

SOECA Membership Meeting 9/30/2025

Youtube video of meeting: https://youtu.be/Q_a_1-35Ry8

Quick recap

The meeting featured Mike Tidwell of Chesapeake Climate Action Network discussing his new book *The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue*. He discussed climate change's local effects and community-based solutions. Mike shared his personal journey into climate activism and discussed the impact of climate change on local environments, including tree mortality and environmental changes in Takoma Park. The conversation ended with updates on various local projects and initiatives related to housing, environment, and upcoming events in the community.

Summary

Climate Change Advocacy Presentation

Mike Tidwell, founder of CCAN, was introduced as the main speaker for the evening, and he briefly mentioned his background in climate change advocacy and his recent book *The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue: A Story of Climate and Hope on One American Street* about climate change's hyper-local effects. Mike's presentation climate change's impact on a personal level and community-based solutions.

Climate Activism in Takoma Park

Mike shared his personal experience living in Takoma Park for over three decades and his recent journey into climate activism, culminating in the publication of a book that explores how climate change affects even local environments. He discussed the mass mortality of oak trees in the area since 2019 and his own battle with chronic Lyme disease, which he linked to the increased tick population due to milder winters. Mike also highlighted the positive changes in the community, such as the conversion of a Takoma Park gas station to an electric vehicle charging station, reflecting a broader shift towards sustainability.

Tree Decline and Climate Solutions

Mike discussed the decline of trees in his neighborhood. He explained how extreme rainfall, mold, and beetle infestations led to the death of many large oak trees between 2019 and 2021.

Mike also highlighted the importance of trees for ecosystem services and human health, and shared a hopeful solution proposed by Dr. Ning Zhang.

Negative Emissions and Geoengineering Solutions

Mike discussed Ning's innovative idea to combat climate change by burying dying trees in low-oxygen clay, inspired by the preservation of Viking ships. He explained this concept as “reverse coal” and emphasized the urgency of addressing carbon overshoot, highlighting the need for negative emissions. Mike also explored geoengineering solutions, including the potential of reflecting sunlight back into space, drawing from the example of Mount Pinatubo's eruption, which spread sulfur dioxide through the atmosphere and cooled the world by one degree Celsius for a year.

Climate Change Impacts and Solutions

Mike presented a slide show about climate change impacts in Takoma Park, highlighting tree deaths, flooding, and extreme weather events. He discussed the city's response to flooding at his church, including the installation of a flood levee made from soil. Mike also covered the decline of Baltimore's urban forest and his own efforts to plant new climate resilient trees, including a swamp white oak in his front yard. He emphasized the need for creative solutions to address climate change and its effects on local ecosystems.

Climate Action and Collective Efforts

Mike discussed climate change action and his book, emphasizing the importance of collective efforts over individual actions. He encouraged attendees to join local climate groups, such as the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and participate in activities like tree vine removal. Mike highlighted the work of inspiring figures like (our) District 20 State Delegate Lorig Charkoudian and shared personal stories. He concluded by inviting attendees to purchase and have their books signed.

Oak Tree Planting and Restoration

Mike answered questions from our neighbors and discussed tree planting recommendations, emphasizing oak trees as keystone species that support diverse life forms. He shared insights on specific oak varieties and soil conditions for planting. Chris also mentioned a proposed tree

canopy restoration project on Wayne Avenue for the purple line, which received enthusiastic feedback but has not yet been accepted by the state. He highlighted the need for volunteers to water trees and provided tips on effective watering techniques.

Climate Action and Solar Initiatives

Mike discussed upcoming events and initiatives related to climate action and renewable energy. He highlighted a talk by entomologist Doug Tallamy at Brookside Gardens and mentioned the potential for solar panel installations on balconies, with legislation planned in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia. Mike also emphasized the importance of solar energy and suggested replacing corn ethanol production in the US with solar panels on existing farmland to significantly increase electricity generation. He briefly touched on green roof policies, mentioning their benefits in reducing rainwater runoff and their implementation in D.C., but noted uncertainty about policies in Maryland and Montgomery County.

Local Projects and Transportation Updates

Following Mike's talk, Chris provided updates on several local projects. The Seabury Springville Terrace retirement community project is delayed due to the loss of federal funding, with the county potentially stepping in to replace it—although it remains unclear if the county can afford to offset the lost federal dollars. The Hotel Silver Spring is being converted into low-income affordable housing, though this project is expected to take several years. Chris also discussed the FLASH bus service on US-29, noting that a proposed stop at Franklin was not included in the latest plans which made him skeptical about whether a proposed stop at Sligo Creek would ever be added. The next SOECA meeting is scheduled for November. Ann Vorce announced plans for a rain garden walk with DEP before the weather gets too cold.