

The regular meeting of the **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL** (EAC) for December 2021 was held tonight via Zoom Web-Conference. Members in attendance were: Vice Chair Greta Bunin, Kurt Ahrens, Michael Freeman, and Sidney Kahn. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager; Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator. Guests present: Julie Slavet, Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership (TTF); Jeffrey Plaut; Boris and Allison Kerzner

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Bunin called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

### **1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Upon motion of Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Bunin, the meeting minutes for November 15, 2021 were unanimously approved by the EAC.

### **2. OLD BUSINESS**

#### **A. Local Plastic Bag Ban/Fee Discussion**

- 1) Members continued discussion on the possibility of a plastic bag ban or fee in Cheltenham and would like to gauge public interest. Ms. Bunin discussed public survey questions that Upper Merion used recently that the Township could consider promoting, as well. Mr. Ahrens expressed concern that the people who answer a survey would skew results, as surveys are usually answered people who feel strongly about a topic.

Ms. Slavet stated that TTF was peripherally involved in enacting the ban in Philadelphia, where half the watershed is located, and would be in favor of it for Cheltenham. TTF would be happy to help with a public survey. She also noted the measure took 10 years to research and implement in Philadelphia.

Ms. Elliott said that getting the buy-in of the business community may be more important than residential feedback as a first step. She suggested that the EAC consider a public relations campaign with messaging on single-use plastics and start gathering business support. She also suggested this could be a more long-term goal for Cheltenham; that we could learn from the experiences of similar municipalities as they get this sort of program up and running.

Ms. Bunin volunteered to draft a proposal to the Board of Commissioners regarding their support and a long term plan to alleviate negative impacts of single-use plastic bags. Mr. Plaut and Mr. Kahn offered to help.

### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. The following items were identified as 2022 Goals for the EAC:**

- Fill the vacancy.
- Move forward a plastic bag ban initiative.
- Work on community engagement: continue highlighting sustainable yards, implement garden tours, and identify additional activities and Earth Day projects.
- Promote the extension of the Tookany Creek Trail.
- Try to improve and strengthen connection with School District, aligning environmental goals.

### **4. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS**

#### **A. Communications and Engagement:**

- 1) Follow-up regarding Bird Town lawn signage – Ms. Bunin stated that this program is no longer a project of Audubon, but a separate entity: Bird Town of PA (birdtownpa.org). The website promotes other certification programs like the National Wildlife Foundation,

Monarch Watch, and more, summarizing the requirements for each. EAC could work with them to develop and promote a Sustainable Cheltenham sticker to be added to a resident's sign obtained through another one of these official programs.

- 2) Diane Ehrich of Collins Nursery is interested in including EAC Sustainable Yard Contest participants who are interested for yard/garden tours.

B. Water and Ecology

- 1) Ms. Slavet gave an update on TTF Initiatives:

The Keneseth Israel Stormwater Project is near completion. A large basin was added under the large parking lot area to alleviate flooding due to runoff from the synagogue roof.

TTF's project volume slowed due to the pandemic, but they are continuing their StreamSmart program, which subsidizes green stormwater infrastructure like rain gardens on residential property, focusing on the Jenkintown Creek.

TTF has done tours before, showing trees and shrubs that were planted, and is happy to assist EAC in offering similar programming.

TTF works with the Horticultural Society to support Tree Tenders, a program in which individuals are trained to plant and care for trees. TTF will support an individual to take the course through the Horticultural Society. Ms. Slavet said she would love to see someone start a tree tender group in Cheltenham. It was noted that Abington's Shade Tree Advisory Commission (STAC) is very active and did a master tree plan for the entire Township. Ms. Bunin said EAC could invite a member of Cheltenham STAC to speak to EAC and see where goals may overlap.

Ms. Slavet said TTF will again be promoting an Earth Day BioBlitz using the iNaturalist app throughout Earth Week.

C. Energy and Emissions – None.

D. Mobility and Healthy Living

- 1) Mr. Raisch was not present to give update on Cresheim Trail.

E. Sustainable Development and Local Economy – None.

F. General Updates

- 1) Ms. Bunin said that Ms. Ankrom arranged to go talk to the CHS Environmental Club January 3 at 2:45.
- 2) Cardboard drop-off – the question was raised about whether the Township is charged for cardboard recycled through single-stream and if it is paid for cardboard collected through drop-off at the Public Works Facility or Waverly Road Compost Facility. Ms. Walter will verify the answer to this with Public Works Director.

G. Staff Report

- 1) Comprehensive Plan Update – The analysis of the recent public survey is being completed by Aaron Holly of the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC). However, Mr. Holly has accepted a new job, so the Township does not yet know how that will impact this project.
- 2) Stormwater Management Fee – The Board adopted an Ordinance establishing a Stormwater Management User Fee at its meeting last week, which will be included in the 2022 tax bill like the sewer and trash fee. The fee will be phased in over three years. The single family residential fee (between 0.1 and 0.5 acre) will be \$80 in 2022 and increase to \$160 in 2023 and \$220 in 2024. There will be three tiers for residential properties ranging from a fee of

half the fee to two times the fee. Non-single family residential properties will pay based on impervious coverage that has been analyzed by the consultant. An enterprise fund was also established for the collection of the fee, which ensures that the money collected from the fee will be dedicate to the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the Township's stormwater system, helping to meet increasing regulatory requirements for stormwater management.

- 3) The Township is looking at its aging facilities, which are in poor condition, inefficient, and need costly fixes for boilers and other maintenance. Staff is looking into what would be the most efficient way to improve services to the Community, including the possibility of a single-campus setting. No decisions have been made at this time.
- 4) This was the first year for the Township's new tree donation program. Over 20 trees were planted through the program, in Tookany Creek Parkway, Curtis Arboretum, and other parks. Staff also worked on getting grants to plant trees – the Friends of Curtis Arboretum (FOCA) planted 17 trees in November, 15 of which were courtesy of a PECO grant. Two FOCA volunteers, Geoffrey and Chrissa, have spent hours each week clearing invasive species along Rock Creek in the Arboretum and planting small trees and shrubs.
5. **NEXT MEETING** – The next meeting of the EAC is scheduled for *Monday, January 10, 2021* on Zoom.
6. **ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business, Ms. Bunin adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.



Robert A. Zienkowski, Township Manager

Submitted by: Lauren Walter, Special Projects Coordinator