

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

**July 26, 2023, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room**

**1. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Bill Ruch, Zane Rice, Karen Adams, Marc Singley, Bill Hartin, and Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Tom Grube, Michael Brett.
- c. Members of the public: Ken Starace, John Marks, and Tony Rose.
- d. The meeting was called to order at 6:42PM.

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 28, 2023**

- a. Rice made a motion to approve the minutes from June 28, 2023, and Adams seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**3. Old Business**

**a. Earth Day (outreach and program planning)**

- i. Ruch stated the Township wants to expand the Earth Day event and discussed planning events, early planning, and every committee member should look at an educational event they would like to do for Earth Day. Adams and Ruch discussed the sub-committee for Earth Day, the entire committee working together for Earth Day events, cohesive planning, locations, foot traffic, and homework assignments for committee members of Earth Day events and the resources needed to execute those events.
- ii. Marks reminded committee members that there are no scheduled meetings in November or December. Hartin asked if they were set to that schedule. Strasko informed the committee that if the meeting schedule changed, it would need to be advertised. Rose suggested having an Earth Day chair for the sub-committee and that the sub-committee could meet in November and December. Hartin discussed the need for thought out ideas for events and the importance of the committee discussing execution of their ideas.
- iii. Ruch stated that the committee has already discussed bees, storm drain labeling, and a clean-up for possible Earth Day events. Ruch also mentioned planting trees and involving Shade Tree Commission members for Earth Day educational information. Ruch discussed planning, execution, and how the committee should divide work amongst themselves and discuss resources needed to execute their ideas. Adams discussed location planning, getting more foot traffic, and agreed that events should be determined first to consider other planning aspects discussed. Committee members discussed location ideas with members of the public.
- iv. Marks also reminded members that there are two newsletters between now and the next Earth Day. Strasko stated that her suggestion would be to

decide on a date so she can add a blurb to the next newsletter about Earth Day. Adams, Ruch, and Strasko discussed a date for the Earth Day event, and the committee decided on Saturday April 20, 2024, to hold the Earth Day event. Committee members agreed to come back to the next meeting with thought-out ideas for events including resources, planning, and if any other organizations needed to be involved.

**b. E-cycle Event**

**i. Outside Municipality Update**

1. Ruch stated that he has reserved the lower parking lot at the high school by the baseball fields for the day of the event. Ruch discussed the only issue is that there are car washes on the school calendar for every weekend, including the Saturday that the e-cycle event is scheduled for. Ruch stated that he sent an email to the school administration in regard to the car wash schedule.
2. Ruch also stated that they had been in contact with Clean Earth to determine if there could be a secondary drop off location for free items and they were waiting to hear back via email. Strasko stated from what she understood Clean Earth would prefer having one drop off location for all items. Ruch stated they were still looking into it.
3. Ruch shared a map that Strasko edited from last year for traffic flow, Clean Earth set-up, and port-a-john locations on site. Ruch stated it was very similar to last year's event, but this year they would have the lower lot to use if needed.
4. Ruch asked Adams for an outside municipality update. Adams stated no one has the final flyer because of the confusion and West Easton would have joined and understood the miscommunication. Adams felt that West Easton should be able to join because they are a small community, but Strasko had expressed concern of charging some municipalities and not others. Adams also stated that in the future there should be more planning for joining with other municipalities, and that the county should be covering the costs. Adams also stated that everyone was enthusiastic to advertise, but when it came to funds, they either had their own program or were so small that there was not enough in the budget to share costs.
5. Ruch asked Strasko what they had heard back from the county. Strasko stated from what Serena Davis at Northampton County responded, Palmer Township can be reimbursed as the host municipality for the event. Strasko also stated that they do not advertise multi-municipality events on the county website. Adams asked clarifying questions and asked if the committee wanted to go back to the other municipalities and have them share the flyer.

Strasko stated that she would recommend advertising in Palmer and accepting all who attend because there are no residency requirements on the final flyer. Ruch stated that the county should have made the process easier. Adams, Strasko, Ruch, and members of the public discussed public participation, event turnout from last year's event, and creating a better plan for next year.

