

**Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council**  
**Tuesday, June 27, 2023**  
**Minutes**  
**APPROVED July 25, 2023**

Present: Anna Brenner, David Boonin, Phil Coleman, Sue Edwards, Nancy English, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, John McKinstry, Milton Meyer, Susie O'Donnell, Jennifer Pfluger

Regrets: Margaret Betz, Hannah Covert, Carol Nackenoff

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 Comments**

Sue Kelly noted that not everyone recycles in town. She hopes the EAC will write an article for *The Swarthmorean* about recycling and the consequences of higher volumes of trash. Sue and Susie O'Donnell offered to write it with Elizabeth as editor. David noted that Bill Webb has purchased more recycling bins for the town center. Each household can only put out just two 50-gallon bins each week. This could be noted in the article. Yard waste is the easiest thing to take out of the waste stream, since it can easily be mulched. Anna Brenner offered to provide signs to help people know what is recyclable.

**2. Minutes from May 2023 Meeting**

Held over until next time.

**3. Allan Prindle**

Allan has moved to Crosslands. The EAC minuted its appreciation of all his work.

**4. Update of progress for Eco-audits**

Elizabeth reported that we have 14 households signed up this year, and 8 more are on the waitlist for 2024.

**5. Bird Town Update**

Shirley Dodson reported that the Swarthmore Bird Town Working Group will next meet July 12. Bird Town PA and Valley Forge Audubon Society have funds available now to support public native plant gardens. These funds are available for signage as well as plants. Bird Town PA will give grants of up to \$500 on a rolling basis. Applications are due by October 31. Valley Forge Audubon has funded native plant gardens in Nether Providence, Newtown Square, and Kennett Square and has new funds available for projects in 2023-24. If interested, notify Shirley and she will provide more information. Susie O'Donnell suggested that those doing Eco Audits would like to be able to give away a native plants.

**6. SRS Parking Lot Issue**

There are talks going on at a high district-wide level about changing SRS to being just a Kindergarten/1<sup>st</sup> grade building. That high level discussion includes paving over more of the campus. Sue Edwards, who lives across from SRS offered to keep tabs on this issue. Phil noted

that building new roads increases traffic and making it easier to drop kids off means more parents drop kids off rather than having kids walk. Phil also said he could check to see about when the school busses will be replaced with electric vehicles. Phil will talk with Tom Schaeffer who might be a resource for more walking to school and could help people understand the issue of paving over SRS. Elizabeth said she is on the SRS Home and School Sustainability Committee and has not heard anything about this issue. David noted that car lines are a way of undermining school/community interaction.

#### **7. Check in with SWEL - Swarthmore Electric Lawn Equipment folks (Vibhat Nair & Jonathan Lock)**

Phil noted that the Swarthmore Electric Lawn Initiative (Sw.eLL) is AFewSteps project now. The new website for SWELL went live Monday, June 26 and can be found here: <https://www.afewsteps.org/electriclawncare.html>

Vibhat Nair said that the money collected are loans, not donation. They need 100 households to participate to make this work and they have a half-dozen donations already. Once they have raised \$10,000, then they would seek out vendors to supply the machines. Then they would approach lawn services vendors to see if they would be interested in borrowing this money to buy the equipment. They would check to see if the company is committed to being green, and to see if there is enough commitment in the community to such a company. The ultimate goal is to raise \$30,000.

A discussion ensued about ordinances on gas-powered lawn equipment. One person said that if there was a gas-powered equipment ban, it would be better to have it apply to both private and commercial uses of lawn equipment. Others urged that we have the SWELL program in place first, otherwise there might be political pushback over a gasoline equipment ban. David said that many people have urged that Borough move to get rid of gas-powered lawn equipment. He noted that long lead times for implementation can help put people in mind about retiring their gas-powered equipment.

If anyone wants flyers about this, email Vibhat for them. We could have these at our table at the Farmers Market in August. We are asking all of us to help with the loan. He said that they might be able to fund two different lawn care companies, or even more if the idea is to replace just leaf blowers, rather than all lawn equipment.

#### **8. Follow-up discussion on presentation by Karen Taussig-Lux, Media Borough's Grant Administrator, about curbside composting**

David noted that Swarthmore's trash infrastructure is very different from Media: they do it themselves and we contract ours out. Bill Webb and he have a vision of getting us to trash collection every other week, thus freeing up time and energy to have a compost pick-up.

#### **9. List of resources to go on Swarthmore EAC Borough Webpage**

We should add a resource to the website on how to compost. Susie offered to send a link about how to compost at home from the aFewSteps website to Margaret to post on the EAC Facebook page. That link is:

<https://www.afewsteps.org/green-tips-of-the-week/make-the-most-of-food-waste-by-composting>

## **10. Zero Waste Plan Update**

Jennifer Pfluger reported that the latest draft of the Single-Use Products Regulations Ordinance that the EAC supports was presented to Borough Council for a vote at its June 12 legislative meeting by Interim Environment Committee Chair David Boonin in Scarlett McCahill's absence. The ordinance was approved as written by a vote of 4-2.

