

Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, March 24, 2026
Zoom
Noon

EAC members present –W. Vitale, A. Meas, S. Thompson, C. Curran-Myers, D. Beane, N. Addeo

Others present – S. Smith, B. Ayers-Fisher, D. Edwards, J. Mitchell, J. Reimer (Wyomissing Borough)

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm. He stated that a quorum was present.

Ms. Curran-Myers requested adding the topic “Act 2 – former Glidden site” to today’s agenda. There was no objection.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Ms. Smith introduced Ms. Reimer from Wyomissing Borough Council and stated that Ms. Reimer is interested in starting an EAC in Wyomissing. All present introduced themselves and offered assistance to Ms. Reimer.

Mr. Bachman connected to the meeting at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Ms. Curran-Myers, seconded by Mr. Beane, to approve the February 24, 2026 meeting summary as written. Motion carried unanimously.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

1. Seeds of Change Community Garden Prep Days at the Greenhouse
Thursdays (4-6pm): March 26, April 2, April 9, April 16, April 23, April 30
2. Movie Knights with Centro Hispano – tabling inside IMAX at 4:30 pm;
movie begins at 5:30 pm; free parking in garage and movie attendance
 - March 26 – Hoppers

- April 23 – Super Mario Galaxy Movie
- May 14 – movie TBD
- 3. Great American Cleanup- April 18 8am-noon
Earth Day Berks- April 18 11:30am-6pm City Park
- 4. Camel Project Chalkpalooza- June 6 10am-2pm
- 5. Good Medicine- June 13 11am-3pm Riverfront Park
- 6. EJ Dives Family Fun Day- July 18 1pm-4pm
- 7. Riverzilla- August 8 Riverfront Park
- 8. 2026 Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Conference – October 14 & 15
DoubleTree

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the Seeds of Change program has had approximately ten participants each week with approximately 50 overall participants. She stated that the kale plants are doing very well and that she will be adding more dates to this program.

Mr. Thompson questioned if the dates for Wacky Water Wednesday had been released. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the program generally begins after school lets out for the summer. Ms. Smith was asked to provide the dates.

Mr. Thompson expressed the belief that these are great opportunities to table and to meet residents.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Signage / Mapping

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the files have been sent to the print shop and they are working on the dimensions. She stated that the signs should be installed by the end of May. Producing the signage inhouse will allow additional signs to be installed as additional projects move forward.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Keep Reading Beautiful has been awarded a \$500 mini grant that will be used to install signage and doggie stations at the dog park, trails, and parks.

Mr. Thompson questioned if the doggie stations would be similar to the one on Palm St. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that they would be the same. She stated that this grant will allow the installation of additional doggie stations. She stated that the City's Clean City team cleans the stations two times per week.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the Palm St station is well used and is always clean.

2. Single Use Plastic Ban

Mr. Beane questioned whether Ms. Curran-Myers had further revision suggestions. Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she did not but that further revisions may be necessary moving forward.

Mr. Beane expressed the belief that the draft is ready to move forward. He stated that he expects Council comments and explained that this ordinance does not need to go through the lengthy zoning amendment process. He stated that he would like the EAC to recommend moving the ordinance forward.

Mr. Beane stated that Ms. Curran-Myers previously provided comment. He explained that the ordinance is more comprehensive and bans more than plastic bags. He noted his hope that this is not seen as too intrusive. He stated that the draft allows store owners to charge a bag fee, which they will keep. He stated that the Policy Committee was careful to recognize that there will be pushback and noted the need for significant education.

Motion was made by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Ms. Curran-Myers, to approve the draft ordinance and continue moving it forward through the process.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that there needs to be clarity about the ordinance and to understand the need for community engagement and outreach. She stated that to be successful the ban will need community support. She stated that these types of comments should be included in the discussions with Council. She expressed the belief that it would be a shame for this to fail because there was no public education. She stated that the community needs to be invited to comment.

Mr. Beane noted his hope to make a presentation to Council before it is added to their agenda. He agreed that support is needed to move the initiative forward.

Mr. Thompson expressed the belief that there may be some pushback but that many people and businesses have already transitioned. He noted the need to introduce the topic in a way that prepares residents and business owners.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted the need to invite business owners to comment. She suggested that Council invite them to town hall and public meetings.

Mr. Vitale agreed that education is needed.

Ms. Smith stated that the draft ordinance does not include the location where it will be in the City Code. She stated that she would like to review the draft with the CD Director for his feedback. She stated that this Department will need to enforce the ordinance and he also needs to support the initiative. The EAC agreed with this approach.

Mr. Vitale stated that the Communications Committee is working with Ms. Melendez and the Green Building Alliance and that this initiative may tie to some of their educational programming. He stated that the Committee also purchased reusable tote bags. He expressed the belief that providing plastic bags, utensils, etc. is automatically done and there is a need to change consciousness and the way of doing business. He agreed that the success of the ban depends on engagement and stated that this will be discussed at tomorrow's Committee meeting.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed with Mr. Vitale.

