

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, July 25, 2023
Minutes
APPROVED August 22, 2023

Present: David Boonin, Anna Brenner, Phil Coleman, Hannah Covert, Chris DeBruyn, Shirley Dodson, Sue Edwards, Nancy English, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, John McKinstry, Milton Meyer, Carol Nackenoff, Jennifer Pfluger

Regrets: Margaret Betz, Susie O'Donnell

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

David Boonin urged that we include the zoom link and the time of the meeting when we post the agenda.

2. Minutes of May and June EAC Meeting

The minutes of both meetings were approved.

3. Announcements: Coming Events

- a. **Rose Valley Watershed Education Event, July 30th**, 2:00, 3:00, and 4:00 pm
The Saul Preserve.
- b. **Information Session with Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon on the Inflation Reduction Act's benefits related to home energy upgrades and electric vehicles. Thursday, August 3**, at 6:30 p.m. at Media-Upper Providence Free Library. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the biggest climate bill in our nation's history. It makes economy-wide investments in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and transportation. The transition to a green economy is expected to save families an average of \$1,000 per year in energy costs. Millions of Americans are already eligible for tax credits that will make it easier and more affordable for them to upgrade to more efficient appliances, purchase an electric vehicle, install residential clean energy systems, and save money on their energy bills. Our U.S. Representative, Mary Gay Scanlon, is hosting an educational program to help constituents learn more about the cost-saving benefits that are available. **You can reach Scanlon's office by phone at 610-626-2020. Register here:**
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScksdzYG4g6lr9CS8MQb-psA8PEfvGA6TbfzFSdTdjVrprb4Q/viewform>
- c. **August 12 Farmers Market:** The EAC will have a table with the Tree Committee, and the Bird Town Working Group. Our table will have information on:
 - i. The Single Use Bag Ban Ordinance.
 - ii. A poster regarding mosquito control.
 - iii. A link to the native plant survey.

- iv. The electric lawn initiative.
- v. Recycling
- d. **Library Zoom Book Talk, September 27** on Chasing Shadows: My Life Tracking the Great White Shark
- e. **EAC Fall Gathering, Saturday, October 21, West Chester University** - Call for volunteers/attendees [EAC Fall Gathering](#). This is a 1-day, in-person meeting of Environmental Advisory Council volunteers and municipal staff, in addition to educational sessions there will also be several opportunities for your EAC to connect and engage with peers.

4. Update on CCA

David Boonin reported that Media Borough has joined Swarthmore and Narberth Boroughs in signing an MOU with CCA for PA/Joule Energy. Those three boroughs will have an outreach session tomorrow, where they will be available to make statements and answer questions for other boroughs interested in CCA.

Jennifer suggested that we prepare a fact sheet on CCA to help people understand what this is all about. John and Phil will put together a brief fact sheet.

5. Bird Town Report

Shirley Dodson reported that the Bird Town Working Group has had a busy month. Media is working to be a Bird Town and have learned from the experiences of Nether Providence and Swarthmore in how to get there. Media has invited us to the Eco Art and Media Festival 2023 September 9, 10-2. Bird Town and Valley Forge Audubon will have information there.

People who want grants for stream remediation, or native plant gardens should contact Shirley about this. The Delaware County Conservation District has funds for environmental projects.

Roger Latham, a member of the Bird Town Working Group, as well as Rose Valley's EAC, has suggested two wholesale nurseries for native plants: North Creek Nursery and Octorara Nursery. One person asked if we could do something with these. Sue Kelly noted that Friends of Little Crum Creek have given away the plugs from North Creek at the Farmers Market. Shirley wrote an article for *The Swarthmorean* on local birds.