This ordinance regulates six categories of single-use products. It 1) prohibits single-use plastic bags, 2) prohibits expanded polystyrene foam products, 3) prohibits polystyrene (#6) plastic products, 4) requires businesses to charge a ten cent fee for paper bags, 5) requires dry cleaners to offer reusable garment bags and charge a ten cent fee per plastic bag, and 6) requires businesses to offer Disposable Foodware Accessories only upon demand or at self-serve stations. The prohibitions go into effect on January 8, 2024, and the paper bag fee and ordinance enforcement go into effect on April 22, 2024.

Jennifer thanked those who made public comments in support of the ordinance, which helped secure its passage: Shirley Dodson, Sue Kelly, Carol Nackenoff and Susie O'Donnell. Borough Council may call on the EAC to help businesses in their transition. Town Center has already asked the EAC for help manning waste stations at its June 15 Ice Cream Social and the Farmers Market has already asked the EAC for help in replenishing their stock of reusable bags.

Jenifer then presented the "EAC Working Plan Towards Zero Waste" for discussion and approval. It appears here:

### ***EAC Working Plan Towards Zero Waste in Swarthmore Borough Last updated May 2023***

#### ***Phase 1 (2022-2024)***

1. *Consider single-use plastics minimization initiatives ✓*
  1. *Survey businesses ✓*
  2. *Survey community ✓*
2. *Recommend single-use products regulations*
  1. *Assess and communicate evidence for best practices ✓*
  2. *Develop ordinance language ✓*
  3. *Support business transition*
3. *Assess Borough waste management*
  1. *Recommend that Borough Council extend the 2023 waste hauling contract by one year (not two; the Borough needs to notify the Contractor by July 31) ✓*
  2. *Investigate current status and history of waste management*
    1. *Trash, recycling and organics waste streams*
    2. *Contracts (and bids)*
    3. *Public spaces*

3. *Collate community and business opinions on Borough waste management from past surveys, public reports, and additional outreach*
4. *Provide summary report of waste management practices with recommendations for future possible initiatives*
4. *Work with Borough on outreach*

*Phase 2 (2023-2025)*

1. *Produce feasibility report on Borough-wide curbside compost collection*
2. *Investigate public space waste management options in Town Center and parks*
3. *Investigate commercial and multi-family waste management options (i.e. opting-in to Borough contracts)*
4. *Incorporate feasible waste management recommendations into RFQ (request for qualifications) for new waste collection contract*
5. *Work with Borough on outreach*

*Phase 3 (2024-2026)*

1. *Discourage types of single-use packaging that are not accepted in municipal recycling or composting streams*
2. *Encourage long-term business transition to reusable wares*
3. *Work with Borough on outreach*

*Phase 4 (2025-20)*

1. *Work with the County to coordinate drop-off programs for harder-to-recycle items (appliances, batteries, electronics, light bulbs, etc.)*
2. *Advance considerations of recovery and recycling of waste in construction and demolition permitting*
3. *Work with Borough on outreach*

Jennifer invited us to join the informal EAC Zero Waste working group currently made up of herself, Susie O'Donnell and Alex Danovitch. She thanked those who have responded favorably to her requests for help. The EAC has been assigned another Swarthmore College student Green Advisor to work on Borough Zero Waste for the 2023-24 academic year.

We thanked Jennifer, Susie and Alex for all of this work. We will include this plan in our annual report to Borough Council. Elizabeth said they should document all the work they are doing. Jennifer will send this report to David Boonin. Jennifer will report this plan to the various borough council committees that will be involved in this.

Phil suggested that we could have an easy Do-It-Yourself project to inform homeowners with large lots how you can compost yourself. (Sue and Susie will add information about this in their letter to *The Swarthmorean*.) In the name of transparency and inclusion, we will need to think about people who live in apartments who cannot compost themselves.

11. Update on CCA

John and David reported on the status of CCA.

Dennis Rowan has been meeting frequently with PECO. Other boroughs are moving forward: Media will be voting on signing the CCA for PA MOU at their July meeting. Morrisville is exploring CCA benefits deeper. CCA is on Ambler's Council agenda for July. CCA for PA is presenting to State College Borough in July. After a presentation at the **PA Renewable Energy Summit** in Camp Hill in June, CCA for PA is talking with Boroughs from Centre and Allegheny Counties who were at the Summit and expressed interest in CCA. They have spoken with Governor Shapiro's energy team and will be following up with them in preparation for going to the PA PUC to review the Implementation Plan.

Regarding Swarthmore, CCA for PA is undertaking the Implementation Plan review with PECO and the PUC first. Next, Swarthmore needs to discuss the elements of the RFP to energy suppliers that Swarthmore wants in the electricity contract: Fixed price, length of contract, percentage of renewable energy, In State PV and Wind vs PA RECs. In this endeavor, Joule and the CCA for PA team will assist Swarthmore as indicated in Swarthmore's CCA Implementation Plan. There is no CCA until a Borough signs a contract with an alternative energy supplier.

The Borough's Environment Committee has given feedback on how to improve the implementation plan and CCA for PA has taken those comments in. They will not be able to sell power in Swarthmore in September. Because they have not even talked with the PUC yet. David has been working with Bill and our Solicitor to getting a renewable energy contract for the Borough now.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05

Respectfully submitted,

John McKinstry, Co-Chair

Next meeting, July 25, 2023.