

Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, April 25, 2023
Virtually

EAC members present – S. Bach, C. Curran-Myers, J. Cole, D. Beane, S. Thompson

Others present – S. Smith, B. Ayers-Fisher, J. Slusser, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, C. Sullivan

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Curran-Myers called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm. She noted that a quorum was present. She stated that she and Ms. Bach presented the EAC's report to City Council last evening and it was well received.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Beane, seconded by Ms. Bach, to approve the March 28, 2023 meeting summary as written. Motion carried unanimously.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ms. Ayers-Fisher provided the following upcoming events:

- April 29 – Peace March and Peace Dove statue re-dedication at noon
- May 6 – Camel Project street art event at Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center 10 am – 3 pm – tabling opportunity
- June 3 – Good Medicine at City Park 10 am – 3 pm – tabling opportunity
- June 21 – first Wacky Water Wednesday – location unknown at this time – tabling opportunity
- June 24 – Dumpster Day – volunteers needed

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that community engagement on the Climate Action Plan will begin in June at these locations:

- June 5 – SE branch library 5 – 6:30 pm
- June 7 – NE branch library 5 – 6:30 pm
- June 10 – SE branch library 11 am – 1 pm
- June 17 – NE branch library 11 am – 1 pm

She stated that an interpreter will be available at these sessions.

Ms. Curran-Myers recapped the Earth Day event. She stated that the survey and community engagement are successful and feedback is being received. She thanked all who participated.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher thanked all for their attendance and assistance. She stated that there were 75 exhibitors, five bands, native dancers and food vendors. She stated that planning for the 2024 event will begin in late May. She stated that approximately 2,500 people attended the event.

LEAD ABATEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Smith stated that Mr. Young indicated that he was available to attend and provide the update but that he must have had an unscheduled issue. She stated that she will reschedule this presentation.

EAC WEBPAGE REVIEW

Ms. Smith shared her screen for the group to review the webpage. She stated that she will work with the City's webmaster to update the page.

Recommendations include:

- Removing the 2015 report and adding the 2023 report in its place
- Adding a button for all the position statements
- Adding a button for all ordinances
- Adding a button for rain barrel information
- Adding a climate action button
- Adding a dialog box in place of the email
- Removing the Urban Planner resolution
- Adding a trees and plants button
- Adding information about yard waste collection
- Adding links to Goggleworks, American Rivers, Penn State Extension and MP3
- Adding a map of the City's parks and playgrounds
- Adding the new brochure
- Removing the intern link
- Removing Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz from the membership list
- Adding the EAC logo

Mr. Thompson stated that the website is bland and is mostly black and grey. He suggested adding green to the EAC page.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz disconnected from the meeting at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

- Bernhart's Park Community Meeting

Ms. Smith noted the need to hold this meeting.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted her understanding that City Council was scheduling the meeting and the EAC would attend in support.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher noted the need for Public Works to get feedback from the community.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she will write a note to City Council asking that this meeting be scheduled.

- Rain Gardens

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the report to City Council included the EAC's disappointment that the garden projects are not moving forward.

- Signage / Mapping

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Ms. Slusser and Ms. Sullivan will be working on the map. She stated that the existing list of green infrastructure projects will be used to begin. She questioned if there was a local option to get the signage prepared and installed.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she is looking into local sign makers and that there are two sign makers used by the National Park Service that would also be options.

Ms. Curran-Myers provided background for those who are not familiar with the length of time this project has taken. She expressed the belief that Philadelphia is no longer at the forefront for signage and there have been too many delays.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the City is installing signs more frequently now and may be able to move the project forward.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted her hope that signs would be installed this construction season.

- Brownfields Database / Non-use Aquifer Designation

Mr. Beane stated that the Non-use Aquifer Designation subcommittee met with Mr. Cinelli and Ms. Millman to begin discussions. He stated that the Lancaster regulations have been reviewed.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that Reading can also enact these regulations.

