

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2023, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Karen Adams, Zane Rice, Bill Hartin, Tony Rose, and Paige Strasko.
Members of the public: John Marks and Tom Dittmar.
- b. Absent: Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

2. Approval of meeting minutes from August 23, 2023

- a. Adams stated that she had changes to the minutes for clarification. Adams asked that Strasko change the language in 3b ii to clarify that Ruch had stated he would attend the e-cycle event at a previous meeting, not the meeting on August 23, item 3d i-Adams asked that Strasko specify that the LCAP student is a Penn State student to illustrate his credentials and asked that his department be included. Lastly Adams asked if items 7a and 7b should be included under the e-cycle agenda item.
- b. Committee members agreed that the minutes would be acceptable after the changes were made. Rice made a motion to approve the minutes after revisions were made, and Hartin seconded the motion. The minutes were passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Earth Day (outreach and program planning)

- i. Rice stated that he was waiting to hear back from a specific department at Beyond Meat regarding event logistics. Rice reiterated that the company has worked with many other organizations previously and that Beyond Meat is focused on the educational aspects of their products. Rose asked for clarification and Rice explained that Beyond Meat is a plant-based meat company that brings their product to community events and how the company got its start. Adams stated that Rice would stay in contact with Beyond Meat and the committee had only one more regularly scheduled meeting for this year.
- ii. Adams explained to Rose that committee members had decided on activities that they were interested in for Earth Day, and Rose stated that he would be interested in stormwater education around rain barrels and flood mitigation projects. Committee members and Strasko discussed related topics for stormwater management, and local programs that residents could participate in through the Nurture Nature Center.
- iii. John Marks also discussed publications that he and Strasko received at the Watershed Conference at Lehigh University a few months previously and modifying some of the current ordinances to be watershed friendly or

environmentally conscience such as building codes and the grass/weeds ordinance.

- iv. Adams and committee members reiterated programs and topics previously discussed. Hartin stated that he had a commitment from a beekeeper for the event, but the beekeeper needed to know what he was presenting on. Committee members discussed areas for the bee presentation and whether they should bring live bees to the event or not.
- v. Committee members and Strasko discussed the budget for Earth Day, the location of the event, agendas for each committee member's topic, and logistics of event planning. Rose and Adams discussed finalizing topics for discussion at the October meeting and how to get residents interested in Earth Day.
- vi. Adams discussed an MS4 educational program the City of Allentown recently held where students painted scenes around storm drains to compete in an art competition and create interest in stormwater with residents and the public.
- vii. Committee members, members of the public, and Strasko discussed ways for students to volunteer for educational events such as through the National Honor Society, reaching out to school officials to make students aware of volunteer opportunities for their service hour requirements, and having enough adults to supervise volunteer groups for safety and job accuracy. Committee members also discussed different activities volunteers could help with, defining the volunteer's role and responsibilities for the event. Hartin also discussed having volunteers help administer an environmental awareness survey for Earth Day. Rose asked clarifying questions about Hartin's intent and discussed outcomes with Hartin and Adams.

b. E-cycle event recap

- i. Adams asked committee members how the event went since she was not able to attend. Strasko stated that no committee members except Hartin volunteered. Strasko reported that everything went smoothly, there were only about 130 participants that came through but since it was raining, she was still satisfied. Dittmar and Marks also discussed the event from their perspective and gave a past understanding of e-cycle events for new committee members.
- ii. Members of the public and Strasko discussed using the electric sign from the county a week in advance to help advertise the event, but Strasko was unsure of the availability since Fire Commissioner Steve Gallagher works with the county for event resources.
- iii. Dittmar discussed past practices of advertising the event with the Northampton Council of Governments (COG) to get as much participation as possible at the e-cycle events.

- iv. Committee members discussed working with multiple municipalities next year, if there should be an e-cycle event in the future, a summary of what was done and what Strasko has done to organize the event. Adams asked Strasko to make a bulleted list of steps or procedures for organizing and running the e-cycle event. Strasko stated that she would share the list with the Trash and Recycling Coordinator, Zach Trexler, to manage and organize the event in the future.
- c. Storm drain labeling**
- i. Strasko asked Rice if he would discuss volunteer opportunities with his contact for the National Honor Society and asked Rose if he would be interested in helping Rice communicate with local schools. Committee members discussed having a list of schools to contact for volunteers and that this was a separate item from the labeling discussed for Earth Day.
 - ii. Adams reiterated that Strasko had not heard from any high school students for volunteer opportunities and that there were no current plans for relabeling in the remainder of 2023 and Strasko confirmed.
 - iii. Committee members decided that they would continue to plan volunteer efforts for storm drain labeling when there was more volunteer interest available, and the weather was suitable for labeling.
- d. ESC Education/Information/Newsletter topics**
- 1. Hartin discussed what the committee and he wanted the results to be of their educational efforts. Committee members and members of the public also discussed various methods of education or survey delivery including meetings, flyers, handouts, publications, seminars, Township newsletters, zoom meetings, and presentations from outside sources and organizations. Hartin discussed his thoughts about what the public would take away from what information they offer, and how the committee wanted the public to use the information they shared with them.
- ii. Survey**
- 1. Committee members discussed finding resident educational interest, methods other organizations have used to conduct surveys, types of questions to include, and Adams discussed her past experiences and knowledge of consumer surveys.
 - 2. Hartin discussed having questions included in the survey that would help the committee determine the level of knowledge of the community on environmental topics.
 - 3. Adams discussed narrowing the focus and figuring out what the intended purpose of the survey is. Hartin stated that even if the survey was not an agenda item or focus for the committee, he would continue to work on the topic and develop survey questions.
 - 4. Adams asked how the committee can help Hartin, and Hartin stated that he was comfortable with giving progress reports to the

group of his findings and progress with the survey and educational program. Rose and Adams asked clarifying questions and suggested using multiple choice survey questions. Adams offered to research into survey methods of other Townships or useful tools.

