

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2023, 6:30PM, Municipal Building Lower Level

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Karen Adams, Bill Hartin, Marc Singely, Tom Dittmar, and Paige Strasko
- b. Absent: Bill Ruch, Tom Grube, Zane Rice, and Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 22, 2023

- a. Dittmar made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, and Singely seconded. The minutes were passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Earth Day Recap

- i. Singely started off the discussion by stating the event went well, he was hoping to have more people involved but understood with children's sporting events and other Earth Day events going on, it was difficult to get people out. Singely also stated that the program and work that Strasko did was great, the event was something to build off, and the committee needed to get more people there. Dittmar stated advertising starting in October was the best way to start. Adams and Dittmar discussed timing and method of advertisement. Dittmar suggested advertising with the boy and girl scouts, as well as Palmer Days.
- ii. The committee and Strasko discussed how to get kids involved, specifically those that needed service or volunteer hours, the need to have Earth Day as a constant agenda item for planning and advertising, the Earth Day subcommittee and if the subcommittee had any suggestions.
- iii. Hartin suggested making an annual report card for the committee and for the group to discuss what they wanted to evaluate themselves on and how they wanted to improve as a committee. Hartin's idea is for the group to periodically evaluate themselves and communicate that evaluation with residents, while using the evaluation as a list of topics the committee wants to educate the public about. Hartin's example was the state of bees and their importance to the ecosystem. Hartin also discussed the significance of storm drain labeling and the social and educational aspect of it at the Earth Day event, and that more labeling would be an opportunity to speak with the public and get their topics out there.
- iv. The committee also discussed looking at what other communities are doing the same day as planned events, how the committee used to plan events in the past, other groups to partner with, scheduling, and having food at events.
- v. Adams asked the committee what they wanted the topic of discussion to be at the next meeting. Dittmar and member of the Earth Stewards of

Palmer John Marks stated outreach and program planning should be for the next meeting. Adams summarized by stating the group will discuss who the committee should integrate with and reach out early.

- vi. Hartin, Adams, and Marks discussed bees, having live things to engage and interest kids and Hartin stated he had already discussed a possible workshop with a beekeeper he has worked with in the past. Singely also mentioned that he saw bee boxes at Sam's Club and that could be added into the education factor of a bee presentation. Hartin discussed using social media posts from the beekeepers as an educational tool. Committee members also discussed the benefits and uses of dandelions and other plants.
- vii. Adams stated the committee should identify four main groups they want to work with now, get them on the schedule by October.
- viii. Strasko and committee members discussed the newsletter schedule and if there was any discussion about a booth for the committee at Palmer Days. Committee members and Strasko discussed upcoming deadlines and writing an article summarizing the Earth Day event in the newsletter. Hartin volunteered to work with Strasko on an article about Earth Day that also included other educational topics the committee wanted to focus on. Adams asked if they could direct residents in the article to the Facebook page and ask what they found was the most beneficial, and what they were looking for at the event to get feedback from residents. Adams, Dittmar and Strasko discussed the best and easiest way to receive feedback from residents. Adams suggested using both Facebook and the Palmer website to get feedback. Singely suggested that the committee plan for all due dates in upcoming newsletters and preparing multiple articles that would be ready to use when the time came and making them topical for the time of year. Adams asked for newsletter deadlines for the rest of the year, but Strasko was unsure if there was a set schedule. Strasko also reminded the group that usually newsletter deadlines are the second week in a month and the committee does not meet until the end of the month. Adams ended the discussion by stating the committee will brainstorm newsletter topics at the next meeting.

b. EAC WeConserve PA Letter

- i. Strasko asked if the committee members had done research about WeConserve PA, but none had. Dittmar stated that the group was not able to become an EAC. Strasko stated the item was not for the committee to decide if they wanted to become an EAC, it was if they wanted to join the group and be part of the network. Hartin asked about what the group did; Strasko and Marks explained that the Township would pay money from their budget to join the network and in return they would be in contact with EAC's in PA, as well as have access to training courses, resources, and templates for different documents. Marks and Dittmar described that

the resources are also available for free on their website and there was not a need to pay the fee for joining. Adams asked what the committee would like to do with the item.

- ii. Dittmar made a motion to deny joining WeConserve PA, and Hartin seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

c. Standard Operating Procedure

- i. Adams asked if the Standard Operating Procedure (S.O.P.) was finalized or not and Strasko stated the committee has not discussed it because they have been planning for Earth Day. Hartin asked what the committee was supposed to do with the agenda item, and Strasko explained the committee had wanted to update the current bylaws, but the Township solicitor stated it would be more beneficial to the group to have an S.O.P. The committee discussed the current document in place, updating that to be in line with the current committee, and clarification on where the committee was in the review process and what they expected from the S.O.P.
- ii. Hartin stated his framework for the S.O.P. would be who is the committee, what do they want to do, and how will they accomplish those goals. The committee agreed that the item should stay on for the next meeting, and Strasko stated she would send a reminder and resend the current bylaws.

4. New Business

a. E-cycle event

1. Strasko stated she reached out to Clean Earth again to determine availability, and they could schedule either September 16 or 23 for an e-cycle event. Singely thought September 23 would be a better date, and Adams asked where the event location. Strasko, Marks, and the committee discussed advertising and planning with Easton High School.
2. Hartin made a motion to reserve September 23 for an e-cycle event pending school approval, and Singely seconded. Adams asked who contacts the school, Strasko stated herself and Ruch did last year. Adams asked Strasko for the school contact so she and Ruch can coordinate and discuss with the high school to plan the event.
3. Dittmar asked if the event would be open to multiple municipalities, and Strasko asked the same question and who would be contacting the other municipalities. Adams asked some clarifying questions about involving other municipalities. Marks and committee members discussed sharing costs among municipalities, budget for the event, planning with neighboring municipalities, who they would reach out to, and other funding from DEP and the county. Marks and Dittmar listed Tatamy, Upper and Lower Nazareth, Bethlehem Township, Wilson Borough, Forks, and Nazareth. Committee members discussed how to

contact other municipalities and timing to confirm the event date with the groups involved.

