

The regular meeting of the **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL** (EAC) for March 2022 was held tonight via Zoom Web-Conference. Members in attendance were: Chair Greta Bunin, Vice Chair Wendy Ankrom, Kurt Ahrens, Sidney Kahn, and Boris Kerzner. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager; Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator. Guests present: Julie Slavet, TTF Watershed Partnership, Rebecca Schultz.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bunin called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon motion of Mr. Ahrens, seconded by Ms. Ankrom, the minutes of the February 14, 2022 meeting were approved with one abstention. (Abstained: Mr. Kahn).

2. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Discussion on Electric Vehicle Website Page – Tabled.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Commissioner Rappoport was contacted about the Township participating in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge through the National Wildlife Foundation for the restoration and stewardship of habitat for the dwindling monarch butterfly population. The pledge involves committing to at least three of a number of proposed action items. The Board passed a proclamation at the March 16, 2022 Board of Commissioners meeting, committing to the following:

- 1) issuing a Proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat
- 2) planting a monarch-friendly demonstration garden in a prominent location in Cheltenham Township
- 3) launching a public communication effort to encourage citizens to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods
- 4) working to create a challenge to engage the residents of Cheltenham Township to create habitat for the monarch butterfly
- 5) supporting the Cheltenham Township Library in its efforts to distribute milkweed and other monarch-friendly seeds to the Cheltenham community
- 6) reviewing Cheltenham Township ordinances, and regulations and practices to determine whether they are counter to monarch butterfly habitat preservation.

Mr. Kahn asked about pesticide use, as damage from pesticide use is a big factor in monarch decline. Ms. Elliott said the Township spot-treats weeds, rather than broad pesticide or herbicide use. The County [sprays for mosquitoes](#), and lists the products used on their site.

Per item #5, members discussed plants for pollinators. Ms. Bunin stated milkweed was planted in the Conklin Pool project, and Ms. Elliott believes there is milkweed at Curtis Arboretum. Ms. Bunin said milkweed seeds must be planted in the fall and go through a cold season. Ms. Ankrom said she and Mr. Ahrens gave out milkweed seeds and other native seed balls at the Arts in the Park event last fall. Ms. Slavet said TTF gives out Rudbeckia and Echinacea. Mr. Kahn is happy to give seeds/seedlings from his own wildflower garden to share with others. Ms. Elliott said the Friends of Curtis Arboretum (FOCA) have a volunteer who does plant sales, and the EAC could potentially collaborate on a seed swap.

Ms. Ankrom stated that she, Ms. Bunin, and Ms. Schultz have plans to talk to the CHS Environmental Club, and one of her ideas for a project for them was to plant a native demonstration garden. Ms. Elliott said they can present this idea to the Township to collaborate

on a location. Parks Superintendent Bob Dominick plans to plant the pollinator garden committed to in item #2.

4. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

A. Communications and Engagement

- 1) Sustainable Yards – The EAC would like to continue the Sustainable Yards initiative in some form this year.

Ms. Schultz stated some ideas floated around in discussion were a sustainable garden tour, a seed swap, and having signage designating sustainable yards which meet certain criteria. She added that the language surrounding this would designate that sustainable yards are a work in progress for everybody, in efforts to welcome all participants without intimidation.

Mr. Kahn suggested collaborating with other local resources such as the Audubon Society and Montgomery County Beekeepers Association, so as to not duplicate work.

Ms. Slavet said TTF has a program to construct small wooden pollinator hotels reusing bamboo and other materials that can be put in riparian buffer areas. She said it is fun for kids to paint and decorate them, but they need to be cleaned and maintained yearly.

Ms. Schultz said there are a lot of engagement opportunities around sustainable yards; things like family-friendly educational workshops are another way to encourage sustainable practices. Ms. Ankrom asked about the possibility of partnering with the Cheltenham Arts Center. She said another important piece is to encourage less un-sustainable yards, i.e. someone may not be ready to pursue a pollinator garden, but measures like reducing use of excess lawn care practices like leaf blowers and mowers which produce pollution would be a positive change as well.

