

TOCC Climate & Environment Committee

Thursday, 1.08.2026, 7:00 PM

Town Hall

MINUTES OF MEETING:

Attendees: Sheila Blum, Reese Bolt, Alison Fox, Linda Geiser (co-chair), Betsy Hague, Jessica Langerman, Tandra Leonard (Town Council liaison), Pilar Maisterra, Melissa Mello, Mary Rainer, Mona Sarfaty, Stacey Schacter.

Minutes: The minutes of the December meeting were unanimously approved by the committee.

Sub-committee Reports:

- **Promoting Solar & Residential Electrification** (co-chair: Jeff Marqusee)
 - Updated the committee on three briefing papers related to electrification and solar panels that are now available on the google drive
 - Focus of the sub-committee for the next month will be on how to most effectively share the research/information papers with Town residents

- **Update the Town's Website** (co-chair: Stacey Schacter)
 - Shared the briefing paper that was created to ask Town Council to consider the redesign of the website
 - Next step is to meet with Todd Hoffman and John ___ in the Town office to better understand the Town's current website platform, capabilities and limitations
 - Sub-committee is targeting the February Town Council meeting to brief the Town Council on the website redesign

- **Recycling/Composting** (co-chair: Jessica Langerman)
 - MoCo Beyond Plastics presentation is all set for Saturday, Jan 10 at 4pm in the Town Hall
 - CEC will have a table with native plants posters, information on May garden tour, solicitation of native gardens for the native garden map, electrification papers/information and recycling/composting flyers
 - Alison has organized the food table
 - Linda and Jessica will hand out flyers to Town residents promoting the event
 - Since the CEC is interested in exploring whether Town residents might be ready to move to dual stream recycling that could increase the quality and percent recovery of recyclables, members of the CEC toured the processing facility where the Town's recyclables are taken .Please see Linda's write up of the committee's tour of Waste Management's Olive St. recycling facility below. Some of us were heartened by the event; others doubted the accuracy of the numbers we were given in regard to how much was really being recycled. Nevertheless, we decided to update and simplify the flyer written by previous members of the CEC committee three years ago, based on WM's own flyer.
 - On January 8, 9 members of the C&E Committee and Mayor Barney Rush were given a VIP tour of Waste Management's modern, warehouse-sized recycling facility on Olive St in Capitol Heights, MD. This is where, in a long, loud, dizzyingly complex vertical and horizontal journey our combined recycling materials are resorted, bundled, and sold for reuse. The journey begins when our Town's waste contractor, Goode, dumps our recycling onto a mountainous heap inside the main doors of the facility. From there the material is lifted, a bucket load at a time, onto a wide conveyor belt using a tractor. The materials then proceed through a variety of increasingly narrow conveyor belts, past a series of optical scanners, blowers, spacers, and human separators. Paper and

cardboard are separated and chopped into a standardized size and baled. Glass is broken, cleaned and packaged, metal cans are separated, and plastics are divided by #1, #2, and #5 and baled separately. Non-recyclables are removed throughout the process and sent to the trash. About 80% of our recyclable materials can be recovered and sold to companies that can reuse the materials, often requiring additional cleaning to do so. Waste Management employees are proud of the facility and the service they provide for residents and the environment. Residents can do the following to improve recovery at the facility 1) Please never put batteries in recycling—especially the ubiquitous small lithium batteries—the facility has had 30 battery-caused fires since 2018, endangering the workers and the equipment, 2) Keep ALL plastic bags out of recycling and especially do not bundle your recycling in a plastic or paper bag—everything in bags will go to the trash as the optical scanners cannot see through them, 3) Rinse out cans and bottles with food in them before putting them in your recycling bin. Food and liquid contaminated articles degrade the quality of otherwise recyclable materials. For more information on what can be recycled explore the WM website at <https://www.wm.com/us/en/recycle-right>.

- Mary came up with a terrific idea, which was to approach the council to find out if it would be possible for Goode to pick up recycling twice a week and garbage only once (the opposite happens now). Ideally, Goode could pick up paper on one run, and all other recycling on the other. That way, we could participate in a dual-stream system while still providing the service of having trash/recycling picked up at the top of people's driveways.
- Sub-committee will submit blurb for February Forecast with info on recycling center tour and what residents can do to help increase the success of recycling
- Tour of Montgomery County recycling processing facility is being rescheduled due to calendar conflicts. Jessica will send out a doodle poll in the next couple days

● **Sustainable Landscaping/Native Plants** (co-chair: Alison Fox)

- Native Plantings speaker event on Sunday, April 12 has been confirmed. Speaker will be Drew Asbury from Brookside Gardens. Drew's presentation will be followed by Q&A
- Update on encouraging residents to move from curb strips to curbside gardens and work with the Town on including native plants in town triangles
- Sub-committee has decided not to pursue Sustainable Maryland Grant for curbside gardens as the process is too onerous for the sub-committee and the Town

Other Business:

- CEC would like to have a table at the Town's Chili Dinner on February 22
 - Michelle Grace will reach out to the CRC to confirm that this will work
 - Informational materials will be the same as what was used for the MoCo Beyond Plastics presentation
- Regarding the proposed Town Environmental staff person roles/duties, Sheila provided information on Takoma Park's sustainability program which could be used as a basis for the roles/duties of a Town staff person. Since Takoma Park is a larger municipality than the Town and has business revenue, the Committee should also look at other municipalities (Somerset, Village of Chevy Chase, etc) for examples of sustainability officer roles/duties.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned and members were reminded that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 7:00pm in the Town Hall.