

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

March 22, 2023, 6:30PM Municipal Building Lower Level

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Tom Grube, Tom Dittmar, Marc Singley, Bill Hartin, and Paige Strasko. Members of the public were John Marks and Kathy Altmann
- b. Absent: Bill Ruch, Karen Adams, Zane Rice, and Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:34PM.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 22, 2023

- a. Grube asked if any of the members had corrections or changes to the minutes. Dittmar made a comment about the Household Hazardous Waste program and Grube asked Strasko to make the hazardous waste a separate agenda item for next month's meeting. Singley made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February, and Hartin seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Earth Day

i. Events

1. Storm drains labeling

- a. Strasko shared different flyer designs she worked on with the committee and asked for a vote on which design to use. The committee decided on two different designs. Strasko shared her documents with the committee that she put together for the storm drain labeling volunteers including maps with instructions, instruction sheets for attaching the labels, and handout materials she and Adams edited a few weeks prior to the meeting. Strasko stated that the Township needed to purchase more wire brushes for volunteers, and how she was thinking of making bags with the number of labels needed, maps and instructions for each volunteer group so they could be split by streets and work through the development adjacent to Mill Race Park.
- b. Grube asked about the timing of the event and how it would work with committee members leaving to help supervise drain relabeling. Strasko stated Adams had volunteered to help stay at tables and pass out information.
- c. Strasko confirmed with committee members that the only venue for the event this year was Mill Race Park to make planning simpler. Everyone agreed since the committee was running out of time to plan for multiple locations.
- d. Hartin discussed with committee members and Strasko what the structure of the volunteer groups would be.

Strasko stated one or two adults would need to be with each group to apply the glue and reminded the committee how Ruch was approached by parents looking for volunteer hours for their children's school requirements, and that much of the volunteer groups would be comprised of high school age children. Grube also mentioned that it would depend on how many people are there on the day. Committee members also discussed other events going on for Earth Day and other sporting events that many volunteers may have to attend. The committee members were confident that starting the relabeling project at 9am would give volunteers with other obligations enough time to participate in relabeling and make it to their sporting events.

2. BSC- educational programs

- a.** Altmann, Strasko, and committee members discussed how the timing of the events would work. Strasko confirmed with Altmann that BSC members could start one of their programs at 11am. Grube discussed how timing could be flexible. Altmann and Strasko discussed timing for when to schedule the water testers. Altmann also described the enviro-scape model they use to teach children about non-point source pollution. Singley asked about starting the labeling event with the enviro-scape and Altmann offered to bring the model to demonstrate before the storm drain labeling. Strasko confirmed that Altmann would be able to attend at 9am when the labeling project would start and Altmann was fine with coming earlier. Strasko and Altmann also discussed the logistics of materials needed like tables, pamphlets, and display materials.

3. Recycling presentation

- a.** Strasko also mentioned that she was still in contact with a representative from the Township's recycling contractor. Grube and Dittmar discussed the resources they found through Waste Management's website that could be used in the future including a power point presentation. Strasko explained the Township uses the company Total Recycle and not Waste Management for the recycling services, and stated they should be sending a representative for the event. Strasko stated if he was able to, she would schedule the recycling presentation for the end of the day at 1pm.
- b.** Grube stated he thought it would be better to end the event around 1:00 or 1:30pm. Strasko asked the committee about

a cleanup event, and the group thought it would be better to schedule a cleanup on a different day and possibly partner with the Earth Stewards of Palmer to cleanup an area that greatly needs it. Marks discussed other groups that the Earth Stewards have started working with to cleanup litter and debris, and stated the groups are always willing to work together and help each other.

- c. Strasko asked Grube if they should have a separate agenda item and Grube agreed.

4. Resident incentives

- a. Singely mentioned his search for finding LED bulbs that the committee could hand out at the event. Strasko reviewed the list of things that the committee has in the municipal building, and Grube discussed where the committee had gotten supplies from before.
- b. Grube asked about the logistics of bringing all the supplies to Mill Race but Strasko was confident she could load her vehicle the night before and meet committee members at Mill Race on the morning of the event. Dittmar discussed what the committee used to hand out at Palmer Days as well.
- c. Altmann offered to bring some handout supplies on the day as well, and Strasko asked her to bring them along.
- d. Singely stated he reached out to Met-Ed to find out about handing out energy saving kits, but shared they have restrictions on handing them out to non-customers. Singely said other utility companies do them as well, and offered to make a list with links to utility websites that offer free handouts and services for their customers. Strasko agreed and offered to frame the sheet and display it so they could catch people's eye with it and offered the same option to Altmann for display.

5. Solar panels

- a. Ruch was not present to discuss any progress he made with Senator Boscola's office for an educational solar panel presentation or table. Grube confirmed that Dittmar brought up another county council member that sells solar panels.

6. Keep PA Beautiful

- a. Strasko asked the group about registering Earth Day with Keep PA Beautiful, but stated since there was not going to be a cleanup event this year, there was not much of a point now. The committee agreed to register a different event with Keep PA Beautiful when they had time to plan one.

7. Nature trail- native plant education

- a.** Strasko stated she reached out to Penn State Extension as Altmann had suggested at the last meeting and got in touch with someone from the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L). Although the representative has other obligations the same day, he was available to present on the morning of Earth Day.

b. EAC WeConserve PA Letter

- i.** Strasko asked if any of the members looked at the materials on the website, and no one had any new comments. Grube asked to push this item until there were enough committee members present to discuss.

c. Standard Operating Procedure

- i.** Similar to the WeConserve PA letter agenda item, Grube asked to push this item until all committee members were present to discuss. Strasko and Grube discussed if there needed to be a separate meeting for the committee to discuss the standard operating procedures but decided to keep it on the agenda until the next meeting, after Earth Day was over.
- ii.** Hartin asked for clarification on what the group was trying to accomplish with the operating procedure and Strasko explained it was meant to give members structure to follow and define roles and responsibilities of current and future committee members. Hartin, Grube, and Strasko discussed more representation, what the operating procedure should include and the need to discuss after the Earth Day event was over.

4. New Business

a. E-cycle event

- i.** Strasko stated that she added this to the agenda so the committee would start planning the E-cycle event and they do not run into last minute issues like they had for Earth Day and the E-cycle event in the past. Strasko shared she was planning on reaching out to Clean Earth the next day to discuss dates. Dittmar stated the dates that would be best would be in September or October, so the committee and volunteers are not working in the heat.
- ii.** Dittmar discussed the benefits of having an E-cycle event that are multi-municipalities for cost sharing, and that Tatamy borough would be very interested in partnering with Palmer Township for the next E-cycle event since they are such a small community. Strasko stated this was also why she started the conversation now, so the committee could communicate with other municipalities and plan to make it a successful event.
- iii.** Dittmar and committee members discussed other municipalities to partner with, where to hold the event, traffic flow and considerations for the committee to discuss at the April meeting. Dittmar discussed the amount of waste that the committee used to collect at Northampton Community

College in years past, and how the community college site had been beneficial to large events in the past.

- iv. Hartin asked if anyone in the past had warned residents and e-cycle attendees about data security and removing their private information from hard drives and other electronic storage devices like printers. Dittmar discussed that they have always advised it in the past, and the procedures that Clean Earth follows because he has worked with the company for many years. Dittmar explained that Clean Earth is popular in this area because they have a high security rating and take the extra step to remove and properly destroy hard drives in order to protect personal information. Dittmar shared that he has watched the equipment at Clean Earth take the mercury out of a fluorescent lightbulb and assured the group that the company does everything they can to protect people's private information. Grube stated the committee should still mention it on the flyer or in the announcement of the event just to be safe.
- v. Hartin asked about earth metals in the recyclable, and Dittmar discussed with the group that Clean Earth separates everything and recycles anything that is usable. Marks also shared his experience with the company and how they use everything out of a product until they cannot use it anymore. Marks also highlighted that the price residents and others pay with these companies is less than someone else.
- vi. Grube asked Strasko to share the dates from Clean Earth for an e-cycle event this year. Marks asked Strasko to inquire if Clean Earth has any materials that inform people on how to deal with harddrives, if they should be removed before bringing your item to the event, or if the harddrives should be left in to ensure that it is destroyed. Strasko stated she would ask, but she also thought that the flyer last year stated for residents to bring electronics intact and that they would accept everything as is at the event. Hartin asked about adding a slogan to the e-cycle flyer to leave an impression on residents. Strasko stated that should be fine, spacing was the main concern since there was mostly pricing information on the flyer. Strasko shared with the committee what the flyer from last year's event looked like. Hartin discussed some basic ideas for a slogan that would get residents thinking about e-cycling.

b. Climate Action Plan

- i. Strasko shared a printed template that she found with the group. Hartin asked where Strasko got it and discussed the Climate Action Plan templates that they each found online. Grube asked if the committee was planning on having a subcommittee to work on the climate action plan. Committee members discussed briefly how to start working on the climate action plan templates, and Strasko stated she would share the template she found with the committee after the meeting.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

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

b. MS4

- i. Strasko had already discussed the MS4 plans that the committee had for Earth Day and reiterated that the Adopt a Drain program she found has an annual cost associated with it. Strasko also stated that with the program just getting redone recently, the Adopt a Drain program she found would have to be considered in the future.
- ii. Strasko discussed the MS4 questions the committee had, and informed them on why she felt that the Adopt a Drain program could wait a year or two.

6. Public Comment

7. For the Good of the Order

- a. Hartin shared Strasko's presentation at the recent Planning Commission meeting made an impact on those participating. Hartin also discussed his vision of the ESC playing a greater role in development plans because he felt that the environment was constantly overlooked when discussing proposed plans of this nature. Hartin discussed some specifics from the Planning Commission meeting such as the development directly next to his house, and the importance of flow rate calculations, and the impact that flooding has on the natural environment. Hartin also highlighted the greater impact on the environment down stream from where the development is occurring, and how many other waterways and water systems will be affected by the increasing stormwater in the system.
- b. Grube had asked about previous discussions with the last liaison about committee members attending other meetings throughout the Township to represent the ESC in their meetings as well, and to stay up to date on what other groups were working on. Grube discussed the plans that the committee reviewed at one previous meeting and seeing if members could attend other meetings during the month, and the benefit to being involved with other Township activities.
- c. Marks also discussed the flooding issues that will be heading towards Hartin's house in the near future with the new development. Hartin discussed the history of his William Penn era home. Marks also made a suggestion of an idea for turning the Schoeneck into a greenway to convert the area into a protected corridor. Strasko stated that the Planning Director, Kent Baird would be the person to discuss that option with and explained he has a background in conservation work.
- d. Altmann also invited the ESC members to attend a Bushkill Stream Conservancy meeting when any of them were able to.
- e. Grube asked to end the meeting to attend to a family matter.

8. Next meeting: April 26, 2023

9. Adjournment

- a. Dittmar made a motion to adjourn, and Singley seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 7:54PM.