

Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: March 12, 2025

Attendees:

Members: Karin McGarry-Rosen (KMR), Mike Melchiorre (MM), Sue Myerov (SM), John Sorrentino (JSO), Peaches Cooper (PC), Nancy O'Neill (NO)

Associate Members: Cakky Evans (CE), Elena Jadach (EJ), Jennifer Sherwood (JSH), Andrea Soo (AS)

Others Present: John Jadach (JJ), Nathan Vasserman (NV, Abington Township Technology Officer), Melanie Pawlowski

Call to Order: 7:03 pm

Approval of the minutes: Minutes from February 2025 meeting were approved with no changes.		
Treasurer's report: JSO reviewed current expenses. Discussion ensued regarding the different accounts: Green Acct., Jackson Park Acct. and Sustainability Acct. and what expenses should come from each account.		
Amendments to the Agenda: SPS Fire, DJS Building Supply follow-up		
Active Business Topic:	Discussion points:	Action Items/Follow-Ups:
Single Use Plastic Bag Ordinance - (KMR/AS)	KMR reported the SUP bag ban passed at the last BOC meeting. Fee was not included in the ban. Ban includes: 1. No plastic bags (Compliant bags are paper or re-useable bags) 2. No Styrofoam 3. Straws by request 4. No plastic stirrers Businesses are required to advertise within 30 days and the ban goes into effect 8/12/2025. On 3/7/2025, a meeting was held with AM, GS and KMR to discuss communication strategy wanting to know best practices. West Goshen Township had the best website, letters, and signage. Something will be made available on the Citizen Tool to report violations and an avenue for the exemption process will be created.	GS will be sending drafts of the website, letters, and signage to AS and KMR for feedback
Composting Coalition Update (JSO/AS)	KMR reported on JSO behalf that results from the Food Waste survey were not received yet. KMR mentioned that the Food Waste Survey closed last month.	
Recycling Program Outreach – update (EJ)	EJ reported in contact with Sarah (librarian) from the Abington Library going to run another recycling program, JJ will be hosting a presentation for teens recycling rules and sustainability and also having a service project. EJ and JJ will be hosting a table at Garden Fest on 4/5 at the Abington Library. PC mentioned that events are advertised on the school district website and counselors give the heads up to attend the events. Students regularly follow the service website.	CE will send the website info to EJ to post a flyer of the event

Climate Action Plan draft completion and ICLEI Membership and technical assistance (CE)	CE reported that for ICLEI there is an upgrade to their Clear path system and questions were asked about the data entered from years past, whether it will be erased or will the inventories be stored. A meeting was held with MM, CE, AM, MG, met with Diane from Practical Energy Solutions to look over the benchmarking for the township buildings and setting up a benchmarking process. Practical Energy Solutions was contracted in December 2024 using the money set aside in the township budget to review 14 township buildings. It was determined and 85% of the energy used comes from 3 township buildings. Benchmarking manually should be done for these 3 buildings which will be completed by members of the EAC. In order to accomplish this, training will need to be held. Currently, bills go directly to each department, and they only scan the payment part of the bills. AM is going to try to get each department to scan the entire bill so that the energy usage information from PECO can be obtained and benchmarked as rates are anticipated to go up potentially 30%. Benchmarking will be able to see peak energy and peak demand and maybe able to put in variable speed for the pumps at the wastewater treatment plant in order to decrease energy consumption. There is a benchmarking group with other municipalities, and they want to know if AT wants to be part of it. To be a part of it you need to have DVRPC benchmarking with the intention of the BOC passing a memorandum that the township is going to benchmark and lead by example where you are requiring and possibly provide some type of incentive for commercial buildings with a square footage of 50,000. CE mentioned that we are not ready for that yet. Practical Energy Solutions will send a proposal using an hourly rate charged last year to provide training, document the steps to data enter the benchmarking, and generate reports—this money will come out of the township budget set aside for energy initiatives.	CE is drafting the RFP for assistance with the CAP
Bird Town Updates (JSH)	JSH wanted to thank everyone for the inputs made to the Bird Town annual report. Second year in a row, we were awarded the Golden Eagle award. Annual Bird Town Spring Summit will be a virtual gathering tomorrow (3/13) at 7PM. JSH will be attending, Speaker will discuss invasive plants. STC along with EAC members are working on putting out an RFP to get an invasive plant management program, RFP has been completed and sent to the township for advertising. This is a STC budget item for 2025. STC also has a budget item for the Roslyn Park gardens for maintenance and expansion of the 2 native plant gardens installed last year. One of the plantings will happen sometime in April, bidding went out to a contractor. Three public events coming up:	Provide JSH with any information to advertise at the Garden Fest event on 4/5. JSH will circulate Native Plant sale flyer when finalized. JSH will send out volunteer signups for

	5. 4/5 Abington Free Library Garden Fest 1-3 PM – hosting a table. If anyone is interested, JSH was just going to offer environmental information, website info, socials, native plants, and benefits of native plants, how you can make your yard healthier, include the salt flyer or just website links. JSH might take the Earth Bingo game last year, CE and SM mentioned that they would also volunteer at the event. KMR mentioned that we should pull something together about the plastic bag ban and have reusable bags to give away. 6. 4/26 Abington Free Library – Native Plant Sale from 10A-3P, JSH sent out a draft flyer to a few people to review. 7. 4/27 Briar Bush Earth Fest from 1-4PM – JSH will be hosting a table at the event and will bring any leftover native plants from sale the prior day. Monthly bird walks continue at Lorimer and Bethayres dates/times are on the township website on the EAC page under Bird Town. Partnered with the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club on their bird walks in April and May every Wednesday.	events and making plant tags. JSO to bring hats to the events to give to the EAC members. KMR mentioned pulling something together about the plastic bag ban and having reusable bags to give away.
Abington School District Collaboration (PC and NO)	PC reported that the school district is working to get the word out about moving forward with option #2 with building 1 new middle school on the current campus. Local special interest groups are partnering to get the word out as residents were unaware of the decision. Vote will be on the ballot for the 5/20 primary election. KMR mentioned that residents have on their front lawn “Say No to Higher Taxes” unsure if it is related to the building of the new middle school or not. PC mentioned complaints that she has been hearing from folks is that we already pay a lot in taxes and the school district is failing our children and are unhappy with the school district. CE mentioned that the school district is trying to get champions to promote the information, and the superintendent Jeff Fecher is coming to the Willow Grove NAACP meeting on Monday night (3/17), anyone can attend. NO mentioned that she is starting to see some of the anti-groups starting to pop up on FB. PC and NO are trying to brainstorm about what the EAC can do to support to get the word out about vote. School board cannot advocate for it. CE mentioned that we should put out a summary of the environmental concerns such as poor air quality and certain building design enhance learning. KMR mentioned make it informative, point to the website, and link out to the calculator to educate about the tax impacts. NO mentioned that the school district sent out a fact sheet including environmental energy efficiency and healthy climate.	NO to provide information to JSH for the upcoming events about the environmental facts about the new school. This will also be placed in an upcoming newsletter.

