

Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, August 13, 2024
Virtually

EAC members present – S. Bach, S. Thompson

Others present – S. Smith, B. Ayers-Fisher, S. Bachman

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bach called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm. She noted that a quorum was not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

UPCOMING EVENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

Ms. Ayers-Fisher provided the following upcoming events:

- Saturday, August 17 – Riverzilla – cleanup 9 – 11 am and event 11 am – 3 pm – Riverfront Park
- Saturday, August 17 – Party at the Park – 1 – 6 pm Pendora Park

Ms. Bach stated that she is attending the 18th Wonder meeting on Monday, August 19. She questioned if it would be helpful to distribute EAC brochures. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she will provide the brochures to Ms. Bach.

- Saturday, August 17 and Sunday, August 18 - Duryea Hillclimb

Mr. Thompson reminded all that the EAC Communication Committee is attending Wacky Water Wednesday on August 21 at Glenside.

- Wednesday, August 14 – National Night Out – 5 – 8 pm Penn St
- Saturday, August 24 – Dumpster Day – select locations

Mr. Bachman stated that the Delta Ave alley repairs are complete and the piping is reconnected. He stated that paving should begin shortly.

Mr. Bachman stated that he has been investigating required repairs on catch basins in the 1400 block of Old Wyomissing Rd, the end of S. 19th St, and along Duryea Dr.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Signage / Mapping**

Ms. Bach stated that the signage quote has been received. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the quote was lower than she anticipated and that an additional sign can be installed. She noted the need to match the site with the signage and get an updated quote. She stated that the locations need to be confirmed and that separate invoices will be issued so that the EAC can pay a portion of the cost.

Mr. Bachman stated that there are four signs ready to be installed along the Wyomissing Creek near the Reading Public Museum.

Ms. Bach stated that the green infrastructure list needs to be reviewed so that this project can move forward.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Mr. Bachman will begin working on the mapping project by taking photos and collecting the latitude and longitude of locations. She stated that this information will be provided to the University of Maryland so they can begin building the map.

- **Letter to Public Works**

Ms. Bach questioned the details of the letter that the Green Infrastructure Committee is sending to Public Works. Ms. Smith stated that the EAC was going to write in support of adding a greenhouse manager to City staff and to encourage the hiring of landscaping professionals to care for the City's green spaces.

- **Goggleworks Rain Barrel Workshop**

Ms. Smith stated that she shared the EAC rain barrel workshop materials with Mr. Bachman.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the EAC recommended holding the workshop in late winter or early spring as people are planning their gardens.

Mr. Bachman stated that he is working to recycle barrels which contain chemicals used by Public Works. He stated that if this is possible, the only item that would need to be purchased is the plumbing kits.

- **2025 Budget Request**

Ms. Smith stated that the EAC's requested amount has been submitted.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Reading Rising Park Maintenance**

Ms. Bach provided a background of the issues at the park for those who did not see the email chain. She stated that residents were complaining that there were unhoused people living in the bushes and that the plants were too large and unkept.

Ms. Smith stated that she noted in the email chain that the EAC adopted the park for litter removal and was not responsible for removing the unhoused or maintaining the plantings.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the lawn mowers that are generally used are too large to use in the small pocket parks. She stated that youth and volunteers cannot use power equipment. She stated that the City staff does not want to use the smaller walk-behind mowers. She stated that she has ordered two push mowers so youth can use them in the future. She stated that she is upset to see what this park now looks like as random weed whacking has occurred and the plants were trimmed during the wrong time of year.

Ms. Bach questioned if the park was full of invasive species. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that it was full of native species but now that it's been cut back incorrectly invasive species will take over. She stated that staff was instructed to wait to trim until the fall but did it anyway. She stated that this was a natural space with little required maintenance and that she did have it weeded.

Chris Trachte, member of the City Planning Commission, arrived at this time. All present introduced themselves.

- **PFA's Update**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that rulings will be coming forward later this fall.

Mr. Bachman stated that water functions will be affected first and will most likely result in rate increases.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that lawsuits are expected against those who produce products containing PFAs. She stated that the best way to control pollution is to stop manufacturing. She stated that those who live downstream from Reading have higher levels of PFAs because no one is upstream of Reading's source water.

Mr. Thompson stated that it is anticipated that cancer in men will increase by alarming rates.

Mr. Bachman stated that those who test for PFAs must wear regulated clothing and shoes to prevent skewing test results.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Reading also does not use firefighting foam.

PROJECT UPDATES

- **EPA Exide Cleanup Update**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that EPA has issued the assessment bids but that a contract has not yet been awarded.

- **NREL Presentation**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she will provide the Power Point slides and video to the EAC. She stated that a good mix of people attended and there were good questions. She stated that she will present them with another project in the future. She stated that one possible question is how to affordably transition an oil or gas power radiant system to electric.

- **Energy Efficiency Project**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that an ordinance will be introduced by City Council on August 26. She requested EAC members speak in support of the project at Council's September 9 meeting. She stated that the project's overall cost is \$17 million but using the 20 year cost savings it will cost only \$5 million. She stated that weatherization projects will be completed and that 2.4 megawatts of solar will be installed.

- **Urban Ag**

Ms. Bach stated that she is meeting with Dr. Jennings on August 19 to discuss the results of the Albright student project.

- **City-Owned Dams**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the City is waiting for input from EPA regarding Bernhart's Dam. She stated that permits are in process to remove Bushong Dam.

Ms. Smith questioned if the City plans to move forward with Confluence Park. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that that is the plan.

LONG TERM PROJECTS

- **Zero Waste Plan**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she is working on a food waste diversion plan.

- **Comprehensive Plan**

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that Mr. Wangolo has restarted work on the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the EAC will be a contributor.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 24 at noon at 6th & Amity Playground - weather permitting. Members are asked to bring a chair.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk