

**Abington Township
Environmental Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes & Engagement Report
March 13, 2024**

Call to Order: 7:03 pm

Attendees:

Members: Mitch Gertz (MG), Michele Kaczalek (MK), Karin McGarry-Rosen (KMR), Mike Melchiorre (MM), Andrea Soo (AS), John Sorrentino (JSO)

Associate Members: Peaches Cooper (PC), Cakky Evans (CE), Elena Jadach (EJ), Jennifer Sherwood (JSH), Jim Webb (JW)

Others Present: Andrew Christy (AC, Shade Tree Commission), Lora Lehmann (LL, resident), Grace Sekelewski (GS, Abington Township Communications Manager)

1. **Approval of Minutes:** February 2024 minutes were approved.

2. **Amendments to the Agenda:**

- Garden Festival
- Shared Energy Manager Program

3. **Reports:**

A. Engagement – Shown with minutes.

4. **Active Business**

A. **Single-Use Plastic (SUP) Ban Ordinance Public Info Session (Karin/Andrea)** – AS made attempts to reach out to PREIT marketing director, Karisa Washam, to gauge interest in our SUP initiative, but received no response.

Action item: CE will determine new contacts for PREIT/Glenside/Roslyn Business Associations and also provide a draft letter of endorsement from NAACP Willow Grove.

B. **Composting Coalition Update (John/Andrea)** – JSO reported that Brent Dieleman (SCS Engineers) would like to schedule a follow-up meeting with EAC and Mark Maxwell (AT Superintendent of Refuse) to understand the elements of our PA Tech Assistance application and propose a plan.

C. **Energy Procurement Support (Mitch/Mike)** – No new updates, but MM reported next meeting with Ashley McIlvaine is on 3/25 to ask for broker to present prices for gas contract.

D. **Recycling Program Outreach** – No new updates. EJ reported she did a presentation at Temple University on 3/7 and will be doing the next presentation at Abington Library.

E. **Deal Park** – KMR reported that PEC has scheduled an event at the park on Sat, 3/23, at 1 pm to do both litter cleanup and informing the public about the meadow project which is projected to start in April 2024 by contractor, ArcheWild. Flyers will be distributed, as appropriate. Commissioner Zappone was contacted, but he has not responded yet.

Action item: KMR/AS to follow up with local resident who volunteered to help at Deal Park and check with SM on status of communication.

F. **Climate Action Plan draft completion and ICLEI membership/technical assistance** – CE reported that we need to complete CAP to get funding for electric charging stations. CE has identified seven specific strategy numbers. Adaptation, resiliency, and innovation are the target areas we need to work and submit by Monday.

G. **LEED for Cities** – No new updates.

H. **Shared Energy Manager (SEM)** – AT is planning to work with Public Works on this program. Our goal is to have the SEM evaluate our energy efficiency in township buildings, review PECO data, compare it with other townships, and focus on opportunities for increased infrastructure for electric vehicles. KMR expressed concern with the lag in production of lithium-ion batteries (due to cost) to support our energy objectives. JW reminded us that the Township is simply striving for our stated goals.

