

The regular meeting of the **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL** (EAC) for April 2020 was held tonight via Zoom Web-Conference. Members in attendance were: Chair Wendy Ankrom, Vice Chair Greta Bunin, Kurt Ahrens, John Raisch, Michael Freeman, and Sidney Kahn. Guests present: Paul Whitaker and Julie Slavet, Executive Director, TTF Watershed Partnership. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Ankrom called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon motion of Mr. Kahn, the meeting minutes for February 10, 2020 were unanimously approved by the EAC.

2. OLD BUSINESS

- A. EAC members continued discussion on a sustainability-based bonus schedule for a tax abatement ordinance (LERTA) incentivizing economic revitalization for commercial or mixed-use properties. The EAC discussed various ways to develop a meaningful, but not overly burdensome method to apply tax abatements for the implementation of sustainability initiatives on their projects. The EAC also wanted to ensure that the bonus abatements were applied to work done over and above what is required by the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). Of particular interest was LEED certification, because, as Ms. Ankrom noted, several items to meet LEED criteria are already part of SALDO. A la carte options to achieve the bonus abatement should be measures above and beyond SALDO requirements or items not required by the SALDO, such as energy resiliency items. The EAC also discussed mechanisms for projects with sustainability initiatives not imagined in the proposed ordinance.

Ms. Slavet left at 8:45 p.m. Mr. Whitaker left at 8:56 p.m. Mr. Raisch left at 9:05.

Recommendation: Upon motion of Mr. Ahrens, the EAC voted 4-1 to recommend staff forward the its draft LERTA sustainability bonus schedule to the Economic Development Task Force and Board of Commissioners subcommittee on the Tax Abatement Ordinance for consideration (Ayes: Ms. Bunin, Ms. Ankrom, Mr. Ahrens, and Mr. Freeman; Nays: Mr. Kahn).

Mr. Ahrens left the meeting at 9:27 p.m.

- B. Members discussed the outline for updates to the EAC and Sustainable Cheltenham website pages. Ms. Ankrom shared a Google document listing various environmental topics for menu items, like energy efficiency resources, SolSmart, electric vehicles, trails, and nature/ecology. Ms. Ankrom proposed that each EAC member choose a topic and be responsible for updating links and information. Members agreed to compile information for their topics by the May meeting and finalize, with pictures, by June meeting.
- C. Discussion on 2020 EAC Goals Due to COVID-19 – Ms. Elliott updated the EAC on how things are up in the air as the Township will need to see the progression of COVID-19 conditions over the next few weeks and determine how the State and Township will reopen. The Board of Commissioners is currently evaluating the Township's financial status and will be reviewing a 5-year financial management plan for the Township. Ms. Ankrom discussed how EAC can support residents through the current economic situation with sustainability and healthy living resources such as gardening and composting tips, rain barrel workshops, trails, etc.
- D. The EAC unanimously agreed to table discussion on 501(c)3 coordination for EAC until next month.

3. **NEW BUSINESS**

4. **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS**

A. Communications and Engagement

- 1) 2020 Sustainability Awards – EAC Members agreed to delay sustainability awards until Harvest Fest in the fall.
- 2) E-Newsletter Status – The e-newsletter and other expenditures are on hold until the Board of Commissioners can get a better handle on how COVID-19 will impact the Township’s finances. However, the Township is able to share EAC links through website, Facebook, e-blasts, and its cable channels. Members will send resources to Ms. Cartlidge.

B. Water and Ecology – None.

C. Energy and Emissions – None.

D. Mobility and Healthy Living – None.

E. Sustainable Development and Local Economy – None.

F. Public Meetings – None.

G. Staff Report

- 1) Ms. Elliott informed the EAC that the Board of Commissioners would likely award a contract for a Stormwater Impact Fee Feasibility Study at its regular meeting on April 22, 2020. The fee would likely be based on the amount of impervious coverage on a property, and would go into a fund, managed by a separate authority, to be used for stormwater improvement projects in the Township, such as to flood reduction. The fee would include tax exempt properties, which do not pay taxes, but often have a significant amount of impervious coverage. The fee is viewed as a more equitable way to distribute the costs of stormwater management. The process would take about a year and involve multiple public meetings and a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, on which a member of the EAC would likely participate.
- 2) Ms. Elliott also reported that the Township is undergoing an update to the Comprehensive Plan, which was last done in 2005. The Montgomery County Planning Commission will be guiding the process and has begun some background work. This process will take about three years, and will also include an Advisory Committee and many public meetings.

Ms. Slavet mentioned that TTF would like to lend resources to support and market both of the above projects.

5. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting of the EAC is scheduled for *Monday, May 11, 2020*. The meeting will likely take place on Zoom.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, Ms. Ankrom adjourned the meeting at 9:47 p.m.



Terry Fedorchak, Interim Township Manager

Submitted by: Lauren Cartlidge, Special Projects Coordinator