

Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, October 26, 2021
Virtual

EAC members present –D. Beane, A. Sellers, B. Vitale

Others present – S. Smith, S. Bachman, B. Ayers-Fisher, J. Long, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Beane called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm. He noted that a quorum was not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW MEMBER UPDATE

Ms. Smith stated that a new member, Rebecca Noviello, has been appointed. She noted her hope that Ms. Noviello would attend this meeting. She stated that if she does not, she will follow up with her. She provided a brief background on Ms. Noviello.

Mr. Beane expressed the belief that she would be a great asset and addition.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she has great energy and she will bring a good balance to the group.

Ms. Curran-Myers arrived at this time.

Mr. Beane stated that a quorum is now present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Ms. Curran-Myers, seconded by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, to approve the August 10, 2021 and September 28, 2021 meeting summaries as written. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW CITY INITIATIVE

Mr. Vitale requested an update on the City's rain garden project on Museum Rd. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that it is in the planning stage.

Mr. Beane questioned progress on Ms. Judge's replacement. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she has no update.

Ms. Sellers questioned if projects continue moving forward. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the WWTP energy audit is on schedule. She expressed the belief that it would be complete in early 2022 and that all the required data has been submitted to DEP.

Ms. Sellers questioned if the position has been advertised. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that it has.

Ms. Sellers questioned the application deadline. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she does not know the deadline.

Mr. Vitale questioned if Ms. Ayers-Fisher applied for the position. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she has.

Mr. Beane noted the return of Ms. Hoag to the WWTP. He requested that she be invited to a future meeting to provide an update.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and stated that she was excited to learn that Ms. Hoag has returned. She stated that she knows that Ms. Hoag understands and cares about sustainability. She expressed the belief that information from the WWTP energy audit will be carefully considered by Ms. Hoag.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the WWTP is the City's largest energy consumer.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that the energy audit will result in a win-win. She stated that the City can reduce energy consumption and keep the same high quality processes. She stated that this will reduce costs to the City and help with the City's carbon use goals.

Mr. Vitale agreed and stated that it helps when residents argue about changing their carbon use to learn that the City is making changes in operations. He

expressed the belief that this is a great project and noted his hope that the audit results will provide easily implementable recommendations.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that this is a high-level audit and is specific to the WWTP.

Mr. Vitale questioned if the audit would examine water usage energy used during waste processing. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she does not believe this is being examined. She stated that the audit will help the City fine tune plant operations. She stated that working in cohorts is very helpful and noted that all in the cohort can then implement the cost saving measures. She stated that water usage will be examined if the opportunity arises. She stated that this audit is at no cost to the City and will result in reduced energy consumption and additional best management practices.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that this is exciting work. She stated that there are few options to work on WWTP processes or to collaborate with other municipalities.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the Dept of Energy rep will be touring the facility in the upcoming weeks. She invited the EAC to attend the tour as well. All members agreed that they would like to participate in the tour.

Mr. Beane stated that the EAC historically tours areas as needed.

SIGNAGE, MAPPING

Ms. Sellers stated that she has not had an opportunity to work on this project.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she has not had an opportunity to work on it either.

Mr. Beane stated that all are busy and stated that he looks forward to the next update.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she will schedule a meeting with Mr. Crespo to review the logo.

INVASIVE PLANTS / NOXIOUS WEEDS

Mr. Beane suggested holding the tour of the Preserve along Oak Lane in the spring. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and stated that she will plan the tour. She commended Ms. Ayers-Fisher for the watershed walks she held at Angelica Park and Pendra

Park / Mineral Spring Park. She stated that Ms. Ayers-Fisher will assist with this walk as well.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that Oak Lane is not the only location that this dumping is occurring. She suggested sending educational materials to this targeted neighborhood. She stated that she had good feedback from the presentation she made to the College Heights Community Council.

Mr. Beane requested that Ms. Curran-Myers share her Power Point presentation. Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she will add explanatory content and share with the group. She stated that this dumping continues.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Ms. Smith prepared amendments to the City's Park Code and Solid Waste regulations that were reviewed and approved by the Green Infrastructure Committee. She stated that the preamble language reminds all about the City's pick up of yard waste. She reviewed the amendments and highlighted the main changes.

Mr. Vitale stated that he had no further changes and agreed that the amendments were reviewed and approved by the Green Infrastructure Committee.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that a small change needs to be made to the agenda memo for the Park Code amendment to indicate that the issue occurs in places other than Oak Lane.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed and stated that she has noticed it occurring on Neversink Mountain as well.

Mr. Vitale suggested that Neversink Mountain be added to the agenda memo. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed. Ms. Smith stated that she will make this change.

Mr. Vitale stated that these amendments do not address dumping of construction materials. He expressed the belief that if residents see one thing being dumped then other things begin being dumped.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and used Skyline Dr as an example. She stated that dumping spreads.

Mr. Vitale questioned if the EAC should address the dumping of construction materials.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that yard waste is addressed by clarifying existing language.

Mr. Bachman stated that dumping is a large enforcement problem. He stated that generally when charges are filed with the MDJ the case is dismissed because the City cannot prove who dumped the materials there.

Mr. Vitale questioned if City Council would be addressing this issue. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the City has a Clean City Coordinator. She noted the need to better define this program. She expressed the belief that no progress has been made and noted the need for additional education.

Mr. Vitale questioned if comprehensive collection would assist. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that it would not. She stated that people's behaviors must change. She stated that many residents don't understand the City's rules so they do what is easiest for themselves. She suggested holding a summit to discuss this issue as more attention on the issue is needed. She stated that trash and dumping is destroying the Preserve areas. She stated that this has been discussed at MP3 meetings.

Ms. Sellers questioned if cameras had been installed on Skyline Dr. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that there are connection and signal issues. She noted the need to logically discuss the issue and determine who is responsible and how to address dumping.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Public Works is making signage for Oak Lane and expressed the belief that these signs could be installed in other areas. She stated that the signage will also include the MP3 logo.

Mr. Beane suggested that a recycling mailer be sent out that includes yard waste. He suggested a mailer targeting specific areas with a separate mailer on yard waste. He expressed the belief that people would comply if they learn about the program. He suggested that a statement on dumping trash and construction materials could also be included.

Mr. Vitale agreed that the City needs to increase awareness of its yard waste collection program. He agreed with Mr. Beane and suggested that instructions on how to really compost may also be helpful.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that those present at the College Heights Community Council meeting suggested door hangers. She agreed that people welcome information to do things correctly.

Mr. Vitale noted the need for user friendly information for residents but a threatening sign about construction and trash dumping. He explained that some neighborhoods have yard waste pick up automatically and others need to call to schedule a pick up.

Mr. Beane and Ms. Smith stated that they schedule pick-ups. Mr. Beane stated that it may be an impediment to have to take this extra step. Mr. Vitale agreed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that it may also be a hardship to purchase the required bags. She expressed the belief that much time for education has been lost throughout COVID because in-person meetings cannot be held. She agreed that the yard waste program should occur weekly City-wide without the need to schedule a pick-up.

Mr. Beane suggested that there may be a grant opportunity to purchase bags and distribute them to all properties with a flyer explaining the program.

Mr. Vitale agreed with Mr. Beane and noted the need to make the program as simple as possible so residents will participate.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that some residents have different cultural and experiential backgrounds. She noted that she finds it interesting that younger people want to participate in trash clean-ups. She expressed the belief that positive movement is occurring.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that a mailer is being prepared to all properties regarding 2022 holiday pick-ups and materials that can be recycled. She stated that she will work to add information about dumping trash and construction materials and about yard waste pick up. She stated that she will discuss weekly collection without the need to schedule pick up City-wide with Mr. Harrity.

Mr. Vitale suggested expanding the weekly pick up program where it is most needed as a pilot.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she likes the language used on the amendments.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested targeted enforcement after signage is installed. She stated that as a lawyer she feels that the City should wait to enforce until after these amendments are enacted.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher suggested addressing construction waste separately. She stated that other municipalities require a waste management plan when construction permit applications are submitted. She agreed that there is still much dumping of construction materials. She stated that dumping of household waste has diminished and expressed the belief that the one hauler system is working.

Ms. Sellers agreed with the need to submit a waste management plan. She stated that when applying for NPDES permits the applicant must include where construction waste and sediment are removed to.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that this may be an easier way to address the issue.

Mr. Bachman, via the chat feature, stated that contractors and house flippers generally don't get the required permits.

Mr. Vitale stated that construction waste recycling is encouraged in green building regulations. He stated that many items can be recycled and stated that recycling of construction waste may also be any easy way to reduce dumping. He expressed the belief that many large contractors regularly recycle construction waste. He stated that this can also be part of Reading's commitment to 100% clean energy.

Mr. Vitale suggested utilizing smaller trash haulers as the construction waste recycler. He also suggested that the City help facilitate by providing a list of qualified recyclers when application forms are received.

Ms. Sellers suggested that this may provide an avenue for new businesses.

Mr. Vitale stated that generally separate dumpsters are provided for construction recycling. He suggested that this be addressed as the EAC reviews the City's Codes.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that a third ordinance is needed to establish invasive species regulations. She noted the need for a mechanism for the City to enforce orders issued by DEP and suggested that all three ordinances move forward together.

Ms. Smith stated that she needed guidance to prepare the third ordinance and questioned if the invasive regulations should be part of the Shade Tree Chapter or a separate Chapter of the Code.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she tried to incorporate the invasive regulations into the Shade Tree Chapter and was unsuccessful. She recommended that invasive species be a stand-alone Chapter. She suggested that she and Ms. Smith prepare the draft before the next Green Infrastructure Committee meeting. She requested that the two amendments be approved today to continue forward momentum.

Ms. Curran-Myers moved, seconded by Ms. Sellers, to approve the amendment to the Park Code with the suggested correction to the agenda memo and to approve the amendment to the Solid Waste regulations as submitted and to move them forward to City Council after adoption of the third amendment regarding invasive species. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

Mr. Beane questioned if there were any pending applications. Ms. Smith stated that there are not.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

Mr. Vitale stated that he will follow up with Mr. Denbowski. He questioned if Ms. Ayers-Fisher has gotten an intern. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she has not. She stated that she is working with management to fill this position.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that people are not applying for vacant positions.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the intern position has not yet been posted and she is unsure why.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Council is currently reviewing the 2022 budget. She suggested that ARPA funding may also be available.

Mr. Vitale stated that a RACC student voiced interest in the internship. He stated that this person attended a Green Infrastructure Committee meeting in the past and noted his hope of getting more involved.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the RACC student was interested in assisting the EAC with its social media.

Mr. Vitale noted the need for community outreach regarding the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan. He stated that the loss of Ms. Judge will slow down the process. He suggested that outreach begin before the Plan is complete. He suggested that the EAC form a committee to begin the Code reviews.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and stated that this would be an ad hoc committee.

Mr. Vitale stated that the Summit went well. He stated that many employees attended and brought good comments. He questioned if Ms. Ayers-Fisher attended the Halloween on Penn event.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she did attend the Halloween on Penn event. She stated that the event was much bigger than she imagined and it was very well attended. She stated that 300 City reusable shopping bags were distributed. She stated that Earth Day Committee members also attended and that activity books were also distributed.

Ms. Smith stated that this event was the idea of the Reading Youth Commission.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she is looking forward to working with the Youth Commission.

Mr. Vitale questioned how many people attended. Ms. Ayers-Fisher expressed the belief that several thousand people attended.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that Penn St is becoming a community center for events. She questioned if Reading should have a mascot. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she works with Zoo Much Fun for mascots but that they were not available that evening. She voiced support for a mascot but stated that she does not have funding.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that a costume would cost approximately \$350. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that high quality costumes cost much more.

Ms. Curran-Myers thanked Ms. Ayers-Fisher for attending many community events. She noted the need to show that the City is a member of the community.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that a clean-up will be held on November 13 from 9 am – noon to clean the alleys and storm drains around 11th & Pike playground.

Mr. Vitale questioned if there is an activity book related to energy. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that the activity books she uses are from Keep PA Beautiful. She stated that she generally uses these books for fourth grade classroom instruction but that she is unable to attend classes in person. She stated that she also orders an extra supply for community events.

Mr. Vitale questioned if an energy activity book would be available. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she will research this. She suggested that activity books may be available through the Dept of Energy. She stated that the Dept of Energy may give permission to download an activity book to reproduce. She stated that she would appreciate assistance researching activity books.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she found activity books on the Project Energy Savings website. She stated that Sparky the Squirrel is the main character. She stated that the books cost \$1.55 each. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she hopes to keep the cost around 50 cents each.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that a business may sponsor this purchase.

Mr. Vitale suggested that Ms. Anderson also be invited to events. He stated that she has information about Reading for 100 and is looking for the opportunity to attend community events.

Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that there is a clean-up and trunk or treat event on October 30 from 9 am – 1 pm at Lauer's Park. She stated that she will be participating in this event and invited the EAC to join her. She expressed the belief that the event will be attended by young families and that young people are very interested in sustainability.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she will be attending an event at Francis of Assisi House. She questioned if Ms. Ayers-Fisher could provide materials to hand out. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that she will drop some activity books off for her.

Mr. Vitale questioned if work on the Plan is moving forward. Ms. Ayers-Fisher stated that work on the Plan is not moving forward but that projects are moving forward.

Mr. Beane stated that there is ten minutes left and many topics to cover.

PLASTIC BAG BAN

Mr. Beane stated that he has no report. He thanked Ms. Smith for the materials she distributed.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed that the materials were very helpful. She thanked Ms. Smith for distributing them.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM BY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BERKS COUNTY

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the program took place on October 13. She stated that it was well attended but there were some technical struggles. She stated that Mr. Amoros attended and provided an update on the City's lead abatement program. She stated that he also committed to adding lead paint to the settlement inspection program.

Mr. Vitale expressed the belief that there will be resistance to adding lead paint abatement to the settlement inspection. He questioned who would be responsible for removing it once it is discovered.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that the owner must correct it. She stated that this is a big issue in Reading and she provided an overview of the program content. She noted her hope that the LWV would discuss other environmental topics. She stated that Act 2 (the PA Land Recycling Act) requires a deed restriction regarding clean-up abatement.

Mr. Beane agreed and stated that abatements are site specific. He stated that municipalities are informed about abatements.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed that the municipality is informed. She stated that she is unsure what the municipality does with the notification and where they can be researched. She suggested that the City develop a database so that they can ensure that when land development plans come forward that there are no issues with the planned land use. She stated that a new use for the property may require additional abatements.

Mr. Beane agreed and stated that this is a real issue in Reading. He stated that he has requested this information from the City for specific locations and the

documents are not available. He suggested that the notice should be indexed and the location cataloged. He suggested that this may be a project for an intern.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that environmental justice is a real issue. She stated that the database would improve residents' ability to know where these sites are and to ensure that the City reviews sites when permits are submitted. She noted the need for this information to be available to the public.

Mr. Beane stated that after remediation there is a liability release that there is no health risk for the current land use. He stated that the goal is to limit the land's future use to specific safe uses only. He stated that if the land use changes further remediation may be needed.

Mr. Beane stated that the other agenda topics will be deferred to the November meeting.

OTHER MATTERS

- Ms. Curran-Myers announced that the next Green Infrastructure Committee meeting will be held on Friday, November 5.
- Ms. Sellers stated that municipalities will be receiving the County Bike and Pedestrian Plan in hopes that it will be incorporated into their Comprehensive Plans. She stated that a Greenways grant is being pursued.
- Mr. Vitale stated that he will schedule a meeting with Mr. Amoros to discuss holding an Energy Summit. He suggested that it may be best to wait until after the Plan is complete.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date is Tuesday, November 23, 2021 at noon.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk