

Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC)

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 08, 2022

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Participants: Rich Canino (chair), Janet Nackoney, James Ball, Thaddeus Waterman, Dawn Taft (staff), Jared Messinger, David Hiles, Ben Simasek (Council)

Guests: Michael Charles, Scott Wilson

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome, Committee Roll Call, & Guest Orientation.
2. Approval of [HEC Minutes 2-16-22](#): **APPROVED**
3. Resolution in support of one/several [state environmental bills](#) (Rich)
 - What is the criteria for how to evaluate which ones we should support? Are there certain bills that particularly need a municipal “voice” to help push them? We might want to do some research on this.
 - TW: Maryland legislative session is only 90 days, so we should likely be thinking about which ones we want to help push now. Sometimes bills are picked apart and assembled– if we see parts of bills that we like, we might bring these to the attention (provisions and bills). A bill that seems interesting is the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act. This includes a carbon pricing bill – money goes back to communities as revenue (to improve resilience for example).
 - JM: carbon pricing bill seems interesting, but most effective if it feeds into something larger– would be interested to know more.
 - [Environmental Human Rights Amendment](#) that [we discussed in April 2021](#)
 - BS: This has gone through some revisions because of liability concerns. Was blocked at first by the Maryland Municipal League (MML) because of these concerns ([testimony](#)).
 - DH: One idea would be to look at the 2021 bills and get something for the council to endorse before the 2023 session
 - BS: Supportive of being more proactive. Looking at the bills that are up, there might be an opportunity to help steer legislation before it’s passed.
 - JB: As a committee, each of us has special interests– but can we organize ourselves to be more responsive to help advocate for what our residents might want? We could then feed those messages and sentiments up to the Council. Might be more productive than showing up with our own personal interests.

- General agreement that our interests to represent the Hyattsville community
 - DH: CCAN may have a standing agenda that would work as a framework for us.
 - JM: We could also focus on acting as a “check”-- we all want to reduce emissions– are the bills proposed rigorous enough? Will they do the job?
 - TW: Agree
 - RC: We can table this discussion and plan to flesh out these ideas in a few months.
- 4. Ivy removal activities with [Hyattsville Aging in Place](#) (Janet)
 - A few years back, HEC partnered with Hyattsville Aging in Place (HAP) to help HAP residents to remove ivy from their yards and trees. Impetus was a desire for HEC to help curb the steep decline of Hyattsville’s aging tree canopy on private property due to invasive ivy. HEC volunteers are not able to enter a resident’s property and remove ivy (even if granted permission by the owner) because of liability concerns. However, since HAP provides liability coverage, this was one way to help. Janet and a few other HEC volunteers got trained with HAP. Demand from HAP for this service has been unclear; Janet recently reached out again to renew interest. HAP will promote the ivy removal service internally and contact Janet. Janet will help advertise the partnership externally.
 - DT: We could create a flyer to promote this program. Also, we have [ivy removal brochures](#) (more brochures [linked here!](#)). Hyattsville Life & Times is also interested in writing env articles.
 - DH: HAP is a workaround for the liability concern. We really need liability coverage for city volunteers. Liability release is a question for the city attorney. Could Hyattsville get the right coverage for volunteers if this is requested by council? MML might have a source for solutions to the liability issue.
 - SW: The Local Government Insurance Trust is/was city and county owned and operated and will generally provide insurance if asked for it. I can call the executive director of LGIT and see if committee members are still covered if you'd like
 - BS: Will follow up with the city to figuring out how we might get more answers to this question about liability for volunteers.
- 5. [Single use plastic bill](#) in County Legislature (Ben)
 - BS: PG Council is considering sponsoring this bill. It needs municipality support. Is it something we could encourage City council to support? The bill was introduced recently, around March 1. Intent is to reduce plasticware, condiment packets etc handed out by restaurants.

- Would be enforced by MD DOE. However, enforcement not a priority for discussion– this bill would be about changing business practices for longer-term.
 - Timeline potentially pretty short. Ben can sponsor a City motion if we are interested
 - JN: Fully in support
 - JB: Would be great to support this. Even if we can get Hyattsville to change practices locally (regardless of County outcome), this could be very impactful and send a strong signal from the local level.
 - DH: Supportive
 - **Vote:** Motion to support this resolution. **APPROVED.** Ben will draft a motion for the City Council agenda soon.
6. Discuss two City legislative proposals to reduce plastic/waste:
- [Plastic bag reduction](#)
 - BS: Sierra Club advocating for a hybrid approach: banning single use plastic bags but also requiring a fee for paper or disposable bags. Does HEC want to support this? Could take to code enforcement and Jim Chandler to understand next steps for passing a City ordinance on this.
 - RC: How broadly would this be applied?
 - BS: Preliminarily just for grocery stores, but as written would now apply for all retail.
 - RC: Where would any collected fees go? BS: Back to city. However, enforcement probably not a huge focus– like above, this would be about changing business practices and norms.
 - JN: Supportive of this idea; lots of places are starting to do this, and everyone has tote bags at this point. We are ready for this step.
 - DH: if the disposable utensil county bill was passed, it would strengthen the argument for the hyattsville bag bill.
 - Next steps: Ben will get some answers to questions and bring back to HEC next meeting for consideration.
 - [Single use plastic on demand](#) - possibly unnecessary if county bill passes
7. Announcements
- [Rt 1 Green Team Summit](#) next Wed, 3/16
 - [AWS Earth Day clean up event](#) on April 23. Two or three clean-ups in Hyattsville:
 - Ben leading one in University Hills
 - Janet co-leading one in Melrose Park
 - One other?
 - DT Updates

- Univ of MD students working on a video to help municipalities “go green”
- Community tree planting on April 2
- Arbor Day April 30
- Casey Trees is going to help plant ~30 trees in back of Driskell Park along back border near pool.
- May 21: New DPW building unveiling @ 11am-3pm food trucks, tours of the building, guest mosquito speaker from Dept of Environment, perennials. HEC volunteers Rich and Janet happy to help.

8. Adjournment.