
Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, February 23, 2016

The regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council was held on the above date for the transaction of general business in the Public Works Center.

EAC members present –C. Curran-Myers, J. Slifko, D. Beane

Others present – S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag, J. Didow, F. Denbowski

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Curran-Myers called the meeting to order at 12:12 pm. She noted that a quorum was not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public present.

BCTV

Mr. Beane reported that the January topic was the Paris Treaty. He stated that it went well. He stated that the focus was to review the Paris Treaty and then relate the requirements to local initiatives. He noted the need for a topic for the March show and suggested that the show be renamed and rebranded as “Our City Our World” is very vague.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed with the need to rename the show and suggested it be tied to “green” as people understand that is an environmental focus.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer arrived at this time. She suggested that the show name also be tied to sustainability.

Mr. Beane stated that he will do some research and report at the next meeting.

Mr. Molteni arrived at this time.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted that a quorum is now present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Beane, seconded by Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer to approve the November 24, 2015 minutes as written. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Mr. Beane, seconded by Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer, to approve the December 22, 2015 minutes as written. Motion carried.

REORGANIZATION

Mr. Beane nominated Ms. Curran-Myers to chair and Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer to vice chair. Seconded by Mr. Molteni.

There were no further nominations.

The slate was unanimously elected as presented.

RECYCLING UPDATE

Mr. Denbowski stated that he has duties with recycling and with the Mayor's staff. He stated that he is working out of the Mayor's office and no longer oversees recycling collection. He stated that his work with recycling is related to policy, education and outreach. He stated that Mr. Schorn is retiring and that the educational program is being reevaluated.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he works on constituent services for the Mayor and that he will have a more detailed update in the future. He stated that he may need the EAC's feedback on several items.

Mr. Denbowski stated that oral arguments were made in Commonwealth Court on February 10 before the full bank of justices. He stated that the lawsuit is now more narrowly focused. He stated that Act 101 does not allow a recycling fee. However, the 2014 amendment to the 3rd Class City Code does allow a recycling fee. He stated that there is a question of whether the 3rd Class City Code applies to a Home Rule City.

Mr. Slifko expressed the belief that Home Rule allowed an expansion of the 3rd Class City