

Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC)

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

HEC members: Thaddeus Waterman (chair), Janet Nackoney (Notes), Dawn Taft (staff), Priyanka Joshi (staff), Lesley Riddle (staff), Danny Schaible (Council), James Wigley, Joseph Demarco, Rayya Newman, Melissa Schweisguth, Ian Fay.

Guests: Kathryn Kutzner, Scott Wilson

Notes

1. Welcome, Committee Roll Call, & Guest Orientation.
2. Approval of [January meeting minutes](#): **APPROVED**
3. Public Comment Period
 - a. No comment
4. Driskell Park Master Plan Discussion
 - a. LR: Development of the Master Plan still in early stages; stopped planning during COVID. Working with Bradley Site Design on developing a draft pre-concept design. Desire to have multiple committees weigh in on the draft plan in coming months. What was planned in 2018 is no longer salient in 2024 primarily because of Suffrage Point development. Are we managing the additional stormwater well? Are we doing enough to protect existing tree canopy (protection of old growth trees, paw paw grove, etc)? The Master Plan is expected to be executed in multiple phases. Hoping that this draft will speak more prominently to protecting the natural environment of Driskell Park.
 - b. DPW is tentatively planning to present the new draft pre-concept design in the April 18 City Council meeting. Will be discussing and soliciting feedback from committees afterward– HEC will plan to slot in Lesley for discussion at the **May 14th HEC meeting**. LR happy to take questions at any point.
5. How to best leverage Metropolitan Washington Council of Government resources (Lesley)
 - a. Hyattsville is an official member of Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). LR is Alternate from Hyattsville on the COG. COG is a terrific resource particularly related to support for climate change initiatives. LR encourages HEC to follow COG and use their resources for brainstorming environment and climate-related initiatives and

recommendations to the City. Anticipating there will be ample City support for a Climate Action Plan.

- b. How can we interface with COG? HEC can interface with COG as a body and our members can also interface as individuals with COG. HEC cannot take on an initiative (as a body) with COG as a direct partner since we act as an advisory body to the City. HEC can check in with Lesley and Dawn to vet ideas for initiatives that we could then present to City Council.
 - c. DS: Development of a Climate Action Plan was specifically added to the City budget this FY as a result of prior discussions and his recommendation to the City. Potential to get COG support to access funding to advance the development of the Climate Action Plan using [EPA Climate Pollution Reduction grants](#).
6. Process for approving letters HEC delegates a member to write and submit between meetings (e.g., letter to Council) (Melissa)
- a. In a prior meeting, HEC had voted to approve an action to write a letter of recommendation to the City Council. There was then some follow-up over email and disagreement about the language and content of the letter. The effort was eventually shelved because of certain disagreement among committee members. There was some significant time put into discussion and drafting the resulting letter, so it felt hard for those who had put effort into the initiative to not advance it as discussed. How do we prevent this from happening again?
 - b. JD: A concept for a letter can be different from the actual content. Would be ideal after a letter is drafted to have HEC come back together to discuss the content and vote to approve it.
 - c. RN: The process was really rushed and there might have also been some confusion during the ensuing discussion. HEC had not been aware of this request in advance; it would have been helpful to have more time to prepare.
 - d. DW: Rich Canino (former HEC Chair) had set up a timeline process for these types of situations. DW will reach out to Rich to ask if he has a documented record of this process.
 - e. TW: Agree. Would be good to set a policy that we need to have a chance to look at and react to a draft letter two weeks before the next HEC meeting. HEC would then discuss, refine and approve the content during our meeting. When a similar request is made from the public in the future, the HEC Chair will ask for more information in advance and ensure that the request fits within our procedural timeline in order to give HEC members enough opportunity to respond.
7. Alternatives to Environmental Depot Discussion (Lesley)

- a. LR: City is working on an Environmental Depot concept for Hyattsville. Won a grant last year (federal funding and ARPA) to get this initiative started and is hoping to get additional funding from [EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant Program \(SWIFR\)](#). Also seeking to develop a public-private partnership down the road. The Depot will help with recycling of mattresses, batteries (all types), recycling and reuse of old paint, bulk item collection for repurposing, etc. Would include educational initiatives as well.
 - b. Greenbelt has an Environmental Depot and is recycling styrofoam as well.
 - c. Anticipating potentially four upcoming City recycling events this year.
8. New Business
9. Announcements
- a. [Anacostia Watershed Society Earth Day Cleanups](#): registration is live! Multiple sites in Hyattsville. Saturday, April 20.
 - b. Saturday, 3/16: Brentwood Green Team is collaborating with Ben Simasek for a [trash cleanup at 38th Ave Park](#)
 - c. [Sustainable Maryland](#) (based at the University of Maryland) often has educational events and happy hours for Maryland Green Teams. DW will share this info with HEC.
 - d. [Sustainable Maryland Healthy Homes Fair](#) is April 6th.
 - e. [Creative Thinking Workshop for Homeowners event](#), May 4th 10-1pm. Event theme: "How to green your old home". Three workshops: 1) Electrification (10-11am), 2) Stormwater, 3) Historic preservation
 - f. TW made us aware of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing](#)— a good resource for news and events about upcoming Maryland bills and legislation.
 - g. DW: Planning a June 15 RainCheck Rebate and Audubon Yard Assessment Tour. Residents will showcase their Audubon-certified yards and RainCheck Rebate programs.
 - h. A reminder that you can email Habitat advisors from the Prince George's County Audubon Society at audubonwildlifehabitat@gmail.com to request a FREE site visit and receive suggestions that will put you on the path towards being Audubon Bird-Friendly Certified Habitat
 - i. Arbor Day 2024: May 4th celebration, 9-12. The City will be planting 80+ trees at the University Hills Duck Pond with Casey Trees. There will be a community event to celebrate. The City plans to plant close to 500 trees throughout the City this year.
 - j. Invasive vine removal this Saturday at Melrose Park.
 - k. Please visit the [City's Environmental Education page](#) for more events!
10. Adjournment.