5. Marks discussed PennDOT's surveys that he has participated in regarding traffic flow and blockages. Committee members also discussed resources available for a resident survey.

iii. Trash/Recycling/Waste and Food Waste

1. Adams discussed educating residents and the public about landfills causing deforestation and using photos from landfills to educate residents on the impacts from trash, litter, and waste treatment facilities. Adams and members of the public discussed past events of landfills in the area, educating residents and committee members about landfill processes, working with Waste Management and Township staff to schedule a tour of the facility, and what that would take on the committee's part.
2. Members of the public also discussed where commercial and industrial waste goes that is generated in Palmer Township, and suggested contacting companies that haul waste for non-residential or private customers. Rose, Hartin, and Strasko stated that they would be interested in touring the facility with Adams.
3. Hartin asked if there has been a calculation developed to quantify the impact of deforestation. Committee members and members of the public discussed deforestation calculations further, forest regrowth, how much carbon trees store, and what else is lost when land is clearcut.
4. Adams asked if anyone had more to share about trash and recycling and that it would be a standing agenda item. Strasko shared recycling information with the group from the Trash and Recycling Coordinator, Zach Trexler. Committee members, members of the public, and Strasko discussed how much material was recycled and not contaminated, year-to-date totals, and tons of trash received at the landfill from Palmer residents.

4. New Business

a. Plastic Bag Ban Study

- i. Strasko informed the group that she heard from the committee liaison that the Board of Supervisors were looking for research on what other communities have done, pros and cons of adopting an ordinance, any legal issues the Township may run into, as well as cost of enforcement and staffing that was discussed previously.
- ii. Adams stated that Marc Singley sent a resource weeks ago that includes ordinances from other communities, different model ordinances, and that the organization, Penn Environment, has worked with multiple

municipalities across Pennsylvania. Adams highlighted that the group focuses on clean air, clean water, and zero-waste.

- iii. Adams discussed her conversation with the zero-waste manager at Penn Environment, and shared some facts about current plastic bag bans in Pennsylvania and across the country. Adams also discussed steps the committee would need to take for an ordinance, suggested timelines included with the model ordinance, using current enforcement infrastructure, the need to educate residents and businesses about the proposed ordinance, and that the only difficult decisions according to her contact would be how to give waivers.
- iv. Adams also discussed national companies such as Wegman's that instituted their own bag practices, discussing or partnering with big companies, and microplastics being the main worry and reason to ban single-use plastic bags. Marks suggested giving a presentation to the Business Industrial and Professional (BIP) Association of Palmer Township comprised of businesses that operate within Palmer to get their feedback and support.
- v. Members of the public discussed what has been observed in roadside litter and what materials are prevalent in litter collected other than plastic bags. Dittmar also discussed properly recycling plastic bags, materials needed for other types of bags, and what single-use plastic bags have been used to make, such as park benches. Lastly, a presentation to the Supervisors was discussed to share the information the committee was gathering for the plastic bag ban.

b. Palmer Days 2024

- i. Strasko discussed her update from the previous meeting about Palmer Days which included needing to sell a food item, timing of the event, raffles, and booth space.
- ii. Committee members, members of the public, and Strasko discussed using a portion of the Township booth for committee information and if committee members could be at the event to talk with residents.
- iii. Adams asked if the committee wanted to participate, if they should get their own booth, or if it was too large of a task. Rose discussed bringing an enviro-scape to demonstrate non-point source pollution.
- iv. Committee members decided not to get their own booth for Palmer Days and will instead have information available at the Township booth again.

c. Committee Membership

- i. Adams stated that the committee needed a new Chairman and Vice Chairman and asked how the committee wanted to handle nominations.
- ii. Adams was nominated for Chairman by Rice and the nomination was seconded by Rose. The nomination passed by unanimous voice vote, and Adams accepted the nomination for Chairman.

- iii. Hartin was nominated for Vice Chairman by Adams and Rice seconded the nomination. The Vice Chairman nomination was passed by unanimous voice vote and accepted by Hartin.
- iv. Committee members also discussed changing the meeting date for next year to be able to hold meetings in November and December. Rose asked Strasko to add meeting date changes to the next agenda.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Strasko stated that she had heard nothing more from Brett than what was discussed for the plastic bag ban study.
- ii. Strasko also discussed an update on the LCAP program because Brett mentioned the program. Strasko updated the committee and answered questions regarding what data has been collected, timeline for the process, communication with the Penn State student, and the presentation required for the Penn State student's coursework at the end of the semester in December.

b. MS4

- i. Strasko updated the group that the MS4 annual report was submitted in September. Adams and Strasko discussed when the new report would be published and updating the PowerPoint with current information.

6. Public Comment

- a. There was no comment from the public.

7. For the Good of the Order

- a. Rose mentioned a million dollar grant for urban forestry infrastructure that was recently awarded to the City of Easton. Committee members and members of the public discussed urban forestry and places that would be suitable for tree planting.
- b. Hartin discussed blue zones and if there was an interest in creating a blue zone in or around Palmer Township. Rose asked clarifying questions and Hartin explained a blue zone is a community or pocket of people who have lived past 100 years old.
- c. Hartin also asked if there were grants that the committee members could apply for, and Rose discussed that the committee would need to have a project, organize, and execute it.

8. Next meeting: October 25, 2023

9. Adjournment

- a. Rose made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Rice seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:54PM.