

Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC)

Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2026

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Open to the Public - Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Melissa Schweisguth, Thaddeus Waterman, Janet Nackoney, Malik Ferguson, Rayya Newman, Staff Liaison Dawn Taft, Councilman Edouard Haba **Guests:** Bradley Phelps, Councilor Kelson Nisbett, Ross van Dongen

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome, Committee Roll Call, & Guest Orientation. (This includes any comments or questions from those considering joining HEC)
2. Approval of [December](#) minutes
 - a. Unanimous approval of December meeting minutes
3. Public Comment Period (Comments limited to 3 minutes per person)
 - a. Ross van Dongen introduced himself, interested in joining the Hyattsville Environmental Committee
 - b. Bradley Phelps introduced himself, also interested in joining the Hyattsville Environmental Committee
 - c. Kelson Nisbett introduced himself, currently serving as Ward 5 council member and is interested in sitting in on the HEC meeting
4. Zero Waste recommendations - timeline, milestones, responsible persons, vote on outreach to UMD professor
 - a. Background: Hyattsville City is interested in pursuing cost saving measures as trash disposal fees rise. Working with WasteZero has been proposed (pay as you throw system), but city council members are interested in hearing about alternative options. HEC has been asked to help brainstorm alternatives and provide recommendations to the council.
 - b. An [official letter](#) was drafted by Malik to invite an expert from UMD to talk about waste reduction. HEC revised and unanimously approved sending an invitation for the UMD professor to be a speaker next month
 - c. Brainstormed ideas:
 - i. Alternative ways to reduce trash per household other than pay-as-you-throw

1. smaller bins, reduce return pickups
- ii. Researching other companies/ways to implement a pay-as-you-throw system that doesn't involve WasteZero
- iii. Mandatory composting/recycling using RFID bins - ie if there is non trash in bins send warnings to residents (utilized by Greenbelt)
- iv. Pay-as-you throw system to be the next thing researched for funding to pursue (PAMC program
<https://www.pgplanning.org/focus-areas/housing-neighborhoods/pamc/>)
- v. Encouraging the city to support state legislation that could potentially minimize waste costs (bottle bill, etc)
- vi. Encouraging recycling at retailers (glass specifically)
- vii. Education initiatives

d. Projected Timeline: Invite UMD expert to talk about waste reduction strategies next month, further brainstorming following months

e. Decision was made to keep the discussion on this topic in the whole committee instead of as a subcommittee

f. Questions:

- i. Unclear on where city is with this right now, thought this was on hold until after Climate Action Plan -
 1. Hyattsville is projecting to be able to do a pilot in fy 2027, so looking for proposals by potentially March. Staff unlikely to have extensive time until a program is going, city is hoping HEC can provide research expertise to look into options
- ii. It would help to have some clarity on the timeline and what HEC can be doing about waste recommendations. If it needs to be in the budget it could impact the timeline
 1. At the moment, the council is looking for ideas and items to be looking at. Drilling down on specifics and budgets likely to be at a later date when city staff have capacity.

5. HEC 2025-26 [Goals](#)

- a. Council member Haba encouraged HEC to bring any budget request ideas for FY 2027 to Dawn and him by the end of the month if HEC needs anything specific
- b. Most HEC priorities for this year are either already funded (Climate Action Plan, Tree plantings, etc) or unlikely to be able to be decided by budget deadline (Waste reduction) for FY 2027

- c. Environmental Education - HEC could endorse environmental communication funding, but it would likely be earmarked under DPW
 - i. Clarification provided by council member that we could ask for communications funds for specific events (Greenfest, Homeowner workshop)
 - d. Ideas proposed to request funding for
 - i. Promotion of events/achievements (Greenfest, Homeowner workshop, Sustainable Maryland certification status)
 - ii. Funding to have staff at environmental events
 - iii. Giving out reusable bags
 - e. HEC voted to request \$4000 from council for environmental communications (flyers, handouts, etc)
- 6. HEC chair, co-chair & secretary elections
 - a. Melissa was unanimously voted to continue as chair
 - b. Rayya was unanimously voted to continue as vice chair / co-chair
 - c. Thaddeus was unanimously voted to continue as secretary
- 7. Any Other Business
 - a. Climate Action Plan
 - i. February 12th from ~6:30-8:00 pm there will be a meeting about the Climate Action Plan. City is looking for representatives from various committees to meet with Stantec (contracted company for the Climate Action Plan).
 - 1. Malik has offered to represent HEC at the Climate Action Plan meeting
- 8. Announcements
- 9. Adjournment