Sustainability Advisory Committee Meeting.

A Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting was held at 125 N Division St, GOB 306, Salisbury, Maryland at 5:30pm on February 5th, 2025.

**Members in attendance:** Charly Sager, Elise Trelegan, Noha Yousif, Mike Angelot, Noah Bressman, Catherine Skeeter, Matthias Pieplak, David Burt, Christina Williams.

**Members of the public in attendance:** Kayle Krieg, Dylan Maine, Christine Maine,

**Staff in attendance:** Zack White, Nick Voitiuc.

**City Council in attendance:** None

**I. Introductions.**

Charly asked the group to introduce themselves, and name one thing that they were grateful for.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Noah motioned to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, Christina (Williams) seconded.

**III. General Discussion**

Charly decided to have the group break into smaller groups to discuss subcommittee topics, with the intention of reconnecting later to share ideas with the entire group. The first two groups were Waste Management and Litter. The Waste Management group stayed in the room, while the Litter group met in the hallway.

Dave led the discussion, and distributed a draft of waste management goals to the group (Matthias, Elise, Mike, Noha, Christine, Dave, Kayle, and Zack). He asked for the group to review the list and help determine which actions would be appropriate for the Green Team to pursue.

Dave discussed one of the items on the list, which was addressing overfilled waste containers. He suggested reaching out to waste management companies to equip trash trucks with cameras that could document areas where trash is overfilling around the community.

Dave also suggested monitoring where waste management vehicles are leaking hydraulic fluids and other materials. Zack asked whether this was intended as a city-specific initiative or a county-wide one. Dave clarified that his intention was for it to be a county-wide effort and mentioned it as part of the county’s waste management plan. Elise pointed out that it might be challenging to get the city, county, and private waste management companies on board with the individual actions on his list. She suggested that the goal should be to have a seat at the table when contributing to the county’s waste management plan.

Matthias emphasized the time constraints, noting that it was unlikely the group would be able to get through the entire list within the time allotted for discussion. However, the group went on to briefly discuss the rest of the points on his list including, food waste, contaminated recyclables, and plastic bags.

Noah commented that he still sees plastic bags throughout the community, despite the Salisbury ban. Elise mentioned that she is working to push for a county-wide bag ban in conjunction with Wicomico Clean. She noted that it’s difficult to quantify how much these plastic bag bans actually help, thus making it a hard sell to county council.

David emphasized the significant problem plastic bags pose, particularly at landfills, where they can clog equipment.

*During the litter discussion the group (Christine, Dylan, Catherine, Noha, Charly, and Nick) talked about scheduling community clean-ups for the first Saturday morning of every month, with the possibility of adding Thursday evenings as well. They also discussed expanding the selection of clean-up locations to increase participation. Noting that cleanups have low turnout, and that they should brainstorm some ideas about how to get people interested in coming out.*

The group came back together and the discussion on waste management concluded. Charly divided the group again, this time into the Education and Transportation subcommittees. The Transportation subcommittee stayed in the room, while the Education subcommittee met in the hallway.

As part of the transportation discussion, Elise mentioned several upcoming bike-related events, including Bike to Work Day, a Bike Week proclamation, and the Ride of Silence. She also talked about creating a survey to distribute to businesses, asking employees how they commute to work. The goal would be to gather data on transportation methods and the distances people live from their workplace.

Elise opened up the conversation to those in the room inviting ideas for transportation committee.

Mike briefly mentioned the idea of a spring scavenger hunt that could take place downtown, with participants traveling around the city by bike. Zack expressed enthusiasm for the idea, saying that it seemed fun and accessible. He added that existing events like the Sea Gull Century might feel daunting for regular residents, making the scavenger hunt a more approachable option.

Elise discussed the challenges of organizing bike-related events of that scale, mentioning the significant expenses involved and the need for police presence to ensure safety.

Elise emphasized that the Ride of Silence is a great event and that the community is fortunate to have it, given the challenges involved in planning events of this scale. She noted that the event serves to commemorate individuals who have been hit and killed while riding bikes.

Noha inquired about the Bike Safe Business Program and whether it is still active. Zack mentioned he was not familiar with the program and asked for more details. Elise and Noha explained that the program encourages businesses to provide incentives for customers who ride their bikes, such as offering bike racks and discounts on store products. Only a few businesses in town are participating, and they suggested it would be beneficial for the city to revive the program so more businesses could get involved.

Christine (Maine) inquired about bike paths throughout the city. Zack and Elise mentioned the "Rails with Trails" plan, along with other bike path-related projects. However, they noted that they were unsure of the status of these projects due to budget constraints and changes in administration. Zack also pointed out that many bike lanes on the streets remain unfinished, which can be confusing for both drivers and pedestrians. The group discussed bike paths in other municipalities like Rehoboth and Annapolis, emphasizing that Salisbury could greatly benefit from continued funding for such projects. Christine mentioned that, as it stands, she doesn’t feel safe riding her bike around town, and a completed bike path system would encourage more people in the community to ride.

The discussion about transportation concluded.

*The education discussion group (Matthias, Noah, Kayle, Christina, Charly, Dave) set a goal to post about one topic per month on social media to maintain consistent engagement and raise awareness. It was suggested that a template be made to make creating posts an easier process. The team also discussed how to reach a broader audience beyond their existing followers on Instagram and Facebook. To address this, they decided to explore ways to collaborate more closely with the City’s communications team.*

*They discussed a collaboration with Habitat for Humanity on cross-posting about the new meadow being developed at a Habitat home. Also, the group planned a green and sustainability-themed event for April’s Third Friday, where they would have a presence by tabling at the event.*

*Lastly, the team brainstormed messaging strategies around promoting best practices for recycling.*

Noah initiated a discussion on PFAS, reiterating some of the points covered in the previous meeting. He emphasized the risk in the Peggy Branch area, where elevated PFAS levels could potentially leak into the Wicomico River. He highlighted the severity of this risk, noting that many people rely on water from Wicomico River tributaries for various activities.

He mentioned collaborating with Wicomico Environmental Trust’s “Creekwatchers” to develop a plan for the testing of PFAS. He mentioned that Creekwatchers do not have the capacity to test for PFAS on-site but can collect and prepare samples to be sent to a lab. The Creekwatchers could then help interpret the data returned. He noted that the cost of a chemical blank test would be $300, with an additional $100 per sample point. Noah suggested that there are four points along Peggy Branch that should be sampled, bringing the total cost to $700.

Matthias proposed a vote to determine whether the Green Team wants to keep looking into testing options, which would require finding a funding source. Charly disagreed with this proposal, stating that she didn’t believe a vote was necessary, as she expected the Green Team would likely unanimously agree to move forward with looking into the issue.

Noah mentioned nearly “half a million dollars” of funds the city received from a settlement with Perdue Agribusiness. Matthias asked if the funds from Perdue could be used for water testing. Zack clarified that he believes the funds being referred to are not from a PFAS settlement but rather from a different settlement related to air pollution. These funds are designated for planting trees in the community. Zack also noted that he believes the city has received funds from a PFAS settlement, though he was unsure if they were from Perdue or other private companies. He mentioned that those funds will likely be allocated for activated carbon filters at the Paleo drinking water treatment plant.

Charly suggested using Green Team funds to pay for the testing.

Dave suggested having a dedicated grant writer for the green team, to which a few of the members stated that they had experience with grant writing and could assist in the process of writing grants.

Charly concluded the regular discussion and made time for questions to and updates from the city.

Noah asked where to report violators of the plastic bag ban. Zack admitted he wasn’t sure, but Elise mentioned that the Housing and Community Development Department has a code enforcement division where reports can be made.

Elise asked Zack if he could provide updates on the City Comprehensive Plan. Zack responded that he didn’t feel he was in a position or informed enough to give solid updates on the plan.

At 6:29 Noah motioned to adjourn, Christina Williams seconded.