Members discussed making a “small spaces” category to be inclusive of various kinds of living spaces and those who do not have yards – this could include someone taking sustainable measures such as potted plants.

EAC will coordinate with Ms. Walter for promotion through Township channels.

- 2) Mr. Kerzner asked if EAC is able to have its own website. Ms. Ankrom said it is hard to have the time to keep up with it, and the group has had trouble staying active in their social media channels. Ms. Elliott stated the Township has a brand and citizen committees should not have their own websites in order to stay under that umbrella and brand. Each Township committee can develop a set of pages within the Township’s website. The EAC made progress last year compiling data for the Sustainable Cheltenham pages on the Township website.

B. Water and Ecology – None.

C. Energy and Emissions – None.

D. Mobility and Healthy Living

- 1) Ms. Slavet said the project at Conklin Pool is a great example site and they will be there over the summer with information to share. TTF wants to get the tributary that runs through Conklin Recreation Center named, which will involve a community engagement process. TTF will be working with Ms. Schultz to do an educational afternoon.
- 2) Trail Fest is planned for 10am-2pm Sunday, April 24 along Tookany Creek Parkway. Activities for the day are not firmed up, but will include a park cleanup. The special events application is still being processed by the Township. They applied for funding for the event, but were not approved. Ms. Schultz is going to do an interactive art activity. The EAC will plan to have a table at this event and discussed handing out seeds as well.

TTF will join for the event and provide park cleanup supplies. Ms. Slavet stated the EAC table could include photos from Sustainability Contests, the Executive Summary for the Tookany Trail Feasibility study, TTF fact sheets, and could provide some way for residents to contact their Commissioner voicing their support for the trail. Ms. Ankrom said they could possibly have postcards on which people could write what they like about trails, which could be mailed to Township Commissioners. Mr. Ahrens stated having guidelines for the Sustainable Yards program would be beneficial to have that day.

Ms. Bunin asked if the Township would be able to provide some funds for supplies; Ms. Elliott will check on what was budgeted.

Mr. Kerzner and Ms. Schultz will work on an event flyer and send to Ms. Walter for print. Ms. Slavet said Celebrate Trails Day is National and the Township could do a press release. She also said it should be listed on the Circuit Trails website – they should provide swag/giveaways and signage for the event.

E. Sustainable Development and Local Economy – None.

F. General Updates – None.

G. Staff Report

- 1) Grant updates – Ms. Elliott has been working on several grants. One is a grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for a water quality improvement project at Robinson Park, which will be part of the Township’s Pollution Reduction Plan (PRP), which is required by state and federal regulations. The PRP puts the onus on municipalities to do a number of projects for water quality over a five year period. Since the Township’s initial PRP was developed, it has been revised, and the Township has found additional projects to qualify.

Robinson Park has a channelized stream going through a small grate, leaving the area very wet. The project concept is in the very early stages, but would involve removal of the channel and getting rid of invasive plants. Ms. Elliott said she would appreciate a letter of support from EAC for this project.

Upon motion of Ms. Ankrom, seconded by Ms. Bunin, the EAC unanimously agreed to issue a letter of support for a water quality improvement project at Robinson Park.

Another grant is being submitted to acquire properties required for the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Flood Control Project in Glenside. The project was put on hold while the Township was working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Flood Control Project, which involved an impact study. After that process, it reached a stage where the Township was able to move the DEP project forward just before pandemic. DEP finally has a Project Manager for this project again to move forward this year. The Township is going through legal channels to acquire easements on properties needed for this project.

Ms. Elliott is hopeful the Township will be able to use some of the stormwater impact fee funds collected to match grants or apply for bonds for these projects.

5. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting of the EAC is scheduled for *Monday, April 18, 2022* on Zoom.
6. **ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, Ms. Bunin adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.



Robert A. Zienkowski, Township Manager

Submitted by: Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator