

**Abington Township
Environmental Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes for April 13, 2022**

Call to Order: 7:03 pm

Attendees:

Members: Cakky Evans (CE), Michele Kaczalek (MK), Karin McGarry-Rosen (KMR), Sue Myerov (SM), Andrea Soo (AS), John Sorrentino (JSO), Jim Webb (JW)

Associate Members: Peaches Cooper, (PC), Jennifer Sherwood (JSh)

Others Present: Lora Lehmann (resident), Nathan Vasserman (IT Officer, Abington Township)

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the March 2022 meeting were approved with edits.
2. **Amendments to the Agenda:** YMCA summer service-learning project, PREIT Earth Day event
3. **Reports:**
 - A. Chairperson's Report – Approved
 - B. Treasurer's Report – Approved
4. **Committee Reports:**
 - A. Policy – None
 - B. Programs – Approved
 - C. Engagement – Approved
5. **Active Business**
 - A. **Climate Action Draft Plan (CAP) and Shared Energy Manager Program Update** – CE will meet with Patricia Gallagher (STC) on 4/19 to continue draft and the national lands system aspects of the LfC recertification. Our shared energy manager, Wilson Engineering Services, will also be scheduling a meeting with AM, Angelo Pontelandolfo (AT Superintendent of Public Works), and CE to discuss their recommendations.
 - B. **Other Energy and Climate Action Initiatives**
 1. Ready for 100 Abington Clean Energy Plan Team (ACEPT) Update – Rf100 campaign is having meetings to emphasize community outreach. Guest speakers have provided valuable resources about federal money for clean energy projects that may be useful to integrate into our Climate Action Plan.
 - Level 2 EV Charging Stations Rebate Program – CE suggested the next step should be to draft an RFP to do an energy audit on our fleet of vehicles.
 - PACleanEnergy.com website – Need to identify a steering committee consisting of multiple municipalities to help guide the direction of the web resources. EAC will discuss Abington Township's level of involvement with this resource.
 2. Municipal Energy Procurement and Efficiency Next Steps – CE reported that AM/Abington Township is continuing to work on the natural gas contractor bid.
 3. Climate Change Legislation/Strategies – CE and PG will discuss this during their 4/19 meeting.
 - C. **Development Plan and Zoning Review and Coordination** – Final review letters for the DJS building addition and proposed Huntingdon Valley Chipotle were submitted to the Planning Commission (PC); SM summarized key comments. EAC is still reviewing the PREIT development proposal. SM also reported that the PC would now like to receive our EAC comments three weeks in advance.
 - D. **Vision2035 Comprehensive Plan Development** – A future land use survey and the implementation chapter will be next on the CP agenda. CE shared details of Ward 6 Commissioner Mike Thompson's newsletter which included his summary of our township's complex housing situation and estimated population growth. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, 4/19, at 6 pm.
 - E. **Rain Barrel program** – New RB workshop has been added for June 11 at the township training center. Redeemer Valley will host a RB workshop on May 14. We will have a RB build this Saturday (4/16) with the Girl Scouts.
 - F. **Next steps for composting, solid waste and recycling:**
 - Composting - First internal meeting with EAC members is planned for tomorrow (4/14) to discuss initial steps, education, who should be involved (township, private businesses, residents), and who to contact.

- **Solid Waste** – CE mentioned there is a grassroots community organization called the Chester County Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL) that is leading the environmental justice movement in Chester, PA. They have shared useful information about the health effects of Covanta’s trash incinerator. This information may help inform Abington Township decisions on solid waste management.
- G. **Bird Town Events** – Bird walks are planned for Lorimer Park and Fox Chase Farm a couple of times per week in April and May. Next event is the native plant sale/swap. Current Bird Town committee (JSh and Andrew Christy/STC) will be planning native plant garden tours starting in June (details to follow on locations and frequency). Bird Town groups will also be hosting a series of “how-to” Zoom webinars in the near future.
- H. **Plastic Bag Ban Survey:**
- KMR shared current results of the survey (based on 430 responses). Results included 96.5% of respondents live in Abington, 60% think local government should play a role in limiting plastic bag use, 92% have reusable bags / 54% actually use them regularly. In addition, PREIT is inviting EAC to host a table during their Earth Day event at Willow Grove Mall on Friday, 4/22, to promote our plastic bag survey. Details to follow. Next step is to engage the businesses and commissioners.
- I. **StreamSmart Block Party (Erin Landis, WT)** – Scheduled for May 7 (rain date of May 14). SM suggests we promote this event in our EAC newsletter and social media.
6. **New Business:**
- A. **Service Learning Day with ASHS** – JW announced the deadline to submit a proposal for ASHS students to participate in a May 27th service learning event is May 1. Must be a 5-hour block event with 10th-11th graders.
- B. **PA Clean Energy website** – See item B1, second bullet.
- C. **EAC comments for Abington Township Community Development Block Grant 2022 Annual Action Plan** – CE discussed this block grant (funded by the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development) which aims to improve housing and human services for low/moderate-income persons. CE is proposing to draft a comment letter that may include recommendations for green energy, lead abatement, reducing fossil fuels, and installing more efficient heating systems, etc. She hopes to draft comments from the EAC in May.
- D. **YMCA Summer Service Learning** – KMR mentioned an email from Robin Tucker (YMCA adolescent coordinator) who is requesting service-learning summer opportunities for their youth (14-22 year olds) beginning July 5. EAC will request additional details to determine if we can provide any opportunities.
- E. **“No-Mow May” Campaign** – CE shared info from Bee City USA about “No Mow May” which is a campaign advocating not to mow your lawn during the month of May to give pollinators an opportunity to thrive. EAC will need to check with the Township and code enforcement on permission to promote this campaign since unmowed lawns may become a nuisance. JSh mentioned that the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust offers a “how-to” youtube video on the proper way to support “No Mow May”.

7. Citizens’ Comments and Responses:

Lora Lehmann (LL) comments:

- Expressed concern about the “No Mow May” campaign; may cause tension between neighbors who don’t share the same opinion. LL agreed with JSh that residents should form individual gardens that support pollinators.
- Emphasized the importance of actively engaging the Township on policies developed in the Comprehensive Plan. LL did not agree with Mike Thompson’s evaluation of population growth and housing needs. She believes that population will follow development, not the converse, and that we need to de-densify our township.
- Asked EAC to consider a plan to repair the Boy Scout Preserve.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm

Next meeting – May 11, 2022 ([Virtual](#)) at 7 PM

Acronym Key:

ACEPT – Abington Clean Energy Plan Team

ASHS – Abington Senior High School

AT – Abington Township

ATFD - Abington Township Fire Department
BOC – Board of Commissioners
CCPC - Comprehensive Plan Consistency Committee
CDP – Carbon Disclosure Project
CP – Comprehensive Plan
DEP – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
EAC – Environmental Advisory Council
EV – Electric vehicle
GHG – Greenhouse Gas
LCAP – Local Climate Action Program
LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LFC&C – LEED for Cities and Communities
Rf100 – Ready for 100
RFP – Request for proposal
STC – Shade Tree Commission
USGBC – U.S. Green Building Council