

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council

June 27, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Present: Susan Kelly, Chair; members Matt McCabe, Tracy Bouvette, and Ashley Grider; associate members Annie Fox, Phil Coleman, Jennifer Pfluger, and Nancy English. Borough Council liaison Lauren McKinney; Swarthmore College liaison, Melissa Tier.

Absent: members Doug Hasbrouck, Jon Penders, Aurora Winslade.

Guests: Swarthmore College student Kemi Oladipo; James Verdi, local resident.

Approval of Minutes

Annie, Tracy, and Susan each suggested certain changes to the draft minutes for the May meeting. After discussion of, and agreement on, the proposed changes, Susan motioned for the March, April, and May (as so edited) minutes to be approved. All were unanimously approved.

A Few Steps

Phil discussed current activities at A Few Steps. He explained that while the group has not been very active recently, they have been collecting e-waste at the Swarthmore Farmers' Market. The group offers to accept e-waste with some exceptions. For example, the group is not taking TVs or air conditioners. The group will next be at the Farmers' Market on July 29th. Ashley asked about collection of e-waste within the Borough after the Farmers' Markets end in the fall. Phil mentioned that A Few Steps had no future plans. Susan explained that the Borough itself was working on finding a solution.

Phil also discussed the Sustainability Coaches Program, which has been quiet recently. While the program has been aimed at the residential market, Lauren asked about whether the group could provide Sustainability Coaching for institutional energy users, such as churches. Phil was not sure, but agreed to follow-up.

Later in the meeting, Jenn suggested A Few Steps post again a reminder for people to focus on "zero-waste" during the upcoming Fourth of July holiday.

Sustainability Office/students

Melissa updated the group on activities at the College Sustainability Office. She introduced Kemi Oladipo, who is an intern this summer in the College's "Sustainable Gardening Initiative." Kemi is working on new plantings in the College's gardens, as well as maintaining the gardens through August 25th. Melissa explained that local involvement in the gardens would be welcome. Annie asked about appropriate age range, and Kemi replied that there was no preference. The group discussed different communities within Swarthmore that might be good candidates for involvement in the effort. Susan mentioned the Swarthmore Rutledge School group that has been helping out at Crum Creek Park clean-up nights and explained how that was working. Jenn mentioned the SRA summer camp, which is underway at SRS, as well as the Good Kitchens group, which already works the College. James suggested the Trinity Day Care community may want to get involved. Kemi explained that volunteers could work from 11am-1pm on Tuesdays and 8-10am on Fridays. The group meets at Parrish Hall and then heads to the gardens.

Melissa also discussed her involvement and attendance at a recent Citizens Climate Lobby event. She explained that this national group's focus is on carbon pricing and that she is particularly focused on carbon pricing at higher education institutions.

Little Crum Creek Park

Susan and Tracy reported on the successful planting day at Crum Creek Park on May 27th. The day drew approximately twenty-five volunteers who planted thirty shrubs and eight trees. Tracy discussed the three funding sources that comprised the \$1,500 in total expenditures related to the day and the successful cooperation of the CRC with this EAC initiative. Tracy asked whether the Borough public works team had reported any problems mowing around the new plantings, and Susan replied that she had not heard any complaints, so presumably the mowing had not been a problem. Susan also reported that since planting, the trees have been doing well – noting that one may even have been overwatered.

Lauren followed-up on prior discussions concerning the damage caused by the annual July 4th horseshoe competition in the park. Lauren reported that SRA (Swarthmore Recreational Assoc.) had agreed to ensure that any damage caused by the competition would be repaired by the organizers/competitors.