4. Adams stated she would go to the list of municipalities websites for contact information and start working on determining which municipalities would be interested in joining the e-cycle event.

ii. Hard drive security

1. Adams asked about this item, and Hartin stated that he posed the question last meeting if the committee should inform e-cycle attendees to remove any hard drive data from their electronics. Dittmar stated that the company, Clean Earth, is very secure, and that Binney and Smith take hard drives there directly for data security. Dittmar and Marks also explained the process Clean Earth uses to destroy hard drives. Adams suggested advertising the data security aspect of the company and stated Ruch needed to contact the school and she needed to contact the municipalities.

b. Climate Action Plan

- i. Adams asked if Strasko had anything on this item. Strasko explained a new employee that came from the City of Scranton had connected her with Penn State students and teachers to discuss the LCAP program that the City of Scranton used for their climate action plan.
- ii. Adams and the committee discussed cities in the area and what their climate action plan looks like, cost associated with hiring a consultant to work on the plan, and what consultants worked on the other cities plans. Adams pointed out that the committee does not have the skill set to complete the plan on their own and that a consultant would be able to integrate Palmer's climate action plan with the others in the region. Adams also suggested talking with other cities and towns, perhaps working with the Nurture Nature Center that has developed the plans for Easton, Allentown, and Bethlehem to get any feedback or advice on completing this type of plan. Adams was adamant that the committee should not try to mimic the other climate action plans and that the calculations required would be better handled by a professional with more experience. Marks also directed committee members to PA DEP's website on the LCAP program Strasko had mentioned and shared they had a five-step plan for communities to follow, as well as measures to include in the plan and more.
- iii. Adams asked what everyone felt the next steps for this item are. Adams suggested everyone review the climate action plans in existence for other communities and talk with communities that have plans, and if they would be willing to discuss the climate action plan process.

c. Household Hazardous Waste Event

- i. Dittmar asked why the committee wanted to run this type of program and gave background on the start of the program and explained that the County

receives funds to hold these events. Committee members and Marks discussed the lack of events from the County in recent years, the need for disposal sites that accept household hazardous waste, the size of Northampton County, and the general lack of state and federal requirements and regulations for hazardous waste. Dittmar also discussed the need for the event to be County wide.

- ii. Dittmar stated he would discuss a county run event with Northampton officials. Adams asked if the committee should discuss with other municipalities first, then band together to discuss with the county. Adams stated she would discuss household hazardous waste with neighboring municipalities when she contacted them regarding the e-cycle event.

d. Educational events

- i. Strasko stated Ruch had added this item for the committee to brainstorm and discuss other educational events besides Earth Day that could be held throughout the year. Strasko suggested composting or yard waste education, native plants, stormwater, bees, or other ideas from the committee.
- ii. Dittmar asked if there was discussion of having a booth at Palmer Days, but Strasko was unsure. Dittmar discussed the committee's involvement in Palmer Days in the past, the opportunity for education, and Adams asked clarifying questions about the event.
- iii. Hartin suggested making the item "educational efforts" to reflect what the committee can accomplish and allow for discussion of what the end goal of each educational effort would be.
- iv. Dittmar discussed bringing back past programs to re-educate residents, such as backyard composting and food waste. Committee members discussed having events three to four times a year to educate on different topics and possibly making the topics seasonal. Singely mentioned doing more clean-up events, Marks and Dittmar discussed clean-up programs that the Earth Stewards of Palmer do, as well as the MS4 program that requires Palmer Township to educate the public on the program and stormwater pollution.
- v. Adams discussed continuing storm drain relabeling, as well as the adopt a drain program. Adams stated the committee should keep a running list of topics or events for them to work through. Hartin stated the item should be recurring and continuously update the item. Singely and Adams discussed a list of topics to add to and where to focus on first.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisor's

- i. Brett was not present to report on the Board of Supervisors.

b. MS4

- i. **Storm Drain labeling**

1. Committee members discussed this topic previously with Earth Day and Educational events. Strasko stated an inventory needed to be taken to determine how many inlets still needed labels in the Mill Race development. Adams asked that this be moved up on the agenda as an action item to keep the committee working towards relabeling.

c. Earth Day Subcommittee

- i. Hartin stated the subcommittee should meet on their own and make suggestions to the group on how to plan and execute Earth Day next year. Hartin also stated he would reach out to the other members to plan their own meeting.

6. Public Comment

- a. There was nothing for public comment.

7. For the Good of the Order

- a. Strasko shared that residents were asking about a shredding event for documents but was unsure if the committee wanted to get involved because they had other events and ideas that need planning.
- b. Dittmar explained that in the past the committee had a shredding truck at e-cycle events to save energy. Singely agreed and thought that would be a good addition to the e-cycle event. Committee members discussed where people can take shredded paper since it cannot be recycled in the curbside bins. Singely asked if this was a topic of research and stated he was interested in learning more about shredding documents.

8. NEXT MEETING: May 24, 2023

9. Adjournment

- a. Dittmar made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Singely seconded. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 8:38pm.