

The regular meeting of the **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL** (EAC) for May 2020 was held tonight via Zoom Web-Conference. Members in attendance were: Chair Wendy Ankrom, Vice Chair Greta Bunin, Michael Freeman, and Sidney Kahn. Guests present: Ann Rappoport. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager and Lauren Carlidge, Special Projects Coordinator.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Ankrom called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

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

2. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Website – Members have started to compile resources for various environmental topics, as decided in last month’s meeting.

Mr. Kahn reported that current events may have an impact on the desirability of electric vehicles (EVs), since the price of gas has dropped and the declining economy will likely limit new vehicle purchases. Mr. Freeman mentioned that recent pictures taken over LA and NYC show cleaner skies due to the significant reduction in the amount of vehicle travel due to COVID-19 restrictions, so people may be interested in moving toward cleaner air just by changing modes of transportation. Members will continue discussion next month, as Ms. Elliott reported that website updates have been paused while the Township’s focus has been on disseminating coronavirus resources.

- B. 2020 EAC Goals Update – The EAC will be scaling back their goals for the year in light of COVID-19 and resulting financial constraints. Ms. Ankrom would like to focus first on communication and website updates to share resources and sustainability content.

Mr. Kahn reported that there will be a webinar this week regarding municipal sustainability. Ms. Elliott reported that multi-municipality resiliency meetings are on hold as municipalities have been forced to focus on how to continue providing essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said the municipalities involved in these conversations were planning to focus on resiliency issues in addition to reducing reliance on nonrenewable energy sources. The pandemic has only reinforced this need. Ms. Elliott will keep the EAC informed when work begins again on this project.

Ms. Rappoport suggested the EAC promote the idea of managed meadows to promote healthy native plant environments. Members discussed the balance between native landscaping and some property owners not maintaining their properties. Ms. Elliott will send the Township’s current ordinance regarding managed meadows to EAC members for review. The Township is not opposed to the concept, but had discussed how meadows look in small yards vs. larger plots and how meadows attract pests. Ms. Ankrom mentioned that Leigh Altadonna wanted to look into local plant ordinances to support native plants and will invite him to the next meeting.

Ms. Bunin mentioned that she attended a session on how EACs can participate in the planning and zoning process in their municipalities. She would like to invite members from Planning Commission, STAC, and/or Zoning Hearing Board to drop into next EAC Zoom call to learn more about the process and how best to work together.

- C. The EAC unanimously agreed to table discussion on 501(c)3 coordination for EAC.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Freeman asked what will be done with trees coming down for improvements at Curtis. Ms. Elliott said that Master Plan calls for using lumber from trees to make something for the park, and the Township would be interested in recommendations. Ms. Ankrom suggested using them

for a naturalized playscape in Ralph Morgan Park. Ms. Rappoport mentioned that making park benches out of the trees is in the master plan, but welcomed research and funding options if the EAC would like to present a proposal for a naturalized playscape.

- B. Regarding the tracking of energy usage, Ms. Ankrom asked how EAC might be able to work with PECO data for the Township. Mr. Freeman could run the energy audit to present to the group as a benchmark, but also mentioned that comparing energy use year-to-year is difficult as other factors influence usage. Ms. Elliott said the buildings with most energy use would be Police, Administration, EMS, and Public Works. Ms. Elliott will get letter of authorization for PECO, or get monthly bills for 2018-2019 to Mr. Freeman.

4. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

A. Communications and Engagement

- 1) EAC would like to present 2020 Sustainability Awards at the rescheduled Arts in the Park event in September. Ms. Elliott mentioned we can call for nominations in newsletter that will be going out – content will be finalized in the next few weeks.
- 2) Ms. Ankrom mentioned holding a photo competition for native landscaping, birds, pollinators for display at EAC table at Arts in the Park, which could be advertised through the Township Facebook page.

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 reported that Township staff is working through challenges brought on by COVID-19, such as how to reopen while protecting employees and the public, and what kind of activities can be supported while maintaining social distancing.
- 2) Ms. Elliot said that the Elkins Park Streetscape project is up and running and should be completed this summer for better pedestrian and vehicle access. Workers are resuming work at Curtis Hall this week, to be completed in the next couple weeks. JAM Catering is unable to host events until the area moves to the governor's green phase due to COVID-19. The Township is finalizing designs for the Tookany Creek Trail project, from Gimbel Field at Harrison Avenue to New Second Street, and is looking to bid out for the bridge construction phase this fall.

5. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting of the EAC is scheduled for *Monday, June 22, 2020*. The meeting will likely take place on Zoom.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, Ms. Ankrom adjourned the meeting at 8:44 p.m.



Terry Fedorchak, Interim Township Manager

Submitted by: Lauren Cartlidge, Special Projects Coordinator