

The regular meeting of the **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL** (EAC) for April 2022 was held tonight via Zoom Web-Conference. Members in attendance were: Chair Greta Bunin, Vice Chair Wendy Ankrom, Kurt Ahrens, Sidney Kahn, and John Raisch. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager; Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator. Guests present: Elizabeth McGoran, Cheltenham Library System; Julie Slavet, TTF Watershed Partnership; Faran Savitz, Penn Environment; Mitch Zygmund-Felt, Ann Rappoport, Rebecca Schultz, Jeffrey Plaut, Alon Fain, Theresa Camerota.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bunin called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon motion of Ms. Ankrom, seconded by Ms. Bunin, the minutes of the March 21, 2022 meeting were unanimously approved.

2. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Discussion on Plastic Bag Legislation:

Mr. Plaut, Ms. Bunin, and Mr. Kahn have been researching the concept of plastic bag legislation and getting input from Commissioners, other local EACs, and the Clean Air Council on what can be implemented to reduce plastic litter in our community. These regulations would involve single-use plastic bags, and the goal would be to achieve a cultural shift to people bringing their own reusable bags. He, and Ms. Bunin have also executed informal surveys of small area businesses, and reported that many support the idea of plastic bag legislation. Ms. Bunin stated 25% of the population in US lives in an area where single-use plastic regulations are in effect. Even a small fee on bags has incentivized a culture change to people using their own bags.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt said educating Township residents will be a key part of encouraging the culture shift to where plastic bags are not considered routine. He would like to create a higher level of environmental and social responsibility through education so the Township can get programs in place to address environmental issues.

Ms. Rappoport said the EAC can share draft resolutions with staff and the Township Solicitor as a starting point. She also recommended the EAC make a presentation at a future Committee meeting of the Board of Commissioners to broadcast the issue. She suggested including a caveat for those who do implement ways to reuse single-use bags, to address the broader picture. The EAC agreed to bring this for discussion to an upcoming Public Affairs meeting.

Ms. Elliott agreed that plastic bags negatively impact the environment, but expressed concerns over enforcement. She would like to see how a program like this is being implemented in smaller communities, so the feedback from that can guide the development of a program in Cheltenham.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt suggested creating a short-term incentive program on a modest scale for larger retailers to see what results are generated, and that maybe the EDTF could partner on this initiative to create a level of interest and energy. He also said the Township is in the midst of soliciting funds from federal, state, and county groups, and he will look into whether an additional funding request could be submitted for some of these environmental programs.

Mr. Savitz said there are six plastic bag bans in Pennsylvania, the latest was recently enacted in Haverford Township. He shared [Penn Environment's model ordinance](#). In communities that enact these ordinances, they phase in the program over at least three months. He also said enacting a small fee for paper bags will help cover costs for businesses to switch. Resources such as FAQs for residents are available so municipalities do not have to reinvent the wheel. He said that a citizen enforcement model is useful in some cases. Mr. Zygmund-Felt stated that

Township Code Enforcement staff could include distribution of informational materials to businesses with whom they are regularly interacting.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Ms. Bunin announced Mr. Plaut and Ms. Schultz as Associate (Non-Voting) Members of the EAC to recognize their continual engagement. Ms. Ankrom would like an agenda item for May regarding rotating members on the EAC, as she is willing to resign her voting position in order to encourage new members.

- B. Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure in the Township:

There was lengthy discussion on the logistics of EV charging infrastructure in the Township. Ms. Elliott said it may be helpful to check with the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) to see if they have put anything in place or have put any thought or research into the on-street parking situation for EV charging. She said there are some challenges with putting charging stations on Township streets, especially where parking is at a premium, but there are also logistical challenges such as what locations make the most sense factoring in the length of time it takes to charge a vehicle. Ms. Ankrom mentioned that if you add a charger in front of your house, it's not a dedicated spot for you. Ms. Elliott will reach out to the Township's planning liaison at MCPC and will give an update next month on any resources available.

Ms. McGoran has been looking into if this could be implemented at the libraries and it was more costly than the Library had anticipated. Ms. Elliott said the Township is evaluating its facilities and will not be ready to invest in EV infrastructure until a plan is made and the Township knows where the facilities will be for years to come. The Township will definitely be looking to include sustainable infrastructure in its future plans. Ms. Ankrom said based on prior discussions, Glenside Library was identified as a location at the top of the list for accessible EV chargers.

Ms. Camerota said there are eight chargers available for public access in the Township. Ms. Ankrom stated that a discussion was held with Township Staff and the Township Solicitor two years ago, which raised some obstacles the Township faces – for one example, if a parking lot is not zoned as commercial, the owner of the lot would not be able to charge for use of a charger placed there. In addition, any commercial charger would be subject to the Township's Business Privilege Tax.

Mr. Kahn expressed that with planning EV infrastructure, the devil is in the details. Challenges include electrical grid access, the economics of it, and who is responsible for them. He feels that the best model will be to privatize EV charging services, and that it's not the responsibility of the Township to provide EV chargers any more than it is to provide gas stations. Instead, the Township's role should be to encourage such businesses to bring this commodity to Cheltenham. The Township's role would be to ensure that permitting/regulations are in place to address the challenges of installing EV charging stations for commercial and private uses.

- C. WeConservePA Fall Gathering of EACs

Ms. Bunin was contacted by WeConservePA, which is considering hosting a gathering of local EACs in the fall, and looking for a host EAC. Cheltenham EAC members decided they do not have the capacity to be the host community or be on the planning committee.

- D. Handwritten letters from Cheltenham Elementary

Students of Ms. Falso's class wrote letters to the EAC regarding invasive species taking over near the Brookwood Run stream at Parkview and Front Streets, for which the students are stream keepers through TTF. Ms. Bunin will work with Ms. Slavet for some ideas to help students clear invasive plants at the creek. Ms. Ankrom would like to find out whether they are

asking for support by way of training and resources or by physically working to remove the invasives.

- E. Ms. Camerota mentioned that the phragmites were cut down to the ground at Robinson Park, and expressed that this was done at the wrong time because it's currently nesting time. She does not fault the busy Public Works crews, but feels there needs to be environmental expertise advising such practices. Mr. Kahn suggested they expand this idea to provide a list of actionable suggestions for park maintenance. They will work with expert residents to compile suggestions.

4. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

A. Communications and Engagement

1) Tookany Creek Trail Fest – Sunday, April 24, 10am-2pm

Mr. Raisch said this is the EAC's first time holding this event, and they are working with many partners, so the event is being pushed out through various partners' social media channels. Volunteers are signed up for the trail cleanup to take place between 9-10am, but help is still needed for this cleanup. There will be a tabling area for the organizations.

Mr. Zygmund-Felt asked if everything is coordinated with Police and EMS to make sure there is an active presence and traffic control for parking.

- 2) Sustainable Yards – For this third year, Ms. Bunin and Ms. Schultz have continued to develop this idea, changing from a contest to something more like a showcase to encourage more participants and be open to even small sustainable practices such as a window box. They are working on a Sustainable Yard sign program to go with this.

B. Water and Ecology – None.

C. Energy and Emissions – None.

D. Mobility and Healthy Living – None.

E. Sustainable Development and Local Economy – None.

F. General Updates – None.

G. Staff Report – None.

- 5. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting of the EAC is scheduled for *Monday, May 9, 2022* on Zoom.

- 6. **ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, Ms. Bunin adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.



Robert A. Zienkowski, Township Manager

Submitted by: Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator