

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council

April 24, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Jenkins, Chair; members: Matt McCabe; James Verdi associate members: Allan Prindle, Jennifer Pluger, Phil Coleman, Susan Kelly.

Absent: Borough Council liaison Lauren McKinney; members: Aurora Winsdale, Claudia Cueto, Corey Ullman, Jon Penders; associate members: Danielle Callahan, Melissa Tier.

Michael Carey attended as Borough Council representative in Lauren's absence.

Colin Purrington attended as a guest to discuss pesticide use.

Opening Remarks

Elizabeth opened the meeting by introducing Michael Carey who attended as Borough Council representative in Lauren's absence.

Due to the absence of a quorum, the March meeting minutes could not be approved.

Marvin Elias attended the EAC meeting to discuss his concern about having made an open space of the half acre or so cornering on Yale and Swarthmore Avenues, thereby reducing small animal habitat area. He says that he's noticed a decline in the wildlife he's observed in the park and stated that he believed the EAC had said in Spring of 2017 that the area would be replanted. Elizabeth Jenkins promised to check in with the Borough on his behalf.

Lighting Letter

Elizabeth summarized the presentation by Billy Hodges during the February meeting on the ongoing light replacement issues in the Borough and the community concerns. A letter summarizing issues has been drafted by Annie Fox. The letter outlines issues raised within the community and offers advice on addressing those issues. Given Annie's absence from the meeting, the draft was not discussed.

Prior Month's Events

EcoArts Fair

The group discussed the recent EcoArts Fair. Lauren, Elizabeth and James all attended and reported that event was a success and will become an annual event. One particular issue that arose is the sales of borough mulch which have been declining in recent years. Corey is currently drafting letter for Swarthmorean to urge more mulch purchase.

The group went on to discuss differences in yard waste collection, which is not contributed to the borough mulch, and annual leaf collection, which is the source of the much. Community members have raised questions as to weeds apparently being carried with town mulch deliveries.

Little Crum Creek Park Clean Up

Elizabeth thanked Susan and Matt for leading the Little Crum Creek Park Clean Up. Susan reported that forty-seven volunteers, including a number of children, helped weed, mulch, prune and replenish the wood chip walkway. The group discussed the unexpected, last minute decision by CRC Watersheds to redirect the Swarthmore College Women's Soccer Team to another site without discussing with Susan or Matt. The group also discussed the absence of any real benefit from working with CRC at the site.

Susan reported that the next clean-up day has not been scheduled but a day may be planned for adults to do some heavier work, including invasive tree removal.

Future Event Ideas

With respect to new, future events, Elizabeth raised the idea of composting information booth at the weekly Farmers' Market. Jenn agreed with the idea and was going to see if she could find someone who might run the booth.

Elizabeth and Susan discussed on work with Aurora and Melissa on waste recycling efforts at college. Susan proposed trying to expand the efforts on campus to a wider borough audience. Susan noted that there was currently a college intern working on recycling efforts at SRS. The group agreed to discuss further when Aurora and Melissa were in attendance.

Open Space Update

Elizabeth reported on updates on possible paths forward on public spaces in the Borough. Aurora had revisited with the Trust for Public Lands to check on content of any report/referendum and was able to review a sample report, which would cost approximately \$8,000. Elizabeth reported on online guides and conservation tools that were discussed at the EAC Conference and mentioned that she & Lauren had also found out about another group, Keystone Conservation Trust, which reviews open spaces and works with communities on programs focused on back yard conservation designs. Under this program, two members of the community would attend a program and then would be able to pass along the guidance at sessions within the borough. Allan asked whether the target audience for such a program would be the public, officeholders, or funders. Elizabeth explained that all those groups could be targeted but Borough officials should understand and support any such program.

Michael asked about spending on public spaces which the Borough already uses, such as Henderson Field. Elizabeth and Matt pointed out that the idea was to prepare for, or prevent, future changes if the property changes ownership (currently owned by the school district). Jenn pointed out that funds would also be used for maintaining public spaces.

As a final note on open spaces, Elizabeth reported that the Centennial Foundation presented its long term perspective on future of Swarthmore which highlighted public spaces; including additions to current public spaces including a possible dog run.

The group discussed the five parks currently owned by the Borough and zoning restrictions at Henderson.

The discussion will continue as Aurora pursues possibilities of working with the Trust for Public Lands and Lauren works with the Keystone Conservation Trust.

Pesticide Discussion with Guest Colin Purrington

Elizabeth welcomed Colin who has a long standing interest in insects and insect control.

Colin began by discussing pesticides that he uses for protection which include permethrin. Colin uses on items such as boots and backpacks as instantly kills any insects that walk on it or eat it. Colin brought sample products and noted that in small doses permethrin was not harmful to humans but care should be used nevertheless.

Colin and the group discussed pesticides' impact on species such as honey and carpenter bees who play a large role in pollination. One of the issues is the ongoing practice of fogging areas which can indiscriminately kill bees. Colin noted that local companies will spray private properties and usually do not disclose the contents of the fog. Elizabeth mentioned that her neighbor sprayed without any notice to her.

The discussion then moved to cover mosquitoes. Various benign methods of control were discussed such as rosemary or bat houses. Colin said such methods were generally ineffective, whereas bug zappers, like fogging, kill insects indiscriminately. The group discussed encouraging dragon flies which are a natural predator of mosquitoes. Colin mentioned that mosquitoes have become more of an issue locally since the Tiger mosquito arrived in 1996.

Colin discussed other initiatives which have been successful such as eliminating standing water, especially in spring. For backyard control, the group discussed outdoor fans which both James and Colin had found successful.

In addition to seeking disclosure from spraying companies, and eliminating standing water, Elizabeth asked about other steps the community should be taking and mentioned that an article summarizing the issues may be useful. Colin mentioned replacing ridged gutter pipes, drilling holes in trashcans and trashcan covers to avoid water collection, and utilizing permethrin in areas with mice to control ticks, which is increasingly important to control Lyme disease spread. He also reiterated the importance of understanding any fogging which is being done in an area. Allan asked whether towns continue spraying and Colin explained it usually only occurs when there is an outbreak of something, like West Nile Virus. Colin also mentioned bird deaths can signal mosquito-borne illness and should be reported.

Elizabeth asked if Colin had written anything up. He agreed to review anything he may have posted on Swarthmore Next Door and forward to the group.

Swarthmore Greenhouse Gas Reporting and Actions

Due to time constraints, Phil Coleman's report on greenhouse gas emissions was postponed to May's meeting