:
  - Consumer electric vehicle tax credits expired September 30, 2025.
  - Residential solar panel purchase tax credits expire December 31, 2025; solar lease use of credits expires June 30, 2026. Commercial solar tax credits last longer (2026-2027).
  - Residential energy efficiency and electrification tax credits expire December 31, 2025.

### Events

- Oct. 5, 1 - 2:30 PM: Taft Center/Hybrid Rain Ready talk
- Oct. 23 (in-person) and Nov. 5 (virtual), 6 - 7:30pm: Flood Resiliency Master Plan Open Houses. The project website includes an interactive map for residents to share flooding experiences and a flooding survey.
- Stream Clean-ups: October 12, 10am – 12pm Maryvale

**New Business:** No new business.

**Adjourn:** Chair McClain adjourned the meeting at 9:01pm.