Matt raised the question of sidewalk borders near the Cresson Ave overpass where new sidewalks have been installed as the sidewalk is currently exposed to Little Crum Creek. Tracy explained that the Borough was currently reviewing potential areas for storm water controls as part of the Delaware County storm water permitting process. The Borough will be reapplying for a “General” storm water permit, which is materially less expensive than the alternative “Special” storm water permit. To maintain the General permit, the Borough needs to show actions being taken on pollution control, which includes sediment in creeks. Accordingly, the Borough currently has a contractor reviewing potential areas of improvement, including the areas near the Swarthmore Pool, CADES and the Cresson Ave overpass. The improvements will need budget support and approval by Jane Billings as Borough Manager but some work will likely proceed in order for the Borough to retain the General permit. Annie asked about monitoring or testing the Creek for herbicides and insecticides, but Tracy explained that such testing gets prohibitively expensive and Susan added that the College performed some monitoring of the waters. With respect to the storm water permit, Nancy explained that the goal was not to remove sediment, which can be very expensive, but to control it. Ridley has had to remove sediment into a holding pool near the new Wawa there, which reportedly cost \$35,000. The group discussed when, and how, the EAC should get involved. Tracy mentioned that involvement prior to the completion of the contractor’s work may be impractical. Lauren said she would try to speak with Jane as well as possibly with Dave Murphy, who chairs the Borough’s Public Works Committee, to see if earlier involvement would be helpful.

It’s Not Trash

Ashley updated the group on the effort to complete an online disposal database. She has been attempting to get volunteers who have signed up to complete their assignments. Annie mentioned that some volunteers who have signed up do not follow-up on their assignments very well. Susan asked whether fall would be a better time to push towards completion as the college students will be back. Lauren mentioned the “Green Haven” club at the high school and said she would try to find out if there was any interest in getting involved. Jenn and Melissa raised the “Green Advisors” at Swarthmore College who arrive early for training. Ashley agreed to try and co-ordinate with Melissa. Jenn also asked whether the project could be raised in Swarthmore College’s “Introduction to Environmental Studies” class and Ashley agreed to contact the professor who teaches that class. Ashley closed the discussion by mentioning that she had been attempting to better link the It’s Not Trash information sheets to the Swarthmore Next Door website.

MMEAC Meeting

Susan gave the group an update on discussions within the MMEAC on how to approach herbicide and pesticide use in the community. Lauren asked whether the initiative was to be education-based and Susan explained that it would be. The idea is to better educate people on the harm caused by herbicide and pesticides and not to shame users. Lauren also asked about current Borough policy, including use of “RoundUp,” however Susan was not sure on rules for the Borough.

Rain Garden/Parking Lot Tour

Susan also reported on the recent tour of the new rain garden and parking lot on College grounds. Jeff Jabco led the tour and it was well received.

Growing Greener Grant

Tracy explained that the Growing Greener Grant was moving along, and he expected the schedule to be circulated within two weeks. Susan mentioned that it would be great to share the findings from KCI with the swim club members prior to Labor Day, before the pool closes.

Resolution To Join Climate Alliance

The group discussed a proposed resolution to join the Climate Alliance, which had been sent to Borough Mayor, Tim Kearny. Susan started the discussion by asking what identifiable steps would be taken if the resolution was recommended to, and passed by, Borough Council. Susan raised the idea of forming a committee, which would identify such actions, such as deploying consistent recycling bins throughout the Borough. Annie pointed out the resolution was aimed at carbon reduction, and the group discussed what could be done for carbon reduction, and whether a new committee, or some other existing group, would be best to support the resolution if enacted. Tracy mentioned a possibly new, non-profit entity while Susan mentioned A Few Steps, the Delaware County Sierra Club, or maybe MMEAC.

The group then discussed what steps could be taken and by whom. Nancy asked whether the resolution was beyond the scope of what the EAC or Borough government could accomplish and Annie asked what actions could be taken at the Borough level to address carbon specifically. As prior examples, Phil pointed to previous commitments by the Borough to purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to offset carbon produced through the Borough's own power consumption, and pointed out the investment in energy efficient street lights.

Jenn asked how this initiative is different from the mission of A Few Steps, to which Phil replied that there was significant overlap. Phil explained, however, that A Few Steps needed more members and was hoping for members who join in order to bring their initiatives to the group. James mentioned that the Instagram account for A Few Steps should be upgraded.

Annie returned the discussion to the Climate Alliance Resolution and whether it should be proposed for adoption by Borough Council. Lauren asked about timing and Annie was not certain. Annie agreed to edit a version of the proposed resolution and circulate it to interested members.

Report from Borough Council

Lauren reported that there were no specific updates from Borough Council which related to the EAC.

Recording secretary,

Matt McCabe