Carroll County Environmental Advisory Council

Curtis Barrett, Chair
Craig Connell, Vice Chair

CarrollCountyMD.gov/EAC ♦
EAC@CarrollCountyMD.gov

Brenda Dinne, Staff Liaison/Secretary
Department of Planning & Land Management

225 N Center Street • Westminster, MD 21157-5194 • Telephone: 410-386-2140

Meeting Summary for April 29, 2026

Members

☒ Curtis Barrett
☐ Ashley Collier
☐ Craig Connell
☒ Caitlin Fleming
☒ Amy Hardesty
☒ Charlene Norris
☒ Aaron Salter
☒ Michele Smith
☐ *vacant*

County Government

☒Brenda Dinne, Special Projects Coordinator/EAC Staff Liaison/Secretary
☐Denise Mathias, EAC Admin Support

Guest Speaker(s)

- n/a

Other Attendees

- None

1. CALL TO ORDER –

- Chair Barrett officially called the March 18, 2026, meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) to order at 3:04 PM in Room 204 of the County Office Building.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES –

a. February 18, 2026

Discussion/Decision:

- No changes were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion 512-26 Motion was made by Charlene Norris and seconded by Caitlin Fleming to approve the February 18, 2026, meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Reference/Attachment(s):

- *www.carrollcountymd.gov/government/boards-commissions/environmental-advisory-council/meetings/*

b. March 18, 2026

Discussion/Decision:

- No changes were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion 513-26 Motion was made by Aaron Salter and seconded by Charlene Norris to approve the March 18, 2026, meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Reference/Attachment(s):

- *www.carrollcountymd.gov/government/boards-commissions/environmental-advisory-council/meetings/*

3. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS –

a. Secretary Report

Discussion/Decision:

- The next regular meeting will be held on May 20, 2026. The agenda will be for continued discussion on uncompleted 2026 work plan projects. Byron Madigan will provide an informational presentation on stream temperature monitoring.
- Interest was expressed in having a guest speaker from the community solar industry to discuss various aspects of solar facilities.

b. EAC Bylaws

Discussion/Decision:

- No changes were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion 514-26 Motion was made by Amy Hardesty and seconded by Charlene Norris to approve the proposed bylaws as presented. Motion carried.

c. Removal of Member – Discussion & Recommendation

Discussion/Decision:

- At the March 18 EAC meeting, the EAC members discussed a recommendation to the Board to remove member Ashley Collier. This would make the position available for someone who is interested and able to commit to participation. A memo was drafted for the Chair's signature upon a vote of the EAC members.
- Ms. Collier's term started on November 18, 2024, and expires December 1, 2028. She attended her first monthly meeting in January 2025. This recommendation is based on lack of attendance and participation.
  - Ms. Collier has attended only 3 meetings between January 2025 and March 2026. The EAC's bylaws indicate that members must attend a minimum of half of the EAC meetings in any given 12-month period. Otherwise, the member can be recommended for removal or not considered for reappointment at the end of the term.
  - Lack of attendance makes it more difficult to achieve a quorum, as the bylaws state that a quorum is based on a majority of filled positions. If her position is not filled, it may be easier to achieve a quorum.
  - Ms. Collier has not responded to any of the EAC member emails relating to upcoming meetings, meeting materials, or tasks to complete.
  - She has been contacted several times via email, and a follow-up attempt was made via phone, to inquire if she was still interested in serving on the EAC. There was no response.
- The EAC members voted to recommend to the Board the removal. Chair Barrett signed the memo.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion 515-26 Motion was made by Aaron Salter and seconded by Charlene Norris to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners the removal of Ashley Collier as a member due to lack of attendance, participation, and communication. Motion carried.

Reference/Attachment(s):

n/a

EAC Member Action Items:

- n/a

4. NEW BUSINESS –

a. Forest Conservation Code Updates – Informational Presentation, Jon Bowman

Discussion/Decision:

- Jon Bowman, Forest Conservation specialist with Carroll County Resource Management Division, presented an overview of the State-required updates to the Carroll County Code, Chapter 150 Forest Conservation Code.
- The Forest Conservation Act (FCA) was originally adopted by the State in 1991. At that time, the philosophy was to reduce development-related loss of forest land. Since that time, it has shifted to a "no net loss" philosophy and then again most recently to increasing the amount of forest land.
- As a result of Senate Bill 526, adopted by the Maryland General Assembly in 2023, the County's Forest Conservation Code will necessitate changes to the County's stream buffer definition as it applies to forest conservation. This will move the stream buffer from a variable width to a fixed width. Upon development of a property, unforested streams will be required to be forested.
- The updates will also expand Priority Forest Retention Areas, which will result in roughly 60% of the county being subject to the requirements for those areas.
- Additional public notification requirements are included, and staff will now need to provide written findings for approval of any clearing in a Priority Forest Retention Area. Both result in a significant additional burden on staff.
- Maintenance requirements will be loosened somewhat.

EAC Member Action Items:

- n/a

Reference/Attachment(s):

Presentation: Forest Conservation Code Update

5. BUSINESS IN PROGRESS –

a. County Capital Projects with Cost Savings, Environmental Benefits, &/or Alternative Energy Options – Discussion & Potential Approval

Discussion/Decision:

- The final draft report was reviewed. No changes were made. The EAC voted to approve the report as final and provide it to the Board of County Commissioners.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion 516-26 Motion was made by Amy Hardesty and seconded by Aaron Salter to approve the final report as drafted and provide it to the Board. Motion carried.

EAC Member Action Items:

- n/a

Reference/**Attachment**(s):

Document: County Capital Projects with Cost Savings, Environmental Benefits, &/or Alternative Energy Options

b. Update to Guide to Subscribing to Community Solar – Discussion & Potential Approval

Discussion/Decision:

- The final draft publication reflected revisions discussed at the last meeting. No changes were made. The EAC voted to approve the publication as final.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Motion 517-26 Motion was made by Amy Hardesty and seconded by Charlene Norris to approve the final publication as presented. Motion carried.

EAC Member Action Items:

- n/a

Reference/Attachment(s):
Document: Guide to Becoming a Community Solar Subscriber in Carroll County

c. New Land Uses on the Horizon – Discussion

Discussion/Decision:

- The EAC reviewed the list of potential new land uses on the horizon to research. The next step is to check the requirements that other Maryland counties include in their Zoning Codes for each of these uses and summarize the requirements. Each member volunteered to research a specific use.
- The uses to be included in the report are Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) and Veriports, Commercial Composting Facilities, Digesters, Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure, and Small Modular Reactors (SMR).

EAC Member Action Items:

• All	Research Zoning Code requirements for the new land uses and summarize before the May 20 meeting.

Reference/**Attachment**(s):
N/A

6. OTHER –

a. Master Gardeners Earth Day Event

- The EAC participated in the event on Saturday, April 18, 2026. Mr. Barrett and Mr. Salter tended to the exhibit. They reported good attendance and interest. Mr. Salter shared some ideas to make the exhibit more engaging for future events.

EAC Member Action Items:

• Mr. Salter	Email to Ms. Dinne specific ideas for a more engaging exhibit

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS & CONCERNS –

- None.

8. ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING –

- The meeting ended at 4:39 PM. The next regular monthly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 3:00 PM in Room 204 of the County Office Building.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT – MOTION 518-26: Motion was made by Amy Hardesty and seconded by Aaron Salter to adjourn the April 29, 2026, meeting. Motion carried.

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

Regular Monthly Meeting – Wednesday, May 20, 2026 @ 3:00 PM, Room 204, COB

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REPORT

April 29, 2026

To: Board of Carroll County Commissioners

From: Curtis Barrett, Chair
On behalf of the Carroll County Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)

Re: **Cost Savings, Environmental Benefits, & Alternative Energy Options for Proposed County Capital Projects**

At the Board of County Commissioner's request at the January 29 joint meeting with the Board and the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), the EAC identified proposed capital projects for which cost savings may be realized along with environmental benefits. The Board also requested the EAC to identify projects where alternative energy sources might be considered to contribute to these benefits.

The EAC reviewed relevant proposed County projects requested in the final *Community Investment Plan Recommended Fiscal Years 2027-2032* and projects identified that may fit these criteria. The following information from the proposed CIP is provided for each project:

- Project Name (and page number from *XX*)
- Total Project Cost
- Brief Description

The EAC offers the following information and suggestions for the Board's consideration to provide cost savings, environmental benefits, and/or alternative energy options for each project:

- Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits [of the project]
- Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider
- Other Environmental Options to Consider

The EAC recognizes that many of these projects are in process and have established budgets. It may not be realistic to make significant design changes to accommodate the proposed recommendations. However, this report may prompt ideas for future County projects, as demonstrated by the feedback included from the Department of Recreation & Parks, which indicates why some of the suggestions for these projects may not have been incorporated in the project requests.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$7,057,220

Carroll Springs HVAC Replacement (pg. 55)

Brief Description:

This project provides funding for replacement of existing rooftop air handler units and terminal control units, heating and cooling plants, and associated piping and pumps at Carroll Springs, located in Westminster.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- Replacing aging rooftop air handler units, heating and cooling plants, and pneumatic control systems at Carroll Springs School with modern equipment will substantially reduce energy consumption. Contemporary HVAC systems operate at significantly higher efficiency ratings than legacy infrastructure, translating directly into lower greenhouse gas emissions associated with electricity and fuel use. The inclusion of updated lighting fixtures conforming to current energy codes further reduces the facility's overall carbon footprint. Over the life of the system, reduced energy demand contributes to measurable decreases in Carroll County's institutional emissions profile.

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Rooftop Solar Panels*: Solar panels generate on-site renewable energy to power the heating and cooling systems, as well as other potential operational systems, reducing utility costs and grid dependence. Higher upfront capital cost is offset by decades of cost-free energy production. Ground-mounted panels could be considered if the roof is not currently built to accommodate the weight of the panels.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- *Building Energy Management System (BEMS)*: If not already in use by Carroll County Public Schools, real-time monitoring software identifies inefficiencies and enables adaptive load control, typically yielding 10–20% additional energy savings beyond equipment upgrades alone.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$5,900,000

Westminster Septage Facility Improvements (pg. 176)

Brief Description:

This project provides funding for improvements at the Septage Facility to coincide with the City of Westminster's Wastewater Treatment Plant Enhanced Nutrient Removal and Bio-Solids Upgrade.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- This project directly supports enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) in conjunction with the City of Westminster's Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade. The installation of a sludge press, pumping station, grit removal system, and updated screening equipment will significantly improve the quality of effluent discharged into local waterways. Excess nutrients are primary contributors to algal blooms and hypoxic conditions in downstream water bodies, including the Chesapeake Bay watershed. By improving bio-solids processing, the project reduces nutrient loading, protects aquatic ecosystems, and supports Maryland's ongoing Chesapeake Bay restoration commitments.
- Conventional septage management methods often have limited economic benefits and can raise environmental concerns. Cost saving benefits exist for products generated from septage via resource recovery technologies such as composting, anaerobic digestion, or emerging thermal technologies.

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Solar Panels*: Solar panels at septage and wastewater treatment facilities are typically constructed as ground-mounted arrays, rooftop systems, or sometimes specialized floating systems designed to power energy-intensive equipment like pumps and aerators. Construction involves securing panels on racking systems, integrating with the electrical grid, and occasionally using tracking technology to maximize efficiency. With rising energy costs, the upfront cost of the solar facility could be balanced out by long-term energy cost savings.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- N/A

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$410,000

Freedom Park Pavilion 1 Replacement (pg. 123)

Brief Description:

This project provides planned funding to replace Pavilion 1 at Freedom Park, located on Raincliffe Road in Sykesville.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- Replacing the deteriorated pavilion structure at Freedom Park eliminates the need for ongoing chemical treatments and maintenance practices associated with aging materials, some of which may leach pollutants into surrounding soil and groundwater. New construction with contemporary materials reduces lifecycle environmental impact. Additionally, maintained pavilion infrastructure supports sustained public use of green space, reinforcing community connection to natural environments and encouraging outdoor recreation over indoor alternatives.

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Rooftop Solar Panels*: Solar panels are constructed at park pavilions by integrating photovoltaic modules onto the roof structures of existing or newly built shelters, often serving dual purposes as shade, rain protection, and sustainable energy generators. This construction process can involve reinforcing the roof, installing racking, and incorporating battery storage to power amenities like lights, charging stations, and security system or a subset of these components. With rising energy costs, the upfront cost of the solar facility could be balanced out by long-term energy cost savings.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- *Rainwater Harvesting Cistern*: A modest cistern system collects rooftop runoff for landscape irrigation, reducing potable water demand and associated utility costs at the facility.
- *Composite Decking* (in lieu of pressure-treated lumber): These materials eliminate Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) preservative leaching into adjacent soils and groundwater. While marginally higher in upfront cost, composite materials carry a 40–50-year lifespan versus 10–15 years for treated wood, substantially reducing lifecycle replacement and maintenance costs.

