

**Abington Township
Environmental Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2024**

Call to Order: 7:02 pm

Attendees:

Members: Mitch Gertz (MG), Karin McGarry-Rosen (KMR), Mike Melchiorre (MM), Susan Myerov (SM), 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: Meryl Hiatt (MH, resident/volunteer), Nathan Vasserman (NV, Abington Township Information Technology Officer)

1. **Approval of Minutes:** June 2024 minutes were approved with edits.

2. **Amendments to the Agenda:**

- Guest Bill Sabey to present about Community Choice Aggregation support letter
- SEPTA Roslyn station stabilization project update
- Joint STC/EAC budget request from Andrew Christy

3. **Active Business**

- A. **Single-Use Plastic (SUP) Ban Ordinance Public Info Session (Karin/Andrea)** – KMR met with Keswick Business Association which included a core business group of Gerhard's, Penny's Flowers, and MinuteMan Press. No major opposition, but some members expressed concern about enforcing a bag fee. KMR will draft a memo with an electronic survey to send to other businesses. Outreach efforts have included engaging with the public via social media, going door-to-door with local businesses, and meeting with NAACP/Civic Associations. CE suggested identifying a business champion and contacting Romaine Crawford/PREIT. AS updated SUP ordinance to better define plastic bags and other materials and will include it with a revised memo in the next available BOC weekly packet.
- Action item: KMR/AS to reach out to Carol, use EAC funds if we choose to send postcards with business survey, identify business champion, and contact new person at PREIT.
- B. **Composting Coalition Update (John/Andrea)** – Abington's Refuse department did not want to engage with SRC Engineers regarding potential composting capacity. May need to explore private business services instead.
- C. **Recycling Program Outreach (EJ)** – EJ will give a recycling presentation to the Abington Club kids club. KMR noted that one resident said the recycling criteria isn't clear (e.g. how to handle pizza boxes). EAC will need to explore how the township website can provide better instructions on how to handle various forms of trash (paper, rubbish, and recyclables).
- D. **Climate Action Plan Draft Completion, ICLEI Membership, and technical assistance (CE)** – CE asked if MG/MM could assist with this initiative. Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG) applications were submitted last week for EV charging stations and EV purchases.
- E. **Bird Town updates (JSH)** – Continuing monthly bird walks. JSH is requesting Bird Town help with pollinator gardens/habitat/annual report, organizing Bird Town events, and attending meetings. No native garden tours are planned for this year, but hoping to restart next year. PC has offered to support AC/JSH, where needed. Bird Town meetings are quarterly.
- F. **Abington School District Collaboration (Peaches and Nancy)** - ASD hasn't provided any other infrastructure meeting updates. PC/CE/NO will have a meeting to discuss EAC recommendations by August. This item will be put on the agenda for next month.
- G. **50th Anniversary of the EAC** – A new subcommittee was formed to include CE, KMR, MM, JSH, JSO, and PC. Members will decide on when to meet and discuss plans to commemorate EAC's 50th anniversary.

4. New Business

- A. **Road Salt (DB)** – Dave Bell spoke about the persistence of road salt contamination on our roads, in our waterways, and in groundwater and presented various findings to the EAC. Information to educate the public on the road salt issue and how to reduce the use of it is now posted on our township website and advertised in out township and EAC newsletters. DB has asked the EAC to look at the info sent, find alternative solutions/best practices, look at issues at Baeder Creek headwaters, find out what the township is doing and what they're researching, and target contractors and the general public on education. DB suggested contacting Ryan Neuman at TTFWP who has studies/maps/reports from Izaak Walton League (national conservation group). JSH suggested that salt storage at the township yard and school yards may be contributing to the high levels found in streams in Abington.

Action item: SM will follow up with the various requests.

- B. **Community Choice Aggregation Municipality Support Sign-On Letter (CE/Bill Sabey)** – This initiative is about local governments procuring power on behalf of their residents, businesses, and municipal accounts from an alternative supplier while still receiving transmission and distribution service from their existing utility provider. Seven (7) municipalities have expressed interest in aggregating to lower cost and seeking public comment in the next 30 days. Bill Sabey is requesting that EAC ask township officials to sign petition to endorse initiative. The goal is to have a power purchase agreement to establish a local power source and reduce cost. SM made motion to support the CCA Municipality letter of support to BOC; EAC members agreed to carry motion.

Action item: CE/MM to request township to sign petition letter of support.

- C. **Pre-Night Out (Aug 5)** – Key items include educating the public with road salt fact sheet, native plant gardening pamphlets, pitching bean bag “trash items” into three different refuse bins (game), Abington Township trash/recycling policy magnet and “I recycle” sticker giveaway. Volunteers will include AS, JSO, KMR, MG, and MM. JSO to check on table arrangement.
- D. **School District Senior HS Fall 2024-2025 Backpack Drive (Sue)** - MG makes motion to vote on whether we want to contribute, SM seconded. EAC voted no to contribute, but individual members may contribute funds or supplies on their own.
- E. **CDP Questionnaire**- CE wants to submit again by the 9/12 deadline. Will need to evaluate adaptation goals and establish a canopy goal with STC as partner.
- F. **SEPTA Rockwell Rd stabilization** - MG said SEPTA will remove all vegetation (95%) in order stabilize the track area. However, a local resident is concerned about losing trees and natural area. SEPTA has assured EAC/resident that they will plant replacement trees and start the work the weekend after Labor Day. MG will connect with Andrew Christy of the STC for assistance. SEPTA has been very amenable so far.
- G. **2025 STC budget request** – STC has asked EAC to join them on 1) a joint funding request like last year (15K to plant/maintain native plant gardens) and 2) another budget request for 20K to establish a township-wide invasive plant action plan with a Natural Lands person to assist. JSO made a motion to support budget request, SM seconded, all in favor/approved.
- H. **Montgomery Award** – EAC still needs to negotiate with the township on when/where to award the last two awardees as follows:
2020 - Pennoni
2021 - Penn State Abington

5. Citizens' Comments and Responses:

Meryl Hiatt (resident/volunteer) spoke about the PA Master Naturalist program that trains volunteers to be in the community and do naturalist projects and native plantings. She came to see what we're doing and expressed interest in participating in such activities with the EAC. JSH will connect with MH on being a volunteer with Bird Town which is in line with her interests and effort to be a Master Naturalist.

6. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Next meeting – **August 14, 2024 (Virtual)** at 7 PM

Acronym Key:

AM – Ashley Mcllvaine

AT – Abington Township

BOC – Board of Commissioners

CAP – Climate Action Plan

CDP – Climate Disclosure Project

CP – Comprehensive Plan

EAC – Environmental Advisory Council

EV – Electric vehicle

LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

STC – Shade Tree Commission

SUP – Single-Use Plastics

TTFWP – Tookany-Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership

USGBC – U.S. Green Building Council

WT – Wissahickon Trails