Development Plans: • 1526 Fairview Avenue (SM)	SM sent materials and a draft letter a few days before the meeting regarding this property. SM shared her screen reported that this sub-division to split their lot to add another single-family home. A rain garden is planned for the storm water management from the additional house. Soil scientist sent out to sample the soil. STC will comment on the trees and plantings. Language in the draft letter was commended for the plans.	Provide feedback to the SM regarding the draft letter
DJS Building Supply follow-up	SM reported that 2 years ago we reviewed a development plan and basically it is all impervious but one of the things that we asked for was if a small green area could be created. SM reported that the plans were modified to include a small, planted area.	
New Business Topic:	Discussion points:	Action Items/Follow-Ups:
Purchases: Shirts and salt sign for e-cycling events (KMR)	KMR reported that JSO was asked, outside of this meeting, about the shirts and he has not placed an order. CE said that she feels she does not need another T-shirt. CE would rather see the money spent on yard signs for neighbors to display on their front yards about salt and energy. KMR mentioned that the shirts were polo shirts for speaking engagements at the BOC meetings and other speaking events such as the Keenager Senior club coming up. CE mentioned that NAACP received polo shirts from the police department which are nice. Polo shirts are optional for any EAC members. SM mentioned that there could be fancy name tags as an option. KMR, SM, JW and CE discussed at the electronic recycling event in February 2025 to purchase a salt sign to bring to future recycling events to remind folks about salt usage. The electronic recycling events are in February and November each year which is beginning/middle of the winter season. For folks could read that they are waiting in line.	CE to reach out to APD to inquire where the polo shirts were from and check out if Vistaprint is having a sale. AS will research where tablecloths that we purchased before were from and send the info to KMR
EAC Responsibilities (CE)	CE asked what kind of support KMR needs. CE asked if a backup is needed for posting on FB or creating newsletters. AS mentioned, that we should update the EAC portion of the website to link it to the SPS information if folks are concerned about the environment—they might come to our page. SM said that she could assist to provide information.	AS and SM to coordinate updating the EAC page to link out to the various webpages about SPS KMR to provide the short URL for the SPS information
Keenager Seniors Club (MG)	KMR mentioned that MG, MM and JSH will be available to speak about Climate Change.	
SPS Fire (AS)	AS attended the public meeting last night (3/11) and shared details about the explosion and fire that occurred 3 weeks ago at SPS which lasted 5 days. It occurred during the night shift with no casualties. A large portion of the factory is destroyed, since the disaster press releases and news recordings of	AS to send out to the group with her summary and include relevant links.

	officials speaking of the status of the work and recovery. The community engagement meeting last night was with Commissioners Vahey and Bole. The commissioners put out a survey and received over 600 responses and the presentation was tailored toward the concerns in the survey. Approximately 180 people were in attendance. Krystn Kuckelman organized the event as part of the Greater Glenside Civic Association (GGCA) and the commissioners created a presentation, answered questions, facts to dated, and status of the site. • Highland Avenue continues to be closed off which is a major artery for traffic. • Concerns about air quality. The air is currently being continuously monitored. • Concerns about surface soils. There haven't been any plans at this point to test the soil. • Drinking water was also a concern but Vahey mentioned that AT's water comes from Neshaminy creek. SM discussed TTF is sampling the water and cyanide was found. Filtering is taking place. • Hallowell Park is right across the street from SPS which has a sports field. Vahey could not confirm or deny the safety of the field, but AT was actually upwind from the disaster at the time and all the wind was in the south direction toward Jenkintown borough. • SPS is in recovery mode—trying to recover any salvageable equipment as it is very specialized, the parking lot is occupied with a large tent. Employees and contract workers are working in the tent set up doing the recovery, • Unsure if SPS will rebuild, options to reclaim the site for public use or rezone for a different use. STC is interested in turning it into a public park. • Next steps over the next 2-3 years, the focus is on dismantling and demolishing the impacted parts of the factory. • SPS hired TRC Environmental to do the monitoring, DEP is overseeing their work. CE mentioned about the businesses in Rices Mill Road. DEP, SPS and AT all have on their websites to advertise updates regarding the fire. AS asked about our role, Anna from the STC was at the meeting and suggested writing a joint letter communicating our recommendations that we have to assist. Since soil testing was up in the air, could the EAC provide funding for the areas of concern? CE mentioned a webinar by PSU Extension which offers soil testing and contamination. Vahey mentioned that if soil testing was done at Hallowell Park, there is no baseline and if something shows up in the testing, unsure if it was actually from the SPS fire vs. existing contaminates.	CE who will ask the folks who ran the webinar what their recommendations are for soil testing. AS will find out what DEP responsibilities are doing as well as talk to Vahey about TRC Environmental group and their role in addressing contaminated soil concerns. AS will share the survey results when posted and will reach out to Krystn about recommendations. AS, CE, and SM want to be involved in the recommendation letter with STC.
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	SM mentioned that the Montgomery Hazard Mitigation Plan should have specific actions for something like the SPS fire. There was no representative from the county at the meeting. This regulatory agency should be making recommendations, and it should be under their purview. Could we recommend that SPS pay at a minimum to check the soil testing at the park across the street? CE asked about the insurance but there was no discussion. Charged debris has been found in yards and folks are afraid to take the kids/dogs outside. CE mentioned that there are 2 class action suits for the SPS fire. CE talked about property taxes, Vahey mentioned that the property tax is \$23,000 with school taxes and other taxes separately and constituent taxes will not be impacted as a result of the fire. AS mentioned, that the chemicals at SPS were not involved in the disaster. CE asked if there was any discussion about the folks fighting the fire as well as the employees that work there that live in Abington. AS mentioned, that a subset of workers live in AT and the commissioners commended the fire fighters and emergency personnel. CE mentioned on a call with AM that AT was looking at the economic impact and the local businesses. Jenkintown had their own community meeting the night before (3/10) and it was contentious. More public officials were at the Jenkintown meeting with representatives from DEP. SPS, TTF and the water department were not present at either meeting.	
Annual Report (KMR)	KMR mentioned at points in the meeting if folks could share any pictures or any information for the annual report. The annual report will be a PowerPoint presentation and no video which is due in April.	KMR asked if everyone could share any pictures throughout 2024 to include in the annual report. KMR asked SM to provide the development plans reviewed in 2024
Citizens' Comments & Responses:	Discussion points:	Action Items/Follow-Ups:
No Mow May (KMR)	KMR reported getting a question from a resident to our EAC address about lawn care since the ordinance forbids lawns greater than 10 inches. KMR, couldn't we ask for an exemption for No Mow May. Minimize mowing and creating meadows and just creating pathways.	SM will look at what we recommend, info from PEC and share it. SM will check with Radnor or West Chester and can find out about their ordinance.

	CE recommends advocating for this. SM mentioned that suggestions were made about the zoning and the saldo and AT is still working on getting into the codes: allowing different types of native landscaping, presentations were done to naturalize your yard. Deal Park is a good example of creating meadows. SM mentioned that presentations were done in the past. DCNR has programs to pay for these meadows, but local ordinances prevent weeds. JSH asked what the timeline is to update the current saldo? SM can promote naturalizing their lawn. SM could request info from PEC. CE mentioned if we could have a webinar or something about naturalizing and have a page under our efforts on the website. CE mentioned that PSU Extension has great resources. JSH mentioned that flyers were posted on FB and our old website.	CE will start putting the PSU Extension stuff on FB. SM will outreach to watershed groups to see if there are opportunities to do some outreach. SM will check on the saldo and zoning recommendations that were vetted by AT. KMR to reach out to the resident to help lobby for this. CE to send the recording and slide deck from the PSU Extension presentation to KMR to share with the resident
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Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm

Next Meeting: April 9, 2025 @ 7:00 pm - VIRTUAL

Acronym Key:

AM – Ashley McIlvaine

AT – Abington Township

BOC – Board of Commissioners

CAP – Climate Action Plan

DCNR – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DEP – Department of Environment Protection

DVRPC – Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

FB - Facebook

GS – Grace Sekelewski

ICLEI - International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

PSU – Penn State University

RFP – Request for Proposal

STC – Shade Tree Commission

SUP – Single-Use Plastics

TTF – Tookany-Tacony Frankford Watershed