

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council
Minutes
Tuesday, November 23, 2021
Approved January 25, 2022

Present: Margaret Betz, Sue Edwards, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, Lauren McKinney, John McKinstry, Susie O'Donnell, Allen Prindle, Robin Schaufler, Vera Wilson, Casey Cole, John Knapp

The November 23, 2021 meeting of the Swarthmore EAC began promptly at 7:30 pm both in person in Swarthmore Borough Hall and on Zoom. (John McKinstry was in Borough Hall).

1. Public Comments

There were several public comments related to the possibility of PECO cutting trees as part of its new electric lines. See Item #3 below.

2. Minutes of the October 26, 2021 Meeting

The approval of the minutes of the October 26, 2021 meeting was held over to the next meeting.

3. PECO

Although the exact details of the project are unknown, there is great concern that PECO plans to erect 55' poles and electric lines that require 10' clearance on each side of them, which may require the destruction of street trees all over town. Many of the members of the public attended the EAC meeting to voice their concern about the threat to the town's natural resources. Elizabeth explained to the visitors the role of the EAC. Jane Billings said that the PECO representative may do a town hall because of the need for more communication. PECO will meet with Jane very soon. Jane said a power pole will go up few kilovolts. The pole will be 10' higher, but it will not be a high voltage power line.

John Knapp made a comment: there were rumors that trees and structures were going to be removed, and those in the area affected saw that some trees had been marked, though they are unsure as to what that marking meant.

Lauren McKinney said that Borough Council is not sure what will happen and noted that the borough has no jurisdiction over PECO. PECO is governed by the Public Utility Commission.

Barbara Drebing said that the value of the trees is significant and that the cost of replacing that value would be enormous compared to the cost of burying the lines.

Murray Wilson asked why PECO is installing these new wires. He found it hard to believe that PECO could do whatever it liked. He noted that they live on North Chester Road, and they have received no notice as to what is happening. He also noted that Asplundh is the tree contractor, and they have a reputation for severe tree trimming.

Catherine Chappelka said that we have more power than some people have assumed. She hoped that our elected officials might work harder to oppose what PECO is trying to do. She noted that so many trees have been tagged and it looks like PECO is planning to clear-cut the town. The letters from PECO to the neighbors are very vague. The only information the neighbors have come from the tree companies that have come in to tag the trees, and the information they gave is ominous. She also wondered why more in borough government has not conveyed more information. Lauren said the borough has not communicated this because PECO has not given them information.

Elizabeth noted that the borough is going to learn more in the meeting in December between Jane and PECO.

Casey Cole agreed that the lines could be buried and feels that the trees should not be touched. She noted that if you drive just out of town and you can see what PECO can do to a neighborhood.

Robin Schaffler, taking her EAC hat off, noted that PECO took down the street trees on Harvard between Park and Rutgers and noted how PECO has removed so many trees and left nothing but stumps.

The letter received was signed by William Patterer who can be reached by email to william.patterer@exeloncorp.com. One person noted that he is known to read the letters from citizens.

There was concern that lines are near older buildings that could also be vulnerable. The map of parts of the town that are going to be affected was sent to the EAC google group by David Galloway. https://scontent-iad3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.15752-9/p280x280/259751320_1271779153334117_1080753566753955260_n.jpg?nc_cat=103&ccb=1-5&nc_sid=ae9488&nc_ohc=WDMSUnDCtBoAX_1pe9d&nc_ht=scontent-iad3-1.xx&oh=088ccc8f1568711f9fc2de6c87a4bf46&oe=61C3C420

Casey Cole said she would set up a Facebook group. She will make that information with Barbara Getz, who sets up the EAC Facebook group.

4. Native Plant Book Club and Activities

We discussed what ideas were most appealing with regard to Native plants:

- Home Eco audit launch again: have individual volunteers walk through people's yards.
- Draw the yard idea for *The Swarthmorean*: have one month where four yards are featured
- A yard fashion month: give plaques of good yards.
- Get list of properties that are under
 1. The Audubon Bird-Friendly Habitat Recognition Program
<https://pa.audubon.org/conservation/bird-friendly-habitat-recognition-program>
 2. The PSU Extension Service Pollinator Friendly Garden Certification Program
<https://extension.psu.edu/certify-your-pollinator-friendly-garden-handout>
 3. National Wildlife Federation Garden for Wildlife Program,
<https://www.nwf.org/garden?ga=2.246284423.2006753442.1638491615-1519989931.1638491615> which includes the Certified Wildlife Habitat,
https://www.nwf.org/CertifiedWildlifeHabitat?campaignid=WH21VSY&utm_source=gfwhomepage&utm_medium=webpage&utm_campaign=default&utm_content=default_gfw_homepagesquare_FY21
 4. Those who have taken the Swarthmore EAC Eco Audit. (Elizabeth has list of the eco audit people.) We might approach those who have done eco audits and see if they are okay with having people come see their yards. Susie and Elizabeth can help put together a list of volunteers.
- Work with Audubon Society to become a Bird Town
- Enact a native plant ordinance (see Lower Makefield Twp in Bucks County (Jim Bray is author), Schuylkill Township in Chester County (Jerry O'Dell)), Warrington Twp in Bucks County for private landowners, and ordinances such as those in Westchester County, NY and Newcastle County, DE that apply to municipal property. We will want to recommend native plants in zoning codes: we should check what other towns have done.

- Get dates from Charles Cresson to do plant identification seminars.
- Bill Menke could do the yard drawings. (Susie is a neighbor of his. She will contact him.)
- Lauren noted some signs that say “No Mow May” to make sure that flowers are allowed to grow during the spring, to let insects to tend to them. You can let the bees visit those flowers, and then mow in the in June when the flowers are no longer useful.
- We want to encourage the use of electric leaf blowers, or even let people just let the leaves decay in their yards. (Robin related that she spoke with her neighbor who was using a leaf blower; he later thanked her for telling him that the noise of his blower carried and he was motivated to switching to an electric leaf blower.)
- Highlight Pollinator Week in the news.

5. EV Charging Code

Robin shared an EVSE (Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment) Infrastructure Ordinance proposal. Since the number of EVs are growing, they will need places to be charged. An example comes from Aspen, CO, which has a similar demographic. That town amended their building code Section 420.7 requiring charging stations for new residential construction. Any parking requires a charging station. (It specifies kinds of electrical infrastructure, wiring, etc.) The Great Plains Institute has a survey of best practices, which includes what ordinances should cover. The DVRPC is planning best practices for our area, but it is unpublished. Robin has asked for help in working on this, including towns our size that have EV charging infrastructure requirements. Robin announced that she is resigning from the Energy Transition Task Force, and therefore the task force is folding. She has a google workspace where all her work is kept. She will not be leaving A Few Steps in the cold.

Elizabeth thanked her for all the work she has done. She assured her and everyone that the goals of the Task Force will continue but now done by the EAC. Lauren reiterated that thanks.

6. Borough Council

This was Lauren’s last EAC meeting. The entire EAC expressed its appreciation for her hard work. She said that at the December 6 Borough Council meeting there will be an announcement of the new Borough Manager. On December 20 is Borough Council’s last meeting of the year, Council will honor Cuzzy and Jane at that meeting. On Dec 2 there will be a luncheon in honor of Cuzzy and Jane from Noon to 1:30.

There will be a new Environmental Committee Chair and an EAC liaison and Lauren said she wants to communicate with them.

Elizabeth will send a thankyou to them on behalf of the EAC.

Allan said he wants to engage the new Borough Council on working with the new EAC so we all know what each does. Elizabeth noted that she and John will work on an on-boarding process during December and will share that at the January meeting. We might invite some of the new Borough Council members to EAC meetings.

Allan asked how someone becomes the Borough’s Environment Committee Chair. Lauren explained that members of borough council members express what their preferences are and then it is sorted out according to interests and expertise.

The EAC meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
John McKinstry

Recording Clerk, *Pro Tem*