6. Feedback to Town Center String Lighting Proposal

The Swarthmore Town Center welcomed the input and advice from the Bird Town Working Group on its proposed string lighting through Town Center. Consequently, they proposed implementing the lighting strategy, below, but asked for feedback from the EAC:

- Commercial grade string lights would be "warmer" light and would NOT be cooler/blue tinted. This would support your birding needs, but frankly, would also support creating a "homier, cozier" look within town center.
- The lighting would be on a timer and dimmer. We could dim the lights based on bird migratory patterns and would also turn the lights off before the 12 AM suggested guidance below. We would propose that the lights go off when the noise ordinance is in place (I believe 11 PM on weekends).

- Birds could sit on the string lights and be supported. The lighting contractor has never had an issue with birds (or other animals) chewing through the wires so he believes this should not be a concern.

The EAC discussed these. Since the EAC is not a decision-making body, it could not give approval. Even so, David said that the Environment Committee might urge the Town Center to follow the dark skies initiative. We also noted that Doug Tallamy says a dark habitat is a healthy habitat. Jennifer suggested that they be more specific regarding the Kelvin: 2100-2200 maximum according to the Audubon Society. <https://rockies.audubon.org/lights-out/articles/how-make-your-outdoor-home-lighting-bird-friendly>
Shirley will send The Town Center information from the Dark Sky Initiative.

7. Update on Article for *The Swarthmorean* on Recycling by Sue Kelly and Susie O'Donnell

Sue Kelly reported that Susie O'Donnell has begun writing the article on recycling. Anna Brenner offered to write an article on composting for *The Swarthmorean* as well. Sue suggested that Anna write her article first and that Susie's and her article would supplement whatever Anna says.

8. Zero Waste: Feedback to Borough Council on Zero Waste

David said the presentation to council on Zero Waste could be at a time later than September. He suggested that we could even present in January or February when new members would be joining Borough Council. Jennifer agreed that it would be wise to present it in the spring. Anna offered to put together a recycling poster. Jennifer will supply her with the name of the current company doing the recycling.

9. Lawn Equipment

a. SWeLL Initiative

Phil said that AFewSteps is all set to go with this initiative. They want everyone to make the loan via the website at AFewSteps. We should also publicize this to our friends.

b. Potential Leaf Blower Ordinance

Although many, including those on the EAC, dislike gas lawn care equipment, it was felt that a ban could provoke a backlash and might cloud our SWeLL initiative. David had advocated for SWeLL before Borough Council. Some appearing before Council have urged a ban. David raised various options such as rebate programs, or other things to urge people to drop their gas powered lawn equipment. <https://toledo.oh.gov/residents/sustainability/electric-lawn-mower-rebate-program> NJ considered a statewide ban. <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/S437> Elizabeth showed us a presentation that had been prepared two years ago regarding strategies to reduce gas powered lawn equipment.

10. Native Plant Survey

A discussion ensued about how to conduct the Native Plant survey. The Bird Town Working Group recommended using Survey Monkey, with QR code that people could get use to access the survey at the Farmers Market. Some suggested adding questions to the survey regarding electric lawn equipment and composting. It was suggested we do a soft launch at the Farmers Market and then do a bigger push with a flyer and in *The Swarthmorean*.

11. WSSD Parking Lot at SRS

We discussed the possibility of the front of SRS being turned into a parking lot. Chris DeBruyn said it might be better talking with the Zoning Hearing Board. Advocating as an EAC is not within our power but individuals could write letters. Chris suggested staying abreast by going to school board meetings. We hope that sue Edwards will continue to monitor this.

12. Borough Comprehensive Plan

David said that a subcommittee of the planning commission is putting together a scope on the comprehensive planning process. He urged that the EAC be engaged in this, to put in things regarding environmental building requirements, green space preservation, solar installations, etc. Chris said that they are putting together a scope of work to hire someone who could guide this process. Thus, they want a professional third party to put this together, which would include our past history, where we are now, and what are our goals for the future.

13. EAC Budget: Requests to the Environment Committee

We will look at the process. If anyone has ideas for budget requests, they should send them to John and Elizabeth.

The meeting adjourned at 9:11

Respectfully submitted,

John McKinstry, Co-Chair

Next meeting, August 22, 2023.