

The regular meeting of the **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL** (EAC) for September 2022 was held tonight via Zoom Web-Conference. Members in attendance were: Chair Greta Bunin, Boris Kerzner, Kurt Ahrens, and Sidney Kahn. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager; Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator. Guests present: Rebecca Schultz; Karen Hanson; Doug Horner, EarthBio Technologies

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bunin called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon motion of Mr. Kahn, seconded by Mr. Ahrens, the minutes of the August 15, 2022 meeting were unanimously approved.

2. PRESENTATION

Doug Horner spoke to the group about his company, EarthBio Technologies, in Glenside, which has been operating in the field of bioremediation for 25+ years. They work with commercial kitchen facilities, using biologicals to remediate fats, oils, and grease, keeping drains clear. Recently, they have implemented an aerobic digester for breaking down food waste on site, which allows it to be diverted from landfills by converting it to gray wastewater and processed through wastewater treatment.

EarthBio Technologies has been running a pilot program for a year, turning the gray wastewater into an agricultural product – a liquid soil amendment. They pick up local food waste a few days per week, and take a few steps to convert it to liquid compost with the addition of microbial package specific to plant and soil growth. The machine is called the compolizer, and for right now, they only include materials that humans can digest (i.e., no paper products or steak bones at this time). It can break down 500-600 lbs. of organic waste in a 24-hour period. It operates 24/7 with a colander at the bottom for the liquid as it becomes ready. Mr. Horner explained that the product is a soil stimulant, not a fertilizer, as the batches change depending on the different foods in the waste at any given time.

Mr. Horner said while this process is still something new they are continuing to develop, Earthbio would be happy to work with the Township in the future if the Township was to implement curbside organic waste pickup or diversion of organics after general pickup. Mr. Horner said waste pickup by EarthBio Technologies is comparable to standard waste pickup for businesses in regards to price. Their goal is to be less expensive than haul-away to landfills, for a 10 mile radius.

Members asked if the soil amendment is available for purchase locally. Mr. Horner said they are currently still doing trials and collecting data about the use of the product. They are about to start a program with Villanova through which Villanova gets to use the soil amendment created from waste collected from apartments there. The company is planning to stay wholesale oriented at this time.

Mr. Ahrens asked about treatment of Cheltenham's wastewater in Philadelphia and about synergies between these two options. Mr. Horner said Philadelphia is more advanced than many communities in the country because they do anaerobic digestion of the wastewater, converting it to energy. He said that both end results – energy produced and the liquid compost produced, are beneficial products of treating wastewater. In winter months when a soil stimulant is not as necessary, the wastewater can easily be sent through to be treated by Philadelphia's water treatment system.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Stream Naming in the Township

Mr. Ahrens said there has been some productive discussion about this with the task force, but nothing concrete yet. They hope to have an update soon, after an upcoming meeting of the task force.

B. Plastic Bag Legislation Update:

Ms. Elliott shared the draft ordinance with the EAC. Members discussed language about a fee for bag purchase. Ms. Elliott suggested the ordinance could leave it open for retailers to set the fee. She said she has also seen some ordinances stipulating a ten cents fee. Ms. Bunin said that a fee is the sticking point of the ordinance, because without a fee, people would take whatever bags are free. Members will look at how other municipalities are putting this into practice and will consider a recommendation next month.

C. Zero Waste Update:

Ms. Walter confirmed tours for EAC members to Covanta Waste-to-Energy and Republic Recycling facilities to learn more about the down-stream process of Cheltenham's waste.

Mr. Kerzner stated a good measure would be to start small and help educate the Cheltenham community about composting, like looking into more resources and putting more information about this on the website. Members discussed doing small-scale community composting of food waste and helping neighbors through the process. It was noted that the Township composts yard waste and leaves collected through its collections.

Ms. Hanson said she reached out to Springfield and Jenkintown who are both interested in a larger scale regional effort to compost. Mr. Kerzner mentioned that larger programs sometimes do make not the best product, because the size of the operation and distance from source to facility should be taken into consideration.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

5. **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS**

A. Communications and Engagement

- 1) Sustainable Spaces Showcase, Awards. Ms. Bunin said there were six entries to the Sustainable Spaces Showcase and five nominations to the Sustainability Awards. Representatives from EAC, Wyncote Audubon, Primex, Friends of High School Park, and the advisory group for the showcase will get together to review entries for the Showcase.

Yard signs – Thirty signs, designed by Ms. Schultz, were ordered by the Township. Entries to this showcase and the past two years' contests will receive a sign.

- 2) Arts in the Park at High School Park is October 2; EAC will be tabling. They discussed promoting composting, the Sustainable Spaces Showcase program, and how to winterize garden/yard.
- 3) Sustainability Awards – Mr. Ahrens and Mr. Kahn will review submissions for validity. Ms. Walter will print the Awards, to be presented at Arts in the Park.

B. Water and Ecology – None.

C. Energy and Emissions – None.

D. Mobility and Healthy Living

- 1) Ms. Elliott gave an update on the construction of Phase III of Tookany Creek Trail. She noted that construction on the first part of the trail has begun and is expected to be complete in March 2023. The second part will begin shortly thereafter and expected to be open by the end of 2023. She explained that this section of the trail is divided into two projects due to the need for three different grants and the different requirements for each grant. Multiple grants were solicited since the cost of the project is significantly more than originally estimated.

E. Sustainable Development and Local Economy – None.

F. General Updates

1) Brookwood Run / Cheltenham Elementary – Tabled.

G. Staff Report:

1) Ms. Schultz asked about the Green Region Grant. Ms. Elliott said the Township does not qualify for this round because we have an open project under that grant. She also mentioned that the Friends of Curtis Arboretum may be submitting a project the next time around.

2) Social Media Policy Update – At September’s Public Affairs Committee meeting, the topic of social media and citizens committees was discussed. The Township Solicitor weighed in on the discussion and said there should be no social media channels run by citizen committees. The members can run social media channels as environmentally-minded members of the public and share sustainability resources, but should be very clear that they are not affiliated with Township. Some questions arose regarding the Sustainable Cheltenham logo tagline and whether that can remain the name of these social media channels. Ms. Elliott will connect with the Solicitor on these specifics.

Mr. Ahrens mentioned past discussions about making EAC a nonprofit organization. Ms. Elliott clarified that the EAC—established as an advisory committee to the Board—will not go away; however, a nonprofit spinoff would be more appropriate for activities such as advocacy.

The group also discussed an EAC newsletter. If emails are collected by the group in their capacity at EAC members, the email list is property of the Township and messaging would have to go through Township channels. If they want their own agency in creating and sending out newsletter, the email list would have to be compiled by members as private citizens.

6. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting of the EAC is scheduled for *Monday, October 17, 2022* on Zoom.

7. **ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, Ms. Bunin adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.



Robert A. Zienkowski, Township Manager

Submitted by: Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator