

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

Call to Order: 7:33 pm

Attendees:

Members: Cakky Evans (CE), Michele Kaczalek (MK), Karin McGarry-Rosen (KMR), Sue Myerov (SM),

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

Others Present: Andrew Christy (AC), Cathy Gauthier (CG), Ashley McIlvaine (AM, Assistant Township Manager)

Approval of Minutes: June minutes were approved

Amendments to the Agenda: None

Reports below were shared and discussed:

- A. Chairperson's Report - None
- B. Treasurer's Report - Reviewed

Committee Reports below were shared and discussed:

- A. Policy - None
- B. Programs - None
- C. Engagement - Reviewed

Energy and Climate Action Initiatives

CE discussed the [June 29, 2022 Mack Truck/Ready For 100 Electric Trash Vehicles for Municipal Use Webinar Presentation](#) for Municipal Officials, Ready for 100 organizations, and EACs. Mark Rebelo from the Township's Public Works Department attended. Mark Maxwell reached out to CE soon afterwards and she responded with an email recommending the Township take advantage of Bergey's (the local Mack dealer for these vehicles) free cost benefit analysis of all Township's Public Works refuse trucks and test rides. JSh commented that the Township should also consider a fleet audit of its vehicles to determine how to prioritize and proceed with electrification of its fleets. CE agreed, noting that the draft Climate Action Plan expounds that the Township's fleet vehicles' fuels constitute over 50% of its greenhouse gas emissions and 56% of energy use. This sector comprises over 40% of Township energy costs. She also noted that the 2022 budgets contain a line item for such an audit and will follow up on Monday, July 18, when AM, JSh, and CE are scheduled to meet about next steps for the Township EV charging stations.

AS has been checking in with Mike McHale about when we should renegotiate the Township's natural gas contracts. Right now, the Township is paying the PECO rate until Mr. McHale advises otherwise. AS also added that George Wrigley is coordinating the Wastewater Treatment Plant's (WWTP) energy efficiency, operations, and costs with the PA DEP and DOE's SWIFT program. She added that George is very thoughtful about how he can reduce costs. Heather Cowley is the point of contact for the PA DEP. The PA DEP hired consultants to visit the Township's WWTP two months ago.

Who is going to manage it from the Township side. Someone from facilities.

Counties will look into it.

Development Plans

SM discussed Penn State Abington's (PSA) Land Development Plan for the new academic building. SM pulled up the plans and has talked to STC about coordinating our comments. There is an extensive landscaping plan.

PSA plans to remove two buildings, Hillcrest and a smaller athletic building, but not the Cloverly building. SM looked into stormwater management. The Land Development Proposal includes seven Stormwater Control Measures. Most are underground and only one is a nature-based solution through bioswales. SM will comment about using more natural-based solutions. She will also review the landscaping plan, but defers comments on species selection to the STC. It appears that

several large caliper trees are being removed. Two landscape architects have contributed to this project. SM asked for help on evaluating species and will include a blanket statement on EAC preference for using as many native species as possible.

SM can ask Allison of Pennoni Engineers about the planned building energy systems. SM will be working with the STC to coordinate a public review.

At this juncture, Cathy Gauthier from the Planning Commission (PC) joined in because she is interested in this PSA plan. She noted that the PC takes our recommendations very seriously.

CE should give the energy and environmental design recommendations to SM. SM, through AM, will ask Terry Castorina if we can have a special joint meeting with the STC and how to coordinate it publicly.

SM offered a sustainability suggestion. Upper Gwynedd Township EAC has developed a resource checklist which we should consider incorporating into our subdivision process. SM noted that we could recommend that this be included in the subdivision handbook as a guide. This would help our development community understand what measures the EAC are looking to see in plans. Need to review if this process needs to be codified.

SM will send out the electronic version of the checklist to the group. JSh and CE will look at the electronic version.

The next Comp Plan team meeting will be July 19th.

Rain Barrel Program

KMG reported that there are 15 barrels in the pipeline. She will be looking for a September date and location for a RB workshop. The group discussed possible locations. CE will look into having a RB workshop at Unity Day on September 10th at Salem Baptist Church.

