

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council

January 24, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Jenkins, incoming Chair, Susan Kelly, outgoing Chair, members: Matt McCabe, Aurora Winslade; Borough council liaison Lauren McKinney; associate members: Allen Prindle, Danielle Callahan; incoming members: Claudia Cueto, Annie Fox, and Corey Ullman

Absent: Associate members Phil Coleman, Jennifer Pfluger, Melissa Tier, James Verdi.

Opening Comments

Elizabeth opened the meeting by thanking Susan for all her work over the years as Chair of the EAC. Susan thanked everyone present for their support over the years and summarized some of the accomplishments during her tenure.

Introductions

Given the changes in personnel, Elizabeth asked each attendee to introduce themselves and give a little background on what brings them to EAC. Everyone present discussed their time in Swarthmore as well as the concerns and issues they have that pertain to the EAC.

Trust for Public Lands Initiative

Elizabeth reviewed the discussions with the Trust for Public Lands to raise money for the purchase, and maintenance, of open spaces in Swarthmore through a ballot initiative. The two primary potential targets would be Henderson Field and land associated with CADES. The discussions started last year and have led most recently to presentation by Stacy McCormick from the Trust in December. There have also been ongoing phone conversations with other representatives of the Trust.

Elizabeth started the discussion by observing that it is not clear the services provided by the Trust are worth the \$25,000 fee which they would require to get involved in an initiative in Swarthmore. Susan mentioned that she had asked the Trust about reducing the fee, but any potential reduction would be minimal (\$2,500). Elizabeth pointed out that some of services, such as voter education, may not be necessary, or could be performed by the EAC itself.

Susan stated that even if there was a way to pursue it, it's not clear that independent funding is available as a representative of the Centennial Foundation who was present at McCormick's presentation did not seem supportive.

Aurora explained that her understanding was that payments would be made incrementally with only \$8,000 due up front to fund initial research into what would be possible under existing law, including to structure the program as a "fee", and not a "tax".

Annie mentioned that the Trust had presented the value created by their work in a better manner at the original conference. Those who attended McCormick's December presentation agreed that it lacked clarity. Annie added that most towns which had worked with the Trust had succeeded in getting initiatives passed. On funding, Corey asked about whether the Borough would fund, and Susan explained that the Borough might fund but a specific funding request would be required.

Lauren asked the group whether people thought it was worth another try to find a way to work with the Trust. Elizabeth suggested exploring their smaller portfolio, less expensive option to clarify matters for potential funders and pointed out that it may not be necessary to push for this November's election. Annie noted that with property tax reassessment underway, people may be less inclined to support a new fee.

Allan and Matt raised questions about the legality of the fee and the status of discussions with the Borough and the School District (which owns both primary properties). The group discussed prior efforts to impose a specific tax, i.e. a carbon tax, versus existing fees, i.e. sewer usage fees, and agreed the appropriate legal form of any initiative needs to be clarified. A similar initiative in Nether Providence involving the purchase of the Summit School was also discussed. Lauren raised the success of the recent alcohol referendum in Swarthmore as a successful, locally-led ballot initiative. Claudia asked about whether a price had been discussed, but Susan explained that the School District has not been approached yet.

Elizabeth summarized next steps as:

- 1) Aurora would continue discussions with the Trust to clarify timing of payments and specific work performed for each payment;
- 2) Annie would discuss the legal distinction between a permissible fee and an impermissible tax with one of her law professors;
- 3) Lauren would contact some of the residents behind the alcohol referendum to discuss their success;
- 4) Claudia would try to reach out to some of the communities in Pennsylvania who have worked with the Trust previously to assess their performance.

Corey also offered to help with any of the foregoing.

Borough Council Update

Storm Water/Sediment Plan

Lauren reviewed with the group the current status of the MS4/storm water permitting and improvements. She and others summarized that the Borough needed to continue to show improvements in sediment control in order maintain its lower-cost status under state storm water regulations. Lauren explained that, since the matter had satisfied the requirement for a public meeting, Jane Billings was moving the process forward for work to be done at the Swim Club. Susan mentioned that the Swim Club had yet to approve the work, but that would be addressed soon. Lauren mentioned that a role for the EAC in this matter may be educating residents on the issues surrounding storm water and runoff.

Spotted Lantern Fly

Lauren also mentioned a rising concern with the presence of the Spotted Lantern Fly and whether the EAC should undertake an educational campaign with respect to this invasive species.

Annie recommended that the EAC consider identification of 3-4 topics a year that could be researched by the EAC with a view towards educating the residents through articles in *The Swarthmorean*, posts on Swarthmore Nextdoor, or presentations at the Warehouse. Elizabeth agreed and thought a committee could be formed to undertake education more broadly.

Changes to the EAC Ordinance

Lauren reviewed changes to the EAC ordinance which had been discussed previously but had yet to be approved by Borough Council due to weather-related postponement of Council meetings. The changes include:

- (1) members should attend at least nine meetings a year;
- (2) associate should attend at least nine meetings a year;
- (3) the Chair shall serve for one-year subject to potential renewal;
- (4) oversight of Little Crum Creek Park will be specifically added to the duties of the EAC.

Appointment of EAC Committees

Based on the meeting's discussions, Elizabeth proposed the creation of the Open Space Task Force and a Committee on Education; as well as confirmed the ongoing work of the Parks Committee. These groups would be:

Open Space Task Force

- Aurora
- Annie
- Corey
- Elizabeth

Education Committee

- Annie
- Corey
- Elizabeth

Little Crum Creek Park Committee

- Susan
- Matt
- Danielle
- James

With respect to the Parks Committee, the group discussed possibly forming a separate, non-profit organization, such as a Friends of Little Crum Creek Park. Lauren mentioned the success in doing so at Glenn Providence Park.

As part of the discussion on the Education Committee, Annie asked about the potential to create a directory of Borough officials, as well as groups within the Borough who might be helpful, such as “A Few Steps”. Elizabeth agreed to try and pull one together and Claudia agreed to help. The group also discussed updating/creating an EAC Facebook page as part of the educational initiative. Annie and Corey agreed to work on it as part of the Education Committee. Aurora added that the Swarthmore College programs should be included with the education outreach and specifically mentioned the Sustainability Summit on Feb 9th as well as a presentation on Feb 6th concerning the recent public water crisis in Michigan by a Swarthmore professor who helped uncover that crisis.

April EAC Conference

The group discussed the upcoming regional EAC conference in April and agreed that anyone who wants to attend should co-ordinate with Lauren. Annie, Lauren and Elizabeth are planning on attending and others were considering. Allan asked whether anyone going from the Borough had a background in renewable energy given that the Conference will focus on that topic, but it was unclear who the right person would be.

Administrative Matters

Elizabeth moved to approve the November minutes which were unanimously approved by the voting members.

Elizabeth also asked about potentially changing future meetings from Tuesday nights and planned to circulate a doodle poll to see if another night might be better.

Aurora asked about a member representing Scott Arboretum, as referenced in the EAC ordinance, and the group discussed the appropriate person.

Susan circulated new posters that explain the storm water and runoff issues associated with the new college parking lot.