6. Starace suggested that the committee set a goal if they want to have greater event participation. Adams and Strasko discussed if West Easton should advertise the event for their residents or not.
7. Committee members, Strasko, and members of the public discussed the committee creating a survey for e-cycle participants to determine how they heard about the event, if there was a survey for last year, criteria for county reimbursement, where to send invoices and process for reimbursement for the event as the host municipality.
8. Adams asked again if she should go back and send the final flyer to the other municipalities to advertise for their residents to attend. Ruch stated that he thinks the committee should take it as a learning experience and not contact other municipalities again because of the communication with the county and lack of clarification on the process with the county. Adams and Ruch discussed how to communicate with the other municipalities on the matter and decided to explain miscommunication with the county and that all are welcome.

**c. Storm Drain Labeling**

- i. Ruch stated that he presented the storm drain labeling to the school district and the administrator added storm drain labeling for Palmer Township to the roster of service hours for seventh and eighth grade students. Ruch also stated that the students have a service hour form Strasko would need to sign.
- ii. Strasko asked Ruch what phone number he gave the school district and Ruch stated Strasko's office extension. Adams asked who would oversee supervising and training the students on scraping and gluing the labels and Strasko stated that she would as the MS4 Coordinator.
- iii. Ruch discussed the possible procedure for Strasko if she gets a call from a parent, and Hartin also offered committee member assistance if they are available on the scheduled day.

**4. New Business**

**a. ESC Education/Information**

- i. Ruch stated that Hartin drafted an educational document. Ruch thanked Hartin for his effort and made suggestions for edits in the first paragraph of the document. Hartin explained that he wrote the document for the committee only and as a history of the conditions of the Township to

inform committee members about what they are working with. Hartin stated that he was looking for feedback on the document going forward and that he was trying to capture what he thought would make the biggest impact.

- ii. Committee members discussed the document further and shared more edits with Hartin. Hartin asked that committee members send him more edits and he will adjust the document.
- iii. Adams asked what the educational channels are and how the committee can expand education. Adams also asked what the structure of educational information is and what tools are available. Marks and Starace suggested working with other community organizations for help and to share information such as BIP and Lions Club. Committee members and members of the public discussed getting residents and community members involved in the education and finding out what they are passionate about to reach as many people as possible. Strasko also stated that the committee can utilize their page on the Township website, and if the group plans early enough, they could reserve a booth at Palmer Days for community outreach.
- iv. Hartin, Ruch and Strasko discussed different methods of surveying residents to determine important environmental issues, volunteering to survey at Palmer Days and using a digital method to survey residents via Facebook and the Township website.
- v. Ruch moved that the committee start working on developing a survey form to put out on social media. Singley asked everyone draft questions for the survey. Rose asked who on the committee would oversee the survey, and Hartin volunteered.
- vi. Adams asked if Marks and Starace would help her make a list of local organizations that the committee could be involved with, and Marks suggested Adams research the national organizations and find their local or regional offices.

**b. Newsletter topics**

- i. Singley stated that this topic flowed with the last and should be combined with the previous agenda item of education/information. Singley also stated that the committee's newsletter articles should mirror their educational outreach topics that they are working on. Strasko clarified that the committee wanted to combine the agenda items for the next meeting, and Ruch agreed.

**c. Roles and Responsibilities**

- i. Ruch stated that the committee is moving away from the Standard Operating Procedures and is looking to define roles and responsibilities of the committee members. Ruch also stated that the roles of committee members are already in the old bylaws, they just need to be put into a new document and presented to the committee members. Strasko stated that

she could pull out member roles in a new document for committee members to review. Ruch also stated that the committee needed to develop the purpose for the ESC.

- ii. Adams asked if the starting point was the old bylaws, and Strasko confirmed that she would reference the old bylaws for the role of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, as well as the activities and duties of the members. Ruch stated that he believes the list should be expanded to all members and that he would work on updating the document with Strasko.

**d. Trash/Recycling/Waste**

- i. Strasko stated that this agenda item came from Adams. Adams discussed expansion of landfills in the surrounding area and her growing concern of trash and waste, and she stated that she believes the committee should pay more attention to the amount of trash in Palmer Township. Adams suggested an educational piece on waste reduction.
- ii. Ruch discussed how the committee has previously explored working with Waste Management to enforce the overflowing garbage bins and yard waste in garbage. Ruch also discussed the stringent regulations from DEP and EPA on landfills. Adams stated that those aspects are important, but she is hoping to educate residents and make them more aware of reducing their waste, or the expansion of landfills in the area to give them a better understanding of the issues.
- iii. Rose commented that it depends on the consumer as well. Adams stated that at some point they will need to hone the educational topics and decide where to start to share deeper information.
- iv. Strasko stated that for educational topics some of the most important items would be reusable containers, growing your own food and reducing food waste, as well as composting. Strasko shared some information that she has been working on to put on the committee Facebook page. Committee members agreed that this would be a great broad education topic that may also be used for the next Earth Day event, Strasko suggested having a composting seminar to show residents how they can compost at home.
- v. Ruch also discussed methane gas from the landfill in Easton heating homes in Glendon that is piped under route 78. Adams also stated that the more positive educational information they can share the better.

**5. Reports**

**a. Board of Supervisors**

- i. Although Brett was absent, Adams asked if any members had updates from attending a Board of Supervisors (BoS) meeting. Hartin shared with the committee that Van Buren Rd will be closed beginning August 7, 2023, for at least thirty days to make road repairs. Rose asked clarifying questions and discussed the road closure with Hartin and Strasko.
- ii. Adams asked what were the two recent items that the BoS had mentioned the committee for. Hartin and Strasko discussed the approval of a Unity

Garden that the BoS would be working with PAZA to construct. Adams asked if the committee needed to be involved in any planning for the Unity Garden and Hartin, Ruch and Strasko all stated that the group will reach out to the committee if needed.

- iii. Ruch stated that the other item mentioned for ESC was stormwater and stormwater concerns. Ruch stated that he had not heard of any specific concerns, and Hartin discussed storm damage the Township experienced about two weeks ago and described some of the specific areas with runoff issues.
- iv. Adams asked if there were any updates on the Penn State program. Strasko stated that they are on board with Penn State and are waiting for the semester to start, she is waiting to hear from Dawson with the student's information, and she received approval to have Craig Beavers as the secondary contact for the student.

**b. MS4**

- i. Strasko stated that the Township experienced catastrophic storm damage that was close to four (4) million dollars and could be more. Strasko also stated that the Township is working with HRG to develop the best temporary and permanent solutions for the damage incurred from the storm. Adams, Ruch and Strasko discussed the Township working with FEMA and PEMA, repairs that have already taken place, and a possible upcoming evaluation with FEMA and PEMA of damages.
- ii. Strasko also stated that she is working on the MS4 annual report because the reporting period ended in June. Strasko also shared that she updated a PowerPoint overview of the 2021-2022 annual report that has been posted on the stormwater page of the Township website. Ruch asked Strasko to add the link to the PowerPoint to the ESC Facebook page.

**6. Public Comment**

- a. There was nothing from the public for further comment.

**7. For the Good of the Order**

- a. Ruch stated that Hartin had shared an article with committee members at the beginning of the meeting and asked Hartin to elaborate. Hartin shared that the article stated that Forbes magazine named the Lehigh Valley the third noisiest region in the country. Hartin also discussed how the committee should pay attention to and be educated about light and noise pollution in the area, the environmental impacts, and discussed how to educate residents in the Township. Ruch, Hartin, and members of the public discussed increased development in the area, warehouses, light pollution, and noise pollution they have experienced as residents of Palmer Township.
- b. Ruch also stated that he was recently appointed to the Planning Commission and would be resigning from the ESC effective immediately. Ruch thanked everyone for their participation on the board and asked them to continue to grow the committee. Ruch personally thanked Strasko for her work with the committee as

well and stated that he will still volunteer for the e-cycle event in September and will continue to support the ESC in the Township. Ruch recommended Singley for Chairman to the committee and that they decide amongst themselves for Vice Chairman. Hartin thanked Ruch for his leadership of the group and agreed with his recommendation.

- c. Adams confirmed with Ruch and Strasko that the committee has three open seats. Ruch asked if the group would vote on a chairman before the conclusion of the meeting for continuity and communication between the committee and Strasko.
- d. Hartin nominated Singley and made a motion that Singley be appointed as chairman. Adams seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous voice vote.

**8. Next meeting: August 23, 2023**

**9. Adjournment**

- a. Rice made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Hartin seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40PM.