Bird Town

AC from the STC and JSh reported on Bird Town Updates. AC hosted the June 25 Abington Bird Town Native Plant Garden Tour. AC asked for input about the autumn tours. Parks and Recreation is putting the autumn garden tour registration in their printed Fall Guide and their ActiveNet online registration system. EAC newsletters will include a link to the Parks and Recreation webpage. The tours will also be announced through the PA Bird Town Program. A discussion ensued about having garden tour registration fees to reduce the number of cancellations. AC asked if we are okay charging a small fee and which account it should go into. JSh responded that fees should go into the EAC Sustainability Account. AC will talk to Jessica Tholey to ensure the total fee does not exceed \$5. AM said that Parks and Recreation would transfer the funds to the EAC account. AC will ask Jessica Tholey about announcing that scholarships are available. It was discussed that the fees will be used for planting native plants in public parks and for future native plant sales.

Native Plant Sale

JSh brought up that there will be a fall plant sale at the Abington Library on September 24. Proceeds will be shared with the Library and the EAC Sustainability Fund. AC will talk with the library about the details. This event will be a sale, and not include a plant swap, as many of the plants that were brought for the spring swap were not re-sellable. JSh and AC requested being reimbursed for purchasing plants for the fall sale. EAC agreed to reimburse AC through his "Homegrown Habitats" wholesale business because he can purchase plants wholesale for less than retail. How many plants they buy will be determined in the next few weeks.

SM asked about replacing the library's worn-down rain barrel; KMR will reach out to the library. CE asked about what to do with the current barrel. KMR will also look into winterizing the current barrel.

JSh will continue doing Bird Towns walks at Lorimer Park and ask Parks and Recreation to list these events.

AC gave an update about a TC Energy grant and collaborating with the Willow Grove Branch of the NAACP for the next tree giveaway. Crestmont and Willow Grove have much of the Township's lowest tree canopy and none of the trees at the last giveaway went to those areas' homeowners due to how quickly the online tree registrations were filled.

Plastic Bag Ban Update - Nothing new to report. Progress is ongoing with the Plastic Bag Ban Coalition meetings.

Composting Update – Nothing to report.

Montgomery Award: MK reported that nothing is scheduled. Nominations were voted on for 2021 and 2020. There was a decision to honor the 2020 and 2021 winners at a BOC meeting and MK will coordinate.

Pre-Night Out: There was a decision to participate in the Pre-Night Out on August 1st. Proposed activities include a Rain Barrel bean toss, the Abington Sustainability Pledge, and a spinning wheel with numbers using themes such as climate actions and energy efficiency, providing info for the plastic survey, light switch decorations for children, and providing popcorn.

KMG will send out an email about pulling this all together by touching base with John Sorrentino. SM will provide the tent.

Special BOC Meeting

PC attended the June 9 [Wissahickon Trails Public Hearing Special Meeting by the Board of Commissioners on June 9, 2022](#). trail hearing. Jennifer Bilger and another person presented to the BOC about the need for a rain garden for stormwater (at Overlook?) and how this is in line with the AT Comp Plan. There is need for support from the EAC and the Montco Planning Commission. PC also reported that, just before this presentation, there was another meeting in which a resident was fined for participating in the "No Mow May" campaign. The resident asked the BOC to consider updating the code and to read a piece from the Penn State Extension pamphlet. The resident gave this pamphlet to Manager Manfredi.

CE noted that, in the future, she will be moving out of Abington Township, but does not know when.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm

Next meeting – August 10, 2022 (Virtual) at **7 PM**

Acronym Key:

AT – Abington Township

BOC – Board of Commissioners

CAP – Climate Action Plan

CP – Comprehensive Plan

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

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

PADEP – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Rf100 – Ready for 100

STC – Shade Tree Commission

SWIFt – Sustainable Wastewater Infrastructure Accelerator (DOE program)

USGBC – U.S. Green Building Council

WWTP – Wastewater Treatment Plant