

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, April 25, 2023
Minutes (Approved 5/23/23)

Present: Margaret Betz, David Boonin, David Calloway, Phil Coleman, Hannah Covert, Alex Danovitch, Shirley Dodson, Sue Edwards, Nancy English, Norm Horn, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, Scarlett McCahill, John McKinstry, Susie O'Donnell, Jennifer Pfluger, Faran Savitz.

The meeting began on Zoom and in person in Borough Hall at 7:30, Elizabeth Jenkins and John McKinstry serving as co-chairs.

1. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

2. Guest Speaker on Passive Houses

Norm Horn of Passive House's Pennsylvania Chapter spoke to us about passive houses. Buildings are important because we spend 90% of our time in them, and they account for 40% of carbon dioxide emissions. A passive house is an efficient building, exceeding LEED standards. Passive Houses rest of five principles: 1) continuous insulation that is climate specific, 2) airtight building enclosure, 3) thermal bridge free construction, 4) high performance windows and doors 5) fresh ventilation with heat recovery. These five principles reduce energy consumption by up to 90%. They are ideal for traditional heat pumps.

He suggested that the Swarthmore EAC promote passive buildings, including amending our building codes to require this. Phil noted that Cathy D'Ignazio and Tom Mandel retrofitted their house at 307 Dartmouth Avenue to be a passive house.

3. Minutes of March Meeting

The Minutes of the March 2023 Meeting were APPROVED.

4. Upcoming Talk

There will be a talk this Thursday by Chip Taylor about Monarch Watch.

5. CCA for PA Update

Elizabeth reported that the CCA for PA Program is being taken very seriously among the various boroughs in Pennsylvania now that Narberth and Swarthmore have signed on. Media seems very interested, as well as Ambler, Morrisville and Downingtown. The interest extends beyond the southeast to include State College in Centre County and Steelton in Dauphin County. CCA for PA is communicating with PECO about implementing the program. A draft Implementation Plan between CCA for PA and PECO is presently in front of PECO. There is no action is required by the Borough at this time.

David Boonin shared that right now that if you stay with PECO, you pay about 9 cents/kilowatt-hour (and that is brown energy.) He found some green providers that are 2.3 cents less: Verde Energy, and Brighton Energy. Phil pointed out that Verde has a business model that lures people in with the low rate, but that rate jumps several fold when customers are no

longer paying attention. An advantage to having CCA is that our municipalities can prevent such bait-and-switch tactics.

Scarlett said she shared our information regarding CCA with Rutledge, Radnor and Alden.

There was discussion about also trying to get the Borough itself on green energy in case CCA did not move as fast as we hoped.

Phil noted that Will Williams, the sustainability person from West Chester, had been a little doubtful about CCA and that explains West Chester's tardiness in pursuing CCA.

6. 2022 EAC Report

Elizabeth reported that the EAC's Annual Report was sent to Borough Council, which thanked the EAC for its work.

7. Home Eco-Audits

Elizabeth noted that the EAC is looking for volunteers regarding native plants and eco-audits and volunteers to help with the administration of the eco-audit project. Those interested in helping this important effort should be in touch with her.

8. Open Space Survey

John sent a letter to the Cressons regarding the EAC's interest in preserving their gardens at 32 Amherst Avenue. He and others will be reaching out to Dr. Sam Ruby, the owner of 111 Dartmouth Avenue, to ascertain his interest in conveying the property to the Borough for use as a park.

9. Bird Town

Shirley Dodson, speaking for the Bird Town Working Group, noted that Bill Webb said that entity is not an official Borough Committee, but is instead a working group of the EAC. There are two new Bird Town signs in Little Crum Creek Park. Margaret Betz's parents are paying for another sign on Yale Avenue where it crosses Crum Creek.

Shirley and Ralf Graves, a Bird Town representative for Nether Providence Township are participating in a webinar to show other municipalities how they can become Bird Towns. There will be summer tabling opportunities at the Farmer's Market and Fun Fair where they plan to bring together Bird Town materials and Swarthmore College student ideas.

10. Zero Waste Ordinance Discussion

Alex Danovitch and Faran Savitz of Penn Environment were on the call to add their expertise on the draft Zero Waste Ordinance.

Scarlett McCahill gave an update on the draft ordinance. On May 1 and May 8 there will be council meetings on the ordinance, and council would welcome people to speak in favor of the draft ordinance. She asked if anyone would be willing to talk to the truck operators at Friday's truckathon and how this ordinance might affect them. She said if anyone is interested in approaching them, they should talk to the Town Center Coordinator.

She, David Boonin and Bill Webb met with Borough businesses on April 12. Ten provided feedback. They are mostly very supportive of the mission. The biggest question is about the fee,

especially what kind of bag triggers the 20-cent fee. For example, the dry cleaners wondered if a reusable dry cleaner bag be a rental? Are gift bags included? Could there be a fee permitted or encourage or require operators to give a refund for a customer who brings their own bag? Could there be clarification between product packaging?

Alex Danovitch and Faran Savitz responded to these questions. They noted that the fee is very important to the ordinance in that it is an inducement to get away from single-use bags, whether paper or plastic. Alex noted that in other cases of such fees, there is a lot of questions, but once in effect, those concerns do not seem to be a big deal.

Scarlett said that Mayor Marty Spiegel has suggested that we ban plastic now, and wait until later to legislate other kinds of single-use bags.

Faran suggested that the ordinance as presently written allows a business to apply for a temporary exemption as they look for sources. Haverford Township does this, and their EAC, which is the one that reviews those exemption, has received only one or two applications for an exemption.

Scarlett raised the possibility that there would be customer resistance to the bag fee. Faran responded that the fee would be preceded signs and other forms of consumer education before the fee takes effect. Alex noted that where this fee has gone into effect there has been little trouble from customers. He also noted that gift bag customers should be willing to pay 20 cents. Both emphasized that the fee is key to get rid of the mentality of single use bags.

<https://www.beyondplastics.org/dry-cleaner-guide>

Scarlett urged us to thank Scott Richardson who has been supportive of this effort with the other food venders, as well as the GM of the Co-Op.

Scarlet requested that as part of the zero waste/plastic update, the EAC produce a 1-2 page user's resource as a companion document to the ordinance.

11. EV Charging Station Grants

We discussed the grant opportunity overseen by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Committee (DVRPC) to get more EV chargers. The key information they need from us is recommended locations. The EAC APPROVED supporting this effort by DVRPC and that the site used be one that will get the most use and traffic. Across from Hobbs and other spots on Myers Avenue were sites mentioned. If anyone knows of other communities, particularly environmental justice communities who might be interested in this grant, they talk with David Boonin.

We held over until our May meeting the following items:

- Styrofoam: Opportunities to recycle - individual level, Borough level?
- Review and organize David Boonin's ideas regarding dividing up the Zoning/Code Based recommendations vs. Education vs. Other to support Ready for 100 goals (Part of the 2023 and onward planning process)

The meeting adjourned at 9:15.

Respectfully submitted,
John McKinstry