

Environment Committee Meeting, August 8, 2021 (via Zoom)

Present: Barton Rubenstein, David Kathan, Ralph Wooden, Andrew Bartley, Yogesh Rajkotia, and Robin Barr.

1. Minutes of the June 10 meeting were approved. Ralph moved their approval, and Dave seconded.
2. Barton would like to accelerate the schedule for the gas-powered leaf blower ban. He argued that it would be in keeping with the climate emergency declaration issued by the Town, and indicated that he had Town Councilmembers were in support. Robin Barr suggested that instead of moving it to January 1, 2022, that we accelerate it to September 2022. The Committee agreed with Robin's September date. Dave offered a motion to accelerate the ban to September 1, 2022 from the current January 1, 2023. Ralph seconded and the motion passed. A discussion followed about the right timing for distributing a pamphlet about the ban. Dave suggested that the pamphlet should be distributed before October 1 this year so homeowners are aware of the ban next year. Barton indicated that he would work on the pamphlet.
3. Recycling. Barton reported that Plastic Tree has indicated that they can do all of our recycling plus pick up reusable items; however, the company could haul our trash. A discussion followed about the efficacy of using Plastic Tree. Robin reported on the challenges of contracting for small town refuse and recycling. In particular, since all the surrounding towns use Goode, and the company does recycling and trash in the same day, it may be more challenging to find a contractor who will haul only trash – it may be difficult for a contractor to find another town to fill in the rest of the day for their employees if Somerset only wants trash hauling. Dave asked about the costs of her service and Robin asked whether she can work with Goode. The consensus of the Committee is to ask Plastic Tree if they could also propose how to handle trash.
4. Apiary. Barton reported that the fence around the hives has been built, and that the liability issue has been resolved. Bees will be brought to the apiary in the Spring, which is the optimum time to start a new hive.
5. LED Streetlights. Barton reported that the Maryland PSC rejected PEPCO's proposed LED streetlighting proposal, and that Matt is currently working with PEPCO to determine our options.
6. Solar. Barton suggested that a good place to install solar on Town property was on the embankment on the Cumberland Avenue side of the tennis courts. The Committee agreed that this was a good place, and Barton agreed to get a quote.
7. Montgomery County Thrive Initiative. Barton indicated that the Town will hold a forum on the initiative in September. The Committee discussed the proposal, and Robin agreed to share the survey that the Town will be conducting on the proposal.
8. Carbon-Free Options. Barton asked the Committee to brainstorm on ideas that the Town could do or promote.
9. Meeting was adjourned at 9:04pm.