

**Abington Township
Environmental Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes & Engagement Report
July 12, 2023**

Call to Order: 7:03 pm

Attendees:

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

Associate Members: Peaches Cooper (PC), Elena Jadach (EJ), Jennifer Sherwood (JSH)

Others Present: Grace Sekelewski (GS, Abington Township), Marlene Kessler (MK), Nancy O'Neill (NO, new associate member), Maria (no last name)

1. **Approval of Minutes:** June 2023 minutes were approved with minor edits. SM abstained from motion to approve.
2. **Amendments to the Agenda** – None
3. **Reports:**
 - A. Engagement – Shown with minutes.
4. **Active Business**
 - A. **New EAC member welcome** – SM introduced Mike Melchiorre and welcomed him to our council as a new member.
 - B. **Associate Member nominations** – SM made a motion to approve Nancy O'Neill as a new EAC associate member. JSO made a motion to approve Mitch Gertz as a new EAC associate member. All were in favor and motions were approved.
 - C. **Rain Barrel Program** – 1,277 RBs sold, 5 remaining RBs for Wissahickon Trails were picked up, and RB payment form was disabled and a new form set up for donations only
 - D. **LD 23-02 – Mt. Carmel Ave. Subdivision plan review (Susan)** – SM reviewed the proposed development plan for a 1.2-acre vacant lot at the corner of Mt. Carmel Ave and Rices Mill Rd. The proposed plan includes a 5-lot, single-family subdivision that will result in a net loss of impervious cover. Key EAC comments included increasing landscape buffers to reduce noise from the railroad corridor/improve aesthetics, recommending native tree species and understory vegetation, improving soil amendments, adding green infrastructure, and ensuring appropriate stormwater management.
 - E. **2023 CDP (Climate Disclosure Project) Cities Annual Questionnaire Response due July 25, 2023, 2022 Feedback** – CE briefly reviewed our involvement with the CDP annual questionnaire which has helped track climate info for cities since 2016. If a city achieves a score of A, then it will be made public. CE noted the questionnaire is due on July 25, 2023. The Abington Township CAP will be incorporated with our questionnaire response.
 - F. **Composting Coalition update** – JSO reported that he passed the short course on municipal composting which is administered by the Institute for Local Self Reliance. Current status is that Montgomery County does not have a viable location in which to do large-scale composting. Originally, White Marsh, Jenkintown, and Abington Townships were exploring opportunities for a public or private partnership to initiate a residential composting program, but we have not identified a resource yet. JSH suggested investigating where Abington and Holy Redeemer Hospitals send their kitchen waste for composting. Also check where EarthBio Technologies does their composting.
 - G. **Plastics Update** – KMR and AS attended the last single-use plastics meeting on 6/19, but no new developments on our part. KMR also recently emailed Commissioner Hecker on when our single-use plastics ban draft ordinance will be considered by the BOC, but there has been no commitment on a timeframe yet.
 - H. **Township Recreation, Parks and Open Space Board update** – KMR reported that the committee is planning to present the Draft Open Space Plan to BOC in July (working session on 7/12, open to public) which will include updates and feedback results. Also mentioned Vahey is interested in continuing the open space committee after the plan is approved to manage development (\$47 million grant to spend before the end of the year). AS interested in continued committee effort.
5. **New Business:**
 - A. **Meadowbrook Nature Preserve** – AS reported that this property was gifted by the Herkness family to Abington Township as a nature preserve with specific protections and conditions. AS will assess where this property stands in terms of its stewardship and previous plantings and report back on how we can improve the natural areas in partnership with the STC.
 - B. **Abington Township EAC web page updates (AS)** – AS requested comments and suggestions on how we can improve the content and visibility of our EAC website. Examples include adding all social media links at the top of the home page,

grouping upcoming events together, adding energy conservation tips (tax credits, Rf100 recommendations), webinars of interest, calendar events (township or Google calendar), etc.

- C. **Abington Township GIS (AS)** – AS reported that the EAC now has access to Abington Township’s ESRI ArcGIS platform (web-based and desktop) and shared an example of what it looks like. This application can be used as a collaborative tool to illustrate features or problem areas in a geographic area. SM inquired if we have access to current stormwater and other infrastructure features in GIS.
- D. **Birdtown Mini Grant Application** – JSH reported that PA Birdtown would like to schedule a Birdtown sign presentation with the BOC at a future public meeting or regular BOC meeting. Date to be determined. In addition, Birdtown is offering mini grants of \$500 each. Applications are due in October. EAC suggested two options for the grant; native plant sale at the Abington Library or creation of a native plant/pollinator garden somewhere. SM made a motion to provide 25% of proceeds from future native plant sales to Abington Library. EAC members approved motion.
- E. **EAC Network Fall Gathering and Survey** – In-person event is scheduled for Saturday, Oct 21, in West Chester and they are calling for ideas and lightning topics of discussion through a survey. In addition, Upper Dublin Township will be hosting their own Bux-Mont EAC regional gathering on 9/23 and will be sending a request for ideas and discussion topics.
- F. **July and August volunteer opportunities** – JSh shared the following June (and beyond) events and asked for volunteers:
 - a. **July 31** – Abington Pre-Night Out; EAC discussed themes and activities we did last year. Activities included bean barrel toss, light switch decorating, bird conservation education, but no giveaways. CE suggested offering information to the public on energy conservation and green energy opportunities (e.g. tax incentives for EVs, upgrading your home to conserve energy, etc.). AS suggested offering information on negative impacts of single-use plastics and how to connect with their commissioners on this issue. General theme of “Did you know...?” will potentially cover all discussed topics.
 - b. **August 9** – Abington Library has requested EAC to present a mini workshop from 6:30-7:30 pm on 8/9. JSH, PC, and EJ plan to participate with an interactive game for kids.
 - c. **Sept 23** – Upper Dublin Township will be hosting a regional EAC networking event on 9/23.
 - d. **Oct 21** – EAC Network Fall Gathering in West Chester, PA.

6. Citizens’ Comments and Responses – None.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 pm

Next meeting – August 9, 2023 ([Virtual](#)) at 7 PM

Acronym Key:

ACT – Abington Community Task Force

ASHS – Abington Senior High School

BOC – Board of Commissioners

CAP – Climate Action Plan

CP – Comprehensive Plan

EAC – Environmental Advisory Council

EV – Electric vehicle

GIS – Geographic Information Systems

Rf100 – Ready for 100

STC – Shade Tree Commission

TTFWP – Tookany-Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership

Engagement Report – August 2023

1. Township events, meetings, & programs:

- A. 7/31/23, 5-9 pm, Pre-Night Out Event: KMR, MM, JSH, AS, JSO, JW attended.

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 **1.2K** likes and **1.3K** followers. We have **650** 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

8/9/23 – Abington EAC monthly meeting.

8/9/23 – Abington Library EAC mini workshop. JSH, PC, and EJ plan to participate.

9/23/23 – Upper Dublin regional EAC gathering.

10/21 – EAC Network Fall Gathering in West Chester, PA.

Meetings

BOC * (second Thursday) SM

BOC Working Committee (second Thursday)

Zoning** (third Tuesday) __

Planning** (fourth Tuesday) __

Shade Tree Commission (STC)**
(second Tuesday) __

Friends of Hallowell Park meetings*
AS

ACT meetings __

Rydal Meadowbrook Civic
Association __

Redeemer Valley Farm and
Community Garden meetings JSh