Mr. Beane stated that he will poll the group to schedule the next meeting.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that ERIS reports cannot include Act 2 information due to a PA DEP data storage issue – most information is still paper-based and filed by parcel number.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that this makes the information difficult to access. She noted her hope that DEP would begin digitizing their records.

Ms. Slusser disconnected from the meeting at this time.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that accessibility is highly needed to determine historical contamination and use limits that have been placed on redevelopment. She stated that DEP expects the municipalities to have this information.

- Environmental Justice

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that several EAC members attended a workshop at Berks Nature. She stated that DEP has new professional environmental justice staff and there are opportunities for Reading to get resources and assistance. She stated that the head of this new division has many local contacts that could also assist the EAC's work.

Ms. Smith stated that a survey was distributed. She encouraged all to take the time to complete it.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that this is a new program and that the information received from the surveys will be included in the initial report. She also encouraged all to complete the survey.

- Schuylkill River Contamination

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she had a chance to speak with Ms. Morrison at last evening's City Council meeting. She provided a brief background on the issue. She stated that a member of the City's Board of Health stated that there was no

indication of the flesh-eating bacteria seen in other parts of the US in the Schuylkill River. She stated that she will write a letter to Ms. Morrison explaining the EAC's findings. She stated that this issue can be removed from the meeting agenda.

PROJECT UPDATES

- Communication Committee

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the brochure is complete and has been translated into Spanish. She stated that she will have the brochure posted to the website. She stated that she will begin to get departmental input on the Climate Action Plan so that it can be implemented. She stated that the City is holding a public meeting on May 9 at 7 pm at Roessner Hall (Albright College) for input on electric vehicle charging stations.

Mr. Thompson stated that Mr. McCoy was taking video footage at Earth Day and will be making a video to share on social media. He stated that this is exciting work and he looks forward to seeing it. He stated that he will have more of an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Thompson stated that the next Communications Committee meeting will be on May 5 at 9:30 am.

- Climate Action Plan

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she will begin updating the draft Plan in May and will include more specific action steps. She noted her hope to begin public meetings in June and begin working with City departments in July. She stated that the Plan will be translated into Spanish. She noted her hope that the Plan would be adopted by City Council in September. She stated that applications for green infrastructure grants require a Plan.

Ms. Smith questioned if Council members should participate in the public meetings. Ms. Ayer-Fisher stated that she would appreciate their participation.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she needs locations to hold meetings in the NW section of the City. Ms. Smith stated that past community meetings have been held at Calvary Lutheran Church and Baer Park field house.

- Invasive Plants / Noxious Weeds Education

Ms. Curran-Myers noted her hope to schedule a walk in the Hessian Camp / Pendora Park area in May or June.

- BCTV Program

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that a program was taped but that she was unable to participate.

Mr. Beane stated that the taping went well. He stated that Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz facilitated the program and he provided the history of the EAC and introduced its members. He stated that Mr. Bradley described the upcoming program topics and has a goal to produce a monthly program. He stated that Mr. Bradley seemed comfortable.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted the need to discuss the Climate Action Plan, green infrastructure and invasive plants.

- City-owned Dams

Ms. Smith stated that the City is moving forward to remove the dam on Willow Creek near Lake Ontelaunee.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she and Ms. Bach are working on a project to help the public understand what happens when a dam is removed. She recommended education to the general public and why removal is recommended and why it is good for the waterway.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that there will be a program on August 3 with Berks Nature and American Rivers to discuss the removal of the Papermill Dam and the resulting public outcry.

NEXT MEETING

Mr. Thompson suggested that the EAC begin meeting outdoors.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher suggested that the June meeting be held at the WWTP so that the EAC can also tour the facility.

Ms. Smith suggested that the May meeting be held at Egelman's Park.

Mr. Cole requested an email including all the event details. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she will send the information to Ms. Smith to share with the group.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 23 at noon at Egelman's Park,
Hill Rd & Angora Rd.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk