

Hyattsville Environment Committee

August 11, 2020

Attendance:

Theresa Goedeke, Chair
Rich Canino, Vice Chair
Jim Groves, Secretary
Eli Webster
Megan Haidet
Brie Welzer
John Fisher
Janet Nackoney
Armando Gaetaniello
Danny Schaible, City Council
Dawn Taft, City of Hyattsville DPW
Lesley Riddle, City of Hyattsville DPW
Deborah McDow, Guest
Greg Smith, Guest
Malcolm Clarke, Guest
Stacie Whitesides, Guest

1. Welcome and Introductions and Roll Call
2. Minutes - Motion to Approve July 14, 2020 Minutes –Canino/Haidt - Approved
3. Development and compliance with county/city environmental requirements (e.g., stormwater, erosion control, etc.) (JG/TG) Need to enforce at the County level. There are many strategies available for building in an environmentally sensitive way. Chair Goedeke spoke to this topic related to increased development in Hyattsville and the need to enforce existing county/city laws and policies that are intended to ensure environmentally responsible development activities. There could be two related but separate issues: 1) compliance/enforcement of existing laws and policies and 2) the need for new laws and policy.

Jim spoke to why he supports pursuing the City to write a letter to the County on this subject and that we need to get all local municipalities to do the same. It is an obvious problem that is not being dealt with using the current stormwater management rules.

Lesley Riddle, Director of DPW said she felt the HEC discussion was going in the right direction. The building phase is where most of this happens. Regulations are based on two-inch rainstorms, but this is no longer adequate or reflective of current/future weather patterns. Concern is that the county construction regulations for stormwater management are not enforced properly or at all. Regulations are not about discouraging development, but working with the County and Developer

to address the issue. Regulations have to be appropriate to the amount of rainfall. Needs to mirror what is happening, environmentally. There was discussion regarding tree mitigation during construction. Have to look at roots, not just canopy.

Greg Smith, guest, spoke to the subject. Part of the framing is that County is directed by the state which is directed by the EPA based on the Clean Water Act. Ways to strengthen the laws are important. System is designed to fail - developers can meet all the standards and it is not enough. There is also too much building in flood plains. Protect public health and the public property. Can be added to the climate action plan that the County is putting together.

John - in the spirit of our gap analysis, asked if there is a county that gets it right that could serve as a model? Land use planning in the time of climate change. Lesley spoke about Anne Arundel County as a good model.

Deborah McDow told the committee about how Pepco and the City cut down her tree. Lesley Riddle responded.

Jim asked that a committee be formed to start drafting and framing a letter.

Theresa

Janet

Jim

Lesley will help

Armando

Look up AWS recommendations as well. Lesley Riddle and Greg Smith will be sharing information that they have around the subject.

4. Report out on leaf blower/lawn mower ban and fact sheet (JM/BW) Council Member Schaible spoke about the blower/lawn mower ban. Washington DC has a ban on gas powered leaf blowers that goes into effect in 2022. They are the “big fish” in the area that affect a lot of the same companies that do work in Prince George's County. They have to use the same equipment but it won't be gas powered. Chevy Chase and Somerset also have ordinances. Hard to find the people from DC since it was passed in 2018 - they have an email but haven't heard back from them yet. A person from Chevy Chase sent some information which the committee will review. Danny thought that we need to make a good argument, not necessarily research since so much has already been done near us. We need to start the conversation with the public so that they understand the rationale for considering phasing out the use of gas powered leaf blowers. Danny said that as we have discussed, we are looking at both individual homeowners and commercial landscapers. Thought that maybe there could be some kind of “cash for clunker” type program. We do have to be wary of the economic impact, particularly on moderate and low income households. Also have to be careful of pushback on getting rid of gas powered blowers/mowers. Danny said that we are still at initial stages and the goal at this time is

broad. Seems to be more about sound as the blowers are extremely loud. We need to have good answers to questions that may arise from the public. Brie agreed and said we are still in the brainstorming phase and that there are many options to address. Having a phased in approach over a long period of time could make this a very positive educational campaign. Janet Nackoney raised concerns about equity and risks of forcing people (and small local businesses) of different economic backgrounds to change who might not be able to afford it. Dawn Taft asked a question about the impact of batteries vs. 2 cycle issues and what are the negatives and benefits. Megan said that if we were to move forward that we should acknowledge this cost and talk about possible rebates so that it shows we understand the issue. Next Steps - will continue meeting as a work group and as we develop a proposal and then when we have something more actionable and present it to the Council.

5. Discussion of and next steps on Race & Equity draft report (EW) Eli has attended meetings of the Race & Equity task force as a HEC representative and explained what HEC does. Spoke about the racist language in the Magruder Park deed, R&ETF agreed it was a good area to overlap our efforts but decided it would have to hold off until the lawyers were done working on the issue. HEC has been invited to help review the Race & Equity Strategic Plan. Public Spaces/green spaces are good for public health and they agreed and will look into it. Can't be environmental justice without racial justice. Vice Chair Canino applauded the R&E Strategic Plan and made comments about the commuting section of the Plan. There was also discussion of the MD Bus pass and making it more readily available. Discussion ensued regarding HEC in general, the lack of racial diversity in HEC's members, and recognizing race/privilege. Perhaps the City needs to do better outreach so that people even know about what the committees can do and what committees there are available to City residents.
6. Reports on coordination opportunities with other city advisory committees (All)
 - a. Tree Committee - Jim and Dawn spoke about the Tree Compliance Code and went through it section by section. There was discussion about reducing the width required for permitted removal per the Shade Tree Ordinance (DBH - Diameter at Breast Height). 50 inches in circumference is about 15.9 inches in diameter. They want to bring that down to 6. Also, Hyattsville needs better enforcement of tree replanting.
7. Announcements or Notices - Dawn noticed there were official comments in the chat in the zoom call. Options - 1) can add a chat transcript to the notes. 2) use a chat function for non-business communication. 3) Dawn just monitors.
8. Adjournment