

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council
Minutes
Tuesday, October 26, 2021
Approved 1/25/22

Present: Margaret Betz, Elizabeth Drake, Sue Edwards, Nancy English, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, Lauren McKinney, John McKinstry, Susie O'Donnell, Allen Prindle, Robin Schaufler, Betsy Larsen

The October 26, 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 no public comments.

2. Minutes of the September 28, 2021 Meeting

The minutes of the September 28, 2021 meeting of the EAC were **APPROVED**.

3. Native Plant Book Club

John reported that he has had further discussions of the book club with Jenifer Phillips at the Swarthmore Public Library. The plan is for John and Elizabeth to write a book review of *Nature's Best Hope* for publication in *The Swarthmorean* in January. The library will have a book club series of discussions in February. It will be followed by a discussion either live or via zoom with Dr. Tallamy in March. The Library has offered to contribute \$100 for Dr. Tallamy's speaking fee. We will hear from the SHS after their meeting as to how much they can contribute.

There was a discussion regarding the talk: in person or on zoom? The sentiment of the EAC was in favor of in person if we can. It makes it more of an event.

One person suggested that we give out some wildflower seeds to the first few people show up. If in person, we could have a table with lots of other books and a flyer on an eco-audit, have literature from the SHS. We could even have a book signing. Could hold it in the Bookstore.

TO DO: John will compile a list of companion events for November meeting.

4. New Member Recruitment

We discussed the posting for recruitment. People were in favor of its wording. The members want to recruit for a more diverse group. Robin has reached out to people and has not had much luck. Lauren will make a plea at Borough Council for people to join our and other borough groups. We need to have diversity in thinking that would anticipate when our solutions might go awry.

Laura urged us to be open to participation with community conversations being held by the Human Relations Commission. We can post positions as broadly as possible, and being out in the community more as COVID goes away will help.

One person noted that the racial incidents of the last few years have not been resolved, and that tension may prevent diversity going forward. It was urged that all members of the council recruit new members especially in the next few months.

5. Budget Recommendations

Robin reported on her research and feels that the borough building is as snug as possible, so it does not make as much sense to pursue funding to get it more efficient. Elizabeth suggested that we follow Phil Coleman's suggestion that we take existing energy data and put it in Energy Star (which is free) and assess what we have now. We could then come back next year and see if there is any need to do a load analysis.

Elizabeth noted that according to Open Sky, there is no way to do a low cost energy project. It might be a good idea to start with the free Energy Star Portfolio Manager tool, and then at the end of 2022, we can think about bringing someone in to do more in depth analysis if needed. The EAC was supportive of this approach. Phil Coleman has used the tool and could provide some guidance as to how to do this.

Allen suggested put aside 10% of our budget and then when it accumulates, we could put on a large solar panel. A question was raised as to whether we are not allowed to set aside money that way. Lauren said some of this money could come out of a capital budget. Lauren will investigate how we might obtain money for solar. Allen will check with Open Sky re possible grant options, and other projects regarding more solar and bring that back to the EAC.

Sue suggested getting in touch with Dave Grady, the Nether Providence Borough Manager, who is good at getting grants.

6. Parks

111 Dartmouth Avenue

John suggested 111 Dartmouth as a park. This lot has been vacant for a long time, when the doctors office was torn down. It was listed a while ago by an early EAC as a possible park. Making it into a park would preserve open space, a space for groundwater recharge and stormwater runoff, and possibly a native plant demonstration garden. Other ideas included a community composting area or a community garden. Lauren had suggested talking to the present owner about using it as a park. Sue thought we might wait until 2022.

If anyone knows the owner, try to contact them.

We might review open spaces in town and think about future open spaces. Cataloging open spaces is part of what EAC's are charged with doing.

The Storybook Walk in the Park

A EAC member had objected to a story that was shown in the storybook walk. Sue said we should not stir up controversy in the park, as there has been tension surrounding Little Crum Creek Park lately. She also said that we should not invade the domain of the children's librarian. Others echoed that the subject matter of the books displayed at the park is beyond our jurisdiction. Elizabeth suggested that we could find some good children's books with good environmental messages and forward them to the library. Sue even suggested that EAC could be taken off the sign as a sponsor of the Storybook Walk and replaced with the "Friends of the Little

Crum Creek Park" since that group has taken over the role of park steward from the EAC. People we supportive of this. TO DO: Sue will see that the name EAC is removed from the sign.

7. New Development at 110 Park Avenue

Robin gave a presentation on behalf of ETTF at the Planning Commission meeting. Some people commented regarding the need for more trees at the development and disagreed with the street tree waiver. The planning commission also disagreed with the stormwater waiver. The code also requires replacement of trees on the property, and this development will eliminate several older trees.

The developers want to put in electric car chargers for each parking spot.

There is no energy efficiency provision in the existing borough code but that could be part of future conversations.

Tomorrow's Borough Environmental Committee will look at putting environmental provisions in municipal codes.

Robin also noted that the development is taking down several trees on the properties, and the plan does not include any replacements.

Elizabeth said we could urge that as much green space could be preserved as possible.

We may also in the future consider new standards for stormwater taking into account climate change. We could possibly borrow from Havertown. Betsy Larsen wondered if a municipality could have stricter standards than Pennsylvania.

Betsy noted that before the new development project can go forward, Borough Council has to approve demolition. Council will need to decide historical significance of the building, and also the culture of the downtown, which would include mature trees that would be removed. She wondered if the EAC would weigh in on the trees being lost and the change in culture of the downtown. (The developer has suggested that in return for the waiver, they would plant trees elsewhere.) The demolition decision will not come before Borough Council until January.

Betsy suggested EAC take a position against demolition of the existing buildings and loss of the open space. The demolition is contingent on not changing the culture of the town, and the need for trees might reflect on the culture of downtown. The group decided not to make a statement against demolition, though there were some members in favor of doing so.

8. Energy Transition Task Force Quarterly Presentation

Robin presented the ETTF Quarterly Report to the Borough.

A Few Steps is supporting the ETTF with \$20/year. She can also use A Few Steps' 501c(3) status to get other things. They have a domain name: energytransitionforswarthmore.org. They are looking for volunteers on the ETTF.

Robin will talk with Betsy Larsen to have the environment committee to urge Borough Council to make a resolution to our representatives in Harrisburg to oppose the anti-RGGI bills.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
John McKinstry
Recording Clerk, *Pro Tem*

