

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, February 22, 2022
Minutes
Approved 3/22/22

Present: Margaret Betz, Thurm Brendlinger, Phil Coleman, Hannah Covert, Alex Danovitch, David Director, Elizabeth Drake, Sue Edwards, Julie Ellis, Nancy English, Francie Halderman, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, Scarlett McCahill, John McKinstry, Allen Prindle, Susie O'Donnell

The February 22, 2022, meeting of the Swarthmore EAC began promptly at 7:30 pm.

1. January Meeting Minutes

The Meeting of the January 25, 2022, were APPROVED.

2. Public Comment

The first public comment came from Alex Danovitch who has been hired as a consultant by Delaware County as part of the ten-year review of the County's compliance with Act 101. He noted that the County is taking a progressive zero-waste approach to waste. The new plan aligns with the County's sustainability thrust. There is a zero-waste group that meets every other week. They are forming an advisory group to help guide the development of the plan to ensure that there is full participation. They are looking for full representation: municipalities of all types as well as environmental and social justice groups. They are having at least 20 listening sessions as part of the plan. They will have a series of monthly public meetings starting in April. They hope to have the plan ready by the fall. If interested in the advisory group, he encourages everyone to apply. (It should have 12 – 15 people and will have 7 meetings total.) The Solid Waste Advisory Committee's website is at

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JuHOynYYT0LkuGgey4R7N_xd2C-0-pMByI9SmULx0ig/edit

3. Doug Tallamy Q&A

This event on Native Plants is scheduled for March 31. The flyer has gone out and members of the EAC are encouraged to attend as part of the EAC's program to promote natives.

4. CRC Clean Up Reminders

The Annual CRC (Chester Ridley Crum) Watersheds Association streams cleanup will be on March 26th. There will be two local sites that volunteers can attend: Doug Perry is the site coordinator for the CADES area (site 385) and Sue Kelly is the site coordinator for site 380, Little Crum Creek Park. Volunteers should register on the CRC website.

<https://www.crcwatersheds.org/events/>

5. Ready for 100 ideas with A Few Steps

Phil Coleman is one of the founders of aFew Steps in 2010 and was a member of the EAC from 2006 – 2020, (the first six officially). He works in energy conservation with the Federal Government. The key activities of aFew Steps have included educational workshops on energy savings, and, more broadly, ways individuals can save the planet. They have promoted green electricity, shade trees and recycling. Prominent initiatives included The Swarthmorean’s Green Advising and Benchmarking program for churches and synagogues in the school district footprint. Some of their less successful initiatives were groups where people met to talk about their energy bills and a “walk to school” promotion that was aimed at cutting school buses in neighborhoods close to the schools.

At present, the board continues to meet about twice a year, provide the Green Tip weekly to The Swarthmorean, and offer personal advice to homeowners on energy issues. Now they have signed up to support the Ready for 100 Initiative by taking on a few projects involving physical infrastructure and education. Their website is afewsteps.org.

There are several infrastructure options. Phil noted that Borough Hall and the municipal services building have already accomplished the low hanging fruit: the installation of LED lights and a highly efficient HVAC units in Borough Hall with many ancillary features such as economizers which cools using outside air when temperatures permit. For the next infrastructure step, Phil suggested putting Borough Hall in the Energy Star Portfolio Manager Program of the US EPA. Other than that, there is not much room for improvement for Borough Hall.

Other good next steps might be:

More solar cells on Borough Hall roof

A solar canopy over parking lots.

Electrification of the police car fleet.

Electrification of the maintenance department fleet.

Expansion of the public EV charging installations.

Some talked in favor of having solar panels over parking spaces such as the SEPTA lot north of the tracks, or along Myers Avenue. Another suggestion was to have a way that people could help in the investment of the solar panels and get a small return on the revenue from the panels.

Another wondered if banks could help provide low interest loans for green investments. Another suggestion was to put solar panels at our school properties, such as SRS and CADES as well as the Park Avenue Community Center. On the education front, it could be possible to tell people of the advantages of clotheslines versus using a dryer. Also, we could help people understand how to put solar panels on one’s own home. Solarize Delco could help individual residents.

There followed a discussion of potential through DCED’s Local Share Accounts. <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/local-share-account-lsa-statewide/> Local share accounts provide grants for \$25,000 - \$1million. Borough Manager Bill Webb is open to grant ideas from the EAC. One suggestion was for the Borough to buy an electric truck, and to put in a level 3 EV “fast” charger, which can fully charge a typical care in about half an hour.

The consensus of the EAC was that the priority seemed to be solar panels on Borough Hall.

6. February Delaware County Plastic Bag Ban Meeting

Susie reported on a meeting among various Delaware County municipalities concerning a ban on plastic bags. The speakers there emphasized the importance of making sure any such ban is business friendly but that it is important to combine a ban on plastic with a fee for single use bags, including paper. Businesses can keep the fee that is charged for single use bags. Will Williams, the Sustainability director for West Chester explained where there should be exceptions for a ban. Enforcement is crucial, including fines for non-compliance. It is important to talk directly to managers, rather than just sending emails to business.

There ways to enact a ban and simultaneously help underserved communities: have re-usable bags that are given out with the businesses' names on them. Jennifer is working on other zero-waste initiatives. Alex added that the County is interested in a county-wide plastic bag ban. He said that the more individual communities enact bag bans makes it easier for the County to act.

7. Solarizing Municipalities

Allen said there are two priorities: solar panels on borough hall, and developing a PPC. Allen said he would be willing to help Bill Webb on grant proposals.

8. Borough Recycling Contract

Bill Webb had noted that the Borough's recycling fees have gone down because we switched to Republic in King of Prussia, from Mascaro.

9. Composting for business community

Can we encourage the local business community to do composting? There are composting days and weeks in May. Perhaps we can create a fact sheet for the local businesses. If people are interested, contact Elizabeth.

10. Review a Calendar of priorities / reporting calendar

People should review the Calendar of Priorities shown below.

The Park Avenue development will be coming back to the Planning Commission this summer. Anyone with ideas regarding updates to the Borough Code should talk to Elizabeth.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55.

Respectfully submitted.

John McKinstry

Co-Clerk

Proposed Calendar

Quarter 1

January:

Book Review for "Nature's Best Hope" in The Swarthmorean

Discuss priorities for the upcoming year: Native Plants, Environmental Code Updates (Ready for 100), Plastic Bag Ban

February:

“Nature’s Best Hope” Book Club Event (February 2)

Ready for 100 Brainstorm with A Few Steps

Apply for LSA Funding?

March:

CRC Clean Up Volunteer Event (March 26th, 9-11:30am) - Little Crum Creek & CADES Woods

Doug Tallamy Q&A (March 31st, 7PM)

Research Environmental Code Updates

Quarter 2

April

Present Environmental Code Updates to Planning Commission

Activities Report due to Borough Council

May

Native Plants - No Mow May (?), “Free the Trees” - English Ivy Management (?), Pesticide Free Summer (?)

June

National Pollinator Week - June 20-26th - Home Eco-Audits

Quarter 3

July

Native Plants (see May)

August

Native Plants (see May)

September

Discussion with Bill Webb re: Electricity Contract - Borough Renewable

Gas Leaf Blower Ban and/or Education

Quarter 4

October

Ready for 100 Ideas/Research

November

Ready for 100 Ideas/Research

December

Ready for 100 Ideas/Research

TBD:

Recycling Education

Composting

Plastic Bag Ban

Business Environmental Toolkit