Department of Recreation and Parks Feedback

- Pavilion will have no lighting and is in a heavy shaded area – rooftop solar panels would not be favorable.
- For rainwater harvesting cistern – no nearby landscaping to water.
- For composite decking – concrete slab/decking is proposed and will withstand heavy use of this pavilion.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$710,000

Hashawha Raptor Mews Replacements & Improvements (pg. 124)

Brief Description:

This project provides planned funding to replace the Raptor Mews at Hashawha Environmental Center located on John Owings Road in Westminster.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- The Raptor Mews at Hashawha Environmental Center serves as a critical facility for the housing and rehabilitation of birds of prey. Replacing and improving this infrastructure directly supports raptor conservation efforts, enabling continued wildlife education programming for the public. A modernized facility also reduces energy use and improves the birds' welfare conditions, supporting higher rehabilitation and release success rates.

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Solar-Powered Lighting*: The addition of solar-powered lighting and/or minor solar power sources for other minimal electrical uses could provide a low-cost energy source at the Raptor Mews. Motion sensors could be used to reduce energy from constant usage.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- *Non-Toxic, Low-Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) Sealants, and Coatings*: Eliminating chemical off-gassing protects rehabilitating raptors and surrounding habitat while reducing long-term liability associated with soil and groundwater contamination. Durable low-VOC coatings tend to have longer service lives, reducing reapplication frequency and maintenance costs with minimal cost premium over conventional products.
- *Passive Solar Design*: Orienting the facility to maximize solar heat gain in winter and shading in summer reduces mechanical heating and cooling demand with no recurring operational cost.

Department of Recreation and Parks Feedback

- Solar-powered is a potential, however area is wooded and cost of solar is not in current construct cost.
- Non-Toxic, low-volatile organic compounds (VOC) sealants, and costings are preferred for this project.
- Composite materials can be used on siding (Hardi Plank) and decking (Trex).
- There is potential to utilize structural Insulated Panels for ceiling and wall construction.
- For passive solar design we would be concerned about direct sunlight on exterior raptor cages during the summer.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$550,500

Piney Run Boathouse Replacement (pg. 126)

Brief Description:

This project provides additional funding for replacement of the boathouse and deck at Piney Run Park, located on Martz Road in Sykesville.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- The existing boathouse structure at Piney Run Park is aging and situated near Piney Run Reservoir. Deteriorating waterfront structures pose a risk of releasing construction materials, coatings, or debris into the reservoir, which serves as a recreational water body sensitive to contamination. Replacement with new materials reduces this risk while improving the structural integrity of a facility central to the park's water-based programming. Modern construction practices and materials also offer improved stormwater management, reducing runoff-related impacts on water quality.

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Solar Canopy Over Deck/Roof*: A solar canopy generates on-site renewable energy to power boathouse lighting and operational systems, reducing utility costs and grid dependence. Higher upfront capital cost is offset by decades of cost-free energy production.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- *Composite Materials*: Impervious to moisture, rot, and ultraviolet (UV) degradation, these materials eliminate chemical risks adjacent to the lake. Their 40–50-year service life significantly reduces lifecycle replacement costs relative to conventional timber construction, making them a strong long-term fiscal and environmental choice.

Department of Recreation and Parks Feedback

- Solar-powered is a potential, however cost of solar is not in current construction cost. New HVAC mini-split heat pump could be energy star rated.
- Non-Toxic, low-volatile organic compounds (VOC) sealants, and costings are preferred for this project.
- Composite materials can be used on siding (Hardi Plank) and decking (Trex).
- There is potential to utilize structural insulated panels for ceiling and wall construction.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$1,020,000

Piney Run Park Outdoor Programming Area Improvements (pg. 127)

Brief Description:

This project provides planned funding for the replacement of the outdoor programming area behind the nature center at Piney Run Park, located on Martz Road in Sykesville.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- This project replaces the outdoor programming area behind the nature center and consolidates it into a centralized space, including removal of the existing amphitheater. A purpose-built outdoor environmental education space strengthens Carroll County's capacity to deliver nature-based programming to residents of all ages. The project also incorporates site work and updated electrical infrastructure, reducing the footprint of impervious surfaces and supporting sound land stewardship adjacent to the reservoir.