5. New Business

- A. **Grant Opportunities for Library (AC/JSH)** – AC reported that he applied for a grant with the PA Native Plant Society (deadline in one week) to help offset cost of native plants to be planted at library on 5/18. Motion was made to support AC’s application for the PA Native Plant Society; motion was approved by all.
Action item: AC will reach out to township.
- B. **Municipal Task Force meeting update** – MG reported the following discussions at the meeting: KI/Alverthorpe Park stormwater projects, Abington Golf Club meet and greet, road salt/chloride monitoring, streamkeepers project, winter seed-sowing, TTFWP RB workshops, and Julie Slavet’s (TTFWP) retirement on 6/24.
- C. **Garden Festival / PA Bird Town** – Garden Fest scheduled on Sat, 3/23, with KMR/JSH hosting an EAC table with handouts and possibly seed packets. JSH drafted a flyer with plant sale, bird walks, and library planting info. KMR may add some info on reverse side with energy initiatives from CE. For PA Bird Town, we will host a 4/27 native plant sale and have called for volunteers. JSH also reported that AC has our new Bird Town signs which we are planning to present at a future BOC meeting. Former Pennypack staff will coordinate with EAC on connecting and collaborating with new Collins Nursery opening at Temple University Ambler campus.
Action item: KMR will inquire with the Township on a convenient time to present new PA Bird Town signs.
- D. **Process for responding to residents (KMR)** – KMR mentioned last month about the Jenkintown-Washington Lane Connections Project and her follow-up with various concerned/impacted residents. For future issues, AS/KMR will include it as a new agenda item and/or ask the concerned resident to attend our EAC meetings. EAC members will then work collaboratively on responses to residents in a timely manner. AC reported that STC is actively working with the township on a tree replacement plan for the Jenkintown-Washington Lane project.
- E. **Annual Report** – GS will let KMR know what the format will be for the annual report before taking next steps.
- F. **New Resident Packet** – EAC discussed what level of EAC content should be included in the packet.
Action item: AS to send link to our AT presentation about the Draft SUP Ordinance. CE will review energy and related links to make sure it is updated before sending to GS. KMR to touch base with the Township on the Montgomery Award and plastics update.
- G. **EAC Network** – JSH summarized sessions about climate action planning PA climate change network, solar for schools, Doylestown energy transition for schools, greening communities, light pollution, and online educational webinars. The EAC Network plans to host a website that will have all resources available to everyone, including farm programs and government support for gardening/urban farms.

6. Citizens’ Comments and Responses –

Relating to our efforts to respond appropriately to residents, LL cited Cheltenham Township as an example of a township installing more restrictions on the public’s ability to speak freely during meetings.

7. Next meeting – **April 10, 2024 (Virtual)** at 7 PM

8. Meeting adjourned at 9:46 PM.

Acronym Key:

AM – Ashley McIlvaine

AT – Abington Township

BOC – Board of Commissioners

CAP – Climate Action Plan

CDP – Climate Disclosure Project

CP – Comprehensive Plan

DEP - Department of Environmental Protection
EAC – Environmental Advisory Council
EDC – Economic Development Committee
LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
MLK – Martin Luther King, Jr.
PEC – Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Rf100 – Ready for 100
STC – Shade Tree Commission
SUP – Single-Use Plastics
TTFWP – Tookany-Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership
USGBC – U.S. Green Building Council
WT – Wissahickon Trails

Engagement Report – March 2023

1. Township events, meetings, & programs:

- 2/8 – BOC meeting and working session, 7 pm and 7:30 pm
- 2/24 – Electronics recycling event, 9 am
- 2/27 – Planning Commission meeting

2. Community Partnerships:

- A. [Montgomery County Parks, Trails & Historic Sites](#) Advisory Board: J. Webb is supporting as a member.
- B. [Tookany-Tacony/Frankford Watershed Partnership](#) (TTFWP): S. Myerov is supporting TTFWP as a board member D. Bell and J. Sherwood are monitoring water quality as “Streamkeepers” once a month. [Stream Smart program](#) continues and residents can inquire about program guidelines [here](#). Please contact Ryan Neuman: 215-744-1853 if interested in home audit ryan@ttfwatershed.org.
- C. [Pennypack Watershed](#): As part of the Upstream Suburban Philadelphia Cluster in the Delaware River Watershed Initiative (DRWI), [Delaware River Watershed Initiative \(DRWI\)](#). J. Sherwood is monitoring water quality as a “Streamkeeper” once a month.
- D. [Wissahickon Watershed \(Wissahickon Trails\)](#): EAC will support WT’s outreach in the Sandy Run headwaters focus area. WT’s [Stream Smart program](#) continues to provide Roychester Park neighbors with free stormwater consultations, free rain barrels and other support. If you are a resident near Roychester Park and Overlook Elementary School interested in participating in this program, please contact Erin Landis at Erin@wissahickontrails.org
- E. Boy Scouts: J. Webb is serving as liaison.
- F. [Wyncote Audubon Society](#) (WAS) and [Audubon Mid-Atlantic](#): J. Sherwood is supporting
- G. [Abington Community Taskforce](#) (ACT): a volunteer is needed to support future meetings.
- H. Penn State Abington – J. Sorrentino is supporting as liaison on sustainability issues.
- I. [Rydal Meadowbrook Civic Association](#) (RMCA): C. Evans is supporting as a board member.
- J. [Briar Bush Nature Center](#): M. Kaczalek is supporting as a board member.
- K. [Redeemer Valley Community Garden](#): J. Sherwood is supporting.
- L. [AT Shade Tree Commission](#) – Trish Gallagher serves on the AT comprehensive plan board.
- M. [Family Promise Montco Food Pantry](#) – EAC will continue to collect donations.
- N. [Penn State Extension Master Watershed Stewards](#): S. Myerov serves on statewide committee
- O. [Willow Grove NAACP](#): C. Evans is supporting as a member and EAC liaison.
- P. [Salem Baptist Church](#): C. Evans is serving as the EAC liaison.
- Q. [Bird Town Pennsylvania](#) J. Sherwood and A. Christy are supporting Abington Bird Town events shown below.
- R. Abington Township Stream Salt Management: Dave Bell has been monitoring (since 2019) and continues to monitor 2 AT sites year-round for the Izaak Walton League Winter Salt Watch. <https://www.iwla.org/water/stream-monitoring/winter-salt-watch>

3. School partnerships

- A. Abington School District –liaison needed.
- B. ASHS Service Learning: submit volunteer requests online: <https://www.abington.k12.pa.us/resources/service-learning/service-learning-opportunities/>
- C. Bryn Mawr College – C. Evans is liaison

4. Public space project maintenance:

- A. Crosswicks Wildlife Sanctuary: J. Sherwood and J. Glassman are volunteering.

- B. Edge Hill Woods Preserve – R. Eisman is coordinating a friends group effort with EAC, STC and Wyncote Audubon.
- C. Ethel Jordan Park: TTFWP is maintaining the riparian buffer, rain garden and 2015 trees.
- D. Hallowell Park: A. Soo is liaison. STC, Friends of Hallowell Park, and neighborhood volunteers support cleanups, tree-plantings, and monitor park and stream conditions.
- E. Jackson Park: C. Evans is plan liaison. A. Christy (STC) is monitoring the 21 EAC trees.
- F. [Keswick Ave Train Underpass Garden](#): EAC to coordinate with C. Parkinson.
- G. Roslyn Park: A volunteer is needed to monitor, & support riparian buffer & rain garden maintenance as needed.
- H. Roychester Park: J. Sorrentino and J. Webb will work with WT & monitor & organize riparian buffer maintenance, as needed.
- I. Iris's Triangle Garden: Garden volunteers are needed, please contact J. Sherwood.
- J. Boy Scout Preserve: STC is monitoring.

5. Social Media

- A. EAC newsletters: K. McGarry-Rosen will continue to send out e-newsletters.
- B. Website: Please review and send content and comments to A. McIlvaine and A. Soo.
- C. Facebook: Reached **1.3K** likes and **1.4K** followers. We have **707** followers on [Instagram](#). Please post or send content to one of the FB administrators: K. McGarry-Rosen.
- D. Twitter: please use “AbingtonEAC” account.
- E. Township website and email blast is available for announcements.
- F. Press: Events may be posted to Abington Patch.

Events and meetings

3/12 – [Shade Tree Commission](#), 7:30 pm (SM, AS)
 3/13 – [EAC monthly meeting](#), 7 pm (AS)
 3/13 – [Human Relations Commission](#), 7 pm (CE)
 3/14 – [BOC meeting](#), 7 pm (KMR), working session canceled
 3/19 – [Zoning Hearing Board](#), 7 pm (SM)
 3/26 – Planning Commission canceled, 7:30 pm (SM)

Administrative Duties

ACT meetings - ?
 BOC * (2nd Thu) - KMR
 BOC Working Committee (2nd Thu) – KMR
 Comprehensive Plan Committee- AS
 EAC Email Account – AS
 Economic Development Committee - JSO
 Friends of Hallowell Park meetings – AS
 Human Relations Commission – CE
 Infrastructure Committee - MG
 Planning Commission (4th Tue) - SM
 Redeemer Valley Farm & Community Garden meetings - JSH
 Rydal Meadowbrook Civic Association - ?
 Shade Tree Commission (STC) (2nd Tue) – SM/AS
 Strategic Plan Committee - MM
 Zoning Hearing Board (3rd Tue) - SM