

Environment Committee Meeting  
April 15, 2010  
Minutes

Present: Sally Kelly, Chair, David Lublin, Council Liaison, Warren Rizzi, Town staff, Kristen Gerlach, Vicky Taplin, Sarah Smith, Patty Larson, Coralee Hoffman

I. Minutes from February were approved. The March meeting was cancelled and agenda items moved to the April meeting.

II. Announcements: Bike Day will take place as planned on May 2. The Town's Election Board requested each Committee to propose questions for the Town Council Candidates Forum. Two questions were suggested by Committee members: (1) Where do Candidates stand on balancing safety, lighting levels and carbon emission considerations in evaluating the current street light proposal; and (2) Where do Candidates stand on continuing the Town's support for the ambitious tree planting program, given current fiscal constraints? The Chair noted that the street lighting proposal will be presented at the Town's annual meeting and encouraged Committee members to attend and comment.

III. No members of the public were present.

IV. Council Liaison Report: David Lublin has been asked to look into single stream recycling possibilities for the Town – that is, all items could be placed in a single bin for recycling, rather than asking residents to sort them. Some issues under consideration include balancing the increased convenience against the fact that the recycling center is farther away, so may be less green in the long run. There is also a possibility of letting residents place recycling with their trashcans, and not setting it out on the curb – something that can work to encourage neighbors to do the same.

V. Tree Program Discussion: The “tree walk” will take place in June, including Committee members, Town staff and the Town arborist to help assess where new trees are needed for the Town's tree planting program. A discussion ensued of ways to address reluctance by some residents to have trees planted in the right of way near their property. The existing neighbor-to-neighbor approach, where Committee members work with residents to help resolve concerns seems to be working well, though can be time consuming. Other approaches discussed could include: more focus on encouraging private property owners to request a tree in areas where the Town's canopy is thinning, as an alternative to trying to convince reluctant residents; deferring planting while seeking alternative options, including private property options; planting fewer, but larger, trees to decrease the number of properties affected each year; and publishing regular reports on tree loss in the Town (which is substantial) to help people understand why new trees need to be planted.

Review of the Tree Ordinance: The Chair noted that the Committee has been asked to review how the Tree Ordinance is working, in a manner similar to the recent review of the Water Ordinance. A survey is being considered that would involve collecting

information (possibly through interview and/or written responses) from Tree Board members, Town staff, the Town Arborist and residents to gauge satisfaction and identify any issues. Content and approaches to the survey draft were discussed. Survey volunteers are needed.

VI. Status on Noise Ordinance and Education: The Town meeting with lawn service companies is scheduled for May 11. The mailer on the new ordinance went to all residents and an educational article appeared in the Forecast. A pledge to work quiet will be presented at the lawn service meeting and participants will be asked to sign on. The Committee discussed the contents of the pledge. The Chair and Council Liaison will attend the meeting and other Committee members were encouraged to attend as well.

VII. Status and Discussion of Conservation Easement Program: Committee members reported on the conservation easement project at the February Town Council meeting. The Council suggested that the Committee obtain legal review of the draft guidelines and asked that the Committee address the question of whether and how donors of easements could obtain Federal tax benefits. Committee members identified a Boston attorney who specializes in municipal conservation easement issues and will follow up to determine whether he can assist. In addition, Committee members contacted the Maryland Environmental Trust, a nonprofit resource organization with extensive experience, sample materials and technical assistance in this area. Committee members will schedule a meeting with the organization in Annapolis to explore to work together. The goal will be to develop a package of information and materials for potential donors.

VIII. Status of Greening of Town Government Proposal: Warren Rizzi reported on ideas from Town staff on ways the Town would improve its procedures and practices to be more environmentally sensitive. Among the possibilities would be reducing trash pick-ups to weekly, stopping yard trash pickups in the winter months, resurfacing roads over time to use a lighter color that would reduce heat, budgeting for and buying more energy efficient vehicles for town use (e.g. a smaller car for Town use). Major changes would go through a public hearing. It may be a good idea to include some ideas on the upcoming TOCC survey of residents. Other possibilities might include putting solar panels on the Lawton Center (with County cooperation) and starting a "Cash for Clunkers" type program so that residents could exchange old light bulbs for more energy efficient bulbs. Bike racks have been installed at Elm Street Park so residents can bike and walk into Bethesda. Cell phones can be left at the Town office for recycling. Compost bins are available in the Town Office and more effort can be made to let residents know. In addition, Town office practices have been changed to use more recycled paper, limit unnecessary copies of handouts, cancel junk mail, and limit use of bottled water for Town functions.

IX. The meeting adjourned shortly after 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Coralee Hoffman