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Solar-Powered Interpretive Signage and Lighting*: Low-voltage solar fixtures eliminate trenching and electrical infrastructure costs for site lighting while reducing ongoing utility expenditures. They also reinforce the environmental education mission of the programming area as a visible demonstration of renewable energy application.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- *Native Plant Landscaping*: Replacing conventional turf or ornamental plantings with native species eliminates the need for irrigation, fertilization, and intensive mowing. This will reduce both operational costs and chemical inputs near the reservoir. Native plantings also serve as live instructional elements for environmental education programming, adding direct programmatic value at minimal cost.

Department of Recreation and Parks Feedback

- Due to heavy wooded area, solar-powered interpretive signage and lighting would not be favorable.
- Staff will promote the use of native plant species.
- Composite materials can be used for future decking.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$282,000

Piney Run Park Pavilion 3 Replacement (pg. 128)

Brief Description:

This project provides funding to relocate Pavilion 3 at Piney Run Park, located on Martz Road in Sykesville.

Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:

- Relocating and replacing Pavilion 3 near the upper restrooms at Piney Run Park supports better site organization and reduces unnecessary land disturbance in other park areas. New construction materials eliminate the environmental liability of deteriorating infrastructure near a water resource

Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:

- *Rooftop Solar Panels*: Solar panels are constructed at park pavilions by integrating photovoltaic modules onto the roof structures of existing or newly built shelters, often serving dual purposes as shade, rain protection, and sustainable energy generators. This construction process can involve reinforcing the roof, installing racking, and incorporating battery storage to power amenities like lights, charging stations, and security system or a subset of these components. With rising energy costs, the upfront cost of the solar facility could be balanced out by long-term energy cost savings.

Other Environmental Options to Consider:

- *Rainwater Harvesting Cistern*: A modest cistern system collects rooftop runoff for landscape irrigation, reducing potable water demand and associated utility costs at the facility.
- *Composite Decking* (in lieu of pressure-treated lumber): These materials eliminate CCA preservative leaching into adjacent soils and groundwater. While marginally higher in upfront cost, composite materials carry a 40–50-year lifespan versus 10–15 years for treated wood, substantially reducing lifecycle replacement and maintenance costs.

Department of Recreation and Parks Feedback

- Due to heavy wooded area, rooftop solar panels would not be favorable.
- For rainwater harvesting cistern – no nearby landscaping to water.
- For composite decking – concrete slab/decking is proposed and will withstand heavy use of this pavilion.

Project Name:	**Total Project Cost:**	$352,000
Piney Run Seawall and Launch Replacement (pg. 129)		
Brief Description:		
This project provides additional funding to replace the wooden seawall and boat launch, located in Piney Run Park on Martz Road in Sykesville.		
Cost Savings and/or Environmental Benefits:		
• The replacement of the wooden seawall and boat launch at Piney Run Park carries significant environmental benefits. Deteriorating wooden seawalls are prone to erosion-driven bank failure, releasing sediment, and potential chemical preservatives directly into the reservoir. Sediment loading degrades water clarity, disrupts aquatic habitat, and accelerates the eutrophication process. A new seawall constructed with appropriate materials stabilizes the shoreline, reduces erosion, and protects the water quality of Piney Run Reservoir. The replacement boat launch also minimizes shoreline disturbance associated with informal or unmanaged watercraft access points		
Potential Alternative Energy Options to Consider:		
• N/A		
Other Environmental Options to Consider:		
• *Vegetated Riparian Buffer* (35-foot minimum): Establishing a native riparian buffer along the stabilized shoreline intercepts fertilizers, sediments, and pollutants before they reach the reservoir. • *Composite Materials*: Impervious to moisture, rot, and UV degradation, these materials eliminate chemical risks adjacent to the lake. Their 40–50-year service life significantly reduces lifecycle replacement costs relative to conventional timber construction, making them a strong long-term fiscal and environmental choice.		

Overall, the County could benefit in general from proactive planning to address potential vulnerabilities of existing infrastructure due to the impacts of climate changes, such as extreme precipitation events that produce high winds and flooding as well as impacts such as periods of drought.

Links to Good Resources Found for these Uses
• MS4 Accounting Guidance FINAL 11 05 2021.pdf • Community Based Public Private Partnerships (CBP3s) • Orner_NOWRA2025_Kevin_Orner.pdf

Curtis Barrett, Chair

C: Roberta Windham, County Administrator
Christopher Heyn, Director, Planning & Land Management
Brenda Dinne, EAC Secretary
Bryan Bokey, Director, Public Works
Robert Hicks, Director, Recreation & Parks