Mr. Vitale suggested that Ms. Lara produce a video. Mr. Thompson agreed and stated that Ms. Lara will be very helpful with this engagement.

Ms. Reimer questioned whether the draft allowed the business to recoup the cost of non-polystyrene containers. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that if this is currently not included in the draft, it may be added. She expressed the belief that this is part of the cost of doing business. She stated that Price Rite does not provide free bags – shoppers must purchase them or bring their own.

Mr. Thompson stated that it is the same at Aldi.

Mr. Vitale stated that the meeting about this topic at Franklyn's included discussion about supply chain issues. He noted the need to identify sources where non-plastic supplies can be procured. Ms. Ayers-Fisher agreed with the need to identify resources.

Ms. Reimer questioned if the City would be willing to purchase bulk items and allow businesses to procure them this way. Ms. Curran-Myers stated that this is a good concept but that it is not a function of the City. She suggested that business owners form a co-operative if this is a viable solution. Ms. Ayers-Fisher agreed. She stated that this would also require the use of the City's procurement rules.

The motion to approve the draft ordinance and continue moving it forward through the process carried unanimously.

3. 2026 EAC Conference

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she has had no contact with the organizers. She expressed the belief that if Reading was hosting the conference, planning would already have begun.

Mr. Thompson stated that he and Ms. Ayers-Fisher attended the 2025 conference. He stated that Reading deserves recognition for the many things it has accomplished.

4. 2026 Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Conference

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that this conference will be held on October 14 and 15 at the DoubleTree and that the contract has been signed. She stated that the host City helps with planning and stated that she is working on a public art and mural walk.

Mr. Thompson stated that this is exciting and offered to help as he is able.

5. Road Salt BMP

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that there is no update but that she is monitoring State actions. She stated that legislation has been introduced and passed by the PA House but there has been no further movement. She stated that this legislation would provide guidance on the use of road salt and motivate municipalities to change their practices and to use less road salt. She stated that Maryland achieved a 50% reduction in the use of salt and kept everyone safe. She stated that Reading is doing what it can and noted the high cost of road salt.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that plows have not yet been removed from Public Works trucks but that is planned to occur in early April when the threat of snow lessens.

6. Schuylkill River Trail Gateway Bridge

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Schuylkill River Greenways (SRG) has hired Barrio Alegria to get community input on the design of the Gateway Bridge. She stated that this was recently the topic of a Spotlight program. She stated that the Reading portion of the Schuylkill River Trail is highly used and that community feedback is needed. She stated that these ideas will be presented to professionals to determine the design and cost requirements. She stated that there is much trail work occurring in Reading and stated that the gap section in Pottstown will be

opening soon. It is believed that this will bring more visitors to the Reading portion of the Trail.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the trail is heavily used between Philadelphia and Pottstown and also above Reading in Schuylkill County. She stated that there are gaps in Berks County but that visitors to the Reading portion are expected to increase in 2026. She stated that SRG hopes that the Bridge will make this section of the trail a destination. A brochure of local businesses is being created so that visitors know where they can get products, spend the night, eat, etc. close to the trail.

Mr. Thompson questioned who is responsible to pay for the Bridge improvements. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the County owns the bridge but SRG leases it from them. She stated that funding would be coordinated by SRG and there is no cost to the City.

Ms. Curran-Myers explained that SRG fundraises and maintains the Trail.

Mr. Edwards stated that he attended the Spotlight. He stated that he is working with SRG, the City Planning Commission, and Managing Director on this project and noted his hope that some construction would begin this fall. He suggested that SRG collaborate with the City to assist with fundraising. He stated that he is optimistic about the project and agreed that it will help to revitalize the area.

Mr. Thompson noted that the project will highlight Reading in positive ways.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the project will be reviewed by the Planning Commission in April and that the project is coming together.

Mr. Edwards stated that he has been with the City for only three months. He stated that before he joined the City he felt that there was no revitalization happening. He stated that he was pleasantly surprised by all the new development occurring in Reading. He stated that he formerly served in Phoenixville and experienced their revitalization. He stated that he is very optimistic about Reading.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she feels the same way. She stated that she has lived in Reading for twelve years and there has been much change. She stated that she is enthusiastic and stated that she is glad to have Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Edwards compared the change in government practices to steering a large ship. He stated that it takes time but Reading's direction is changing.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Act 2 – Former Glidden Site

Mr. Beane stated that he is environmental counsel for the Berks County Industrial Development Authority but stated that this parcel has not been discussed with him since the site was acquired.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Ms. Smith shared DEP's notification letter with the EAC. She stated that the final report will be submitted to DEP. She explained that the owner can voluntarily address contaminants on the site and that if there are reductions in the baseline contaminants, the owner is not legally responsible for their future effects. She stated that DEP can set specific site standards and use restrictions including caps, no drilling of water wells, vapor barriers, construction management, etc. She stated that it is presumed that this site contains paint solvents, lead, and arsenic.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted the need for the EAC to be aware of the situation. She stated that DEP has 90 days to make a determination. She stated that this is a well-known site and the community has concerns.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she has spoken with the DEP representative and there are possible plumes migrating off-site which may involve other properties. She stated that sampling was done where DEP was permitted. She expressed the belief that people don't fully understand Act 2 and stated that land recycling is safe if used within the DEP determination.

Mr. Beane stated that the last property with similar concerns that was redeveloped was American Chain & Cable. He stated that this parcel continues to have citizen concerns. He agreed that this site will bring similar concerns.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she put a link to DEP Act 2 in the chat for new members to become acquainted with the regulations.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Act 2 is commonly referred to as Brownfields. She stated that cleanup does not make the site perfectly clean. She thanked Ms. Ayers-Fisher for sharing the link and agreed that there would be considerable citizen concerns.

Mr. Beane stated that the plume was discovered during the Act 2 review process. He stated that the owner must demonstrate to DEP that the plume will not impact offsite receptors using scientific modeling. He stated that these receptors include water wells, streams, rivers, etc. He stated that this information must be included in the final DEP report.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Reading does not permit water wells and requires properties to connect to RAWA, which is a surface water source. She stated that these regulations do not protect polluters but helps with redevelopment. She stated that if Reading was designated as a non-use aquifer, the science and modeling would not be needed since wells are prohibited anyway.

Mr. Thompson expressed the belief that this neighborhood needs this shopping center.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and stated that this is a good use for the parcel and that the parking areas will help cap the contaminants.

There was a brief discussion about the area around Price Rite. The group felt the area is underutilized and noted that if redevelopment is proposed, it would also need to follow the Act 2 process.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Communications Committee

Mr. Vitale stated that winter and climate change articles have been published. He explained the fellowship program with Barrio and stated that the Committee has several bilingual members. He stated that reusable tote bags will be distributed at Earth Day and that the Committee is working on a Spanish podcast. He stated that trash and recycling have come forward as community concerns, especially not understanding how to properly sort and set out trash. He stated that videos about the topic are being produced.

Ms. Reimer noted the need for community communication. She noted the need to convince Wyomissing Borough Council that a volunteer EAC will not increase costs.

Ms. Curran-Myers explained that for her first eight years on the EAC, they had no budget. She stated that when the signage project started moving forward, the EAC

made a funding request to City Council which was approved. She stated that a volunteer EAC can do a lot with a small amount of funding. She stated that the EAC mainly helps support the work of Public Works.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher agreed and stated that the EAC volunteers help to expand staff capacity.

Mr. Vitale stated that, generally, Ms. Ayers-Fisher brings topics forward and the EAC helps target those efforts and acts as a think tank.

2. Policy Committee

Mr. Beane stated that he has nothing further to report on the Committee's work.

3. Green Infrastructure Committee

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the Committee has been focused on the signage project and the dumping of yard waste. She stated that she will have a yard waste display for the EAC's table at Earth Day.

Ms. Meas disconnected from the meeting at this time.

Mr. Thompson stated that he is telling everyone to use the 311 app for City issues. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Public Works has received over 3,000 electronic recycling requests through the app. She stated that she is trying to capture this type of data and stated that receiving requests through the app helps with work flow.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Council has approved the 2026 public service announcements (PSA) and work will begin in April. She stated that the PSAs will focus on stormwater and the WWTP. She stated that the 2025 PSAs received over 1 million watches and stated that the PSAs reach people where they are. She stated that the target area is Berks County through Comcast services.

PROJECT UPDATES

MS4

Mr. Bachman stated that there are problems with people dumping paint down the storm drains. He stated that this is not being enforced by Property Maintenance. He explained that his crews must clean up the paint and that eliminates enforcement.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned if Property Maintenance is not able to enforce this or if it is not a priority. Mr. Bachman stated that staff has photos of the situation but because it happened on Washington St and the property is located on Mulberry St, Property Maintenance felt they could not enforce this violation. He stated that he spoke with the property owner who said that the person who dumped the paint was working for him. He stated that the owner began being argumentative but later agreed that the contractor should have known better. He stated that it was approximately ½ gallon of paint.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that because the violation was witnessed by staff, that should have been enough for enforcement.

Ms. Reimer disconnected from the meeting at this time.

Rain Gardens

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that many plants were started in the greenhouse and that they will be planted in Reading's parks.

GESA Project

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the City is expecting \$800,000 in additional funding available to low income communities through the Inflation Reduction Act. She stated that this will allow additional projects to be completed. She stated that the solar groundbreaking will occur on May 18 and EAC members will be invited to attend.

EPA Exide Cleanup Update

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that residential testing is completed and public lands will now be tested. She stated that she is working with EPA to have this done at Bernhart's this spring. She stated that the area is growing in nicely.

OTHER MATTERS

None

NEXT MEETING

The next EAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at noon via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Smith, MMC
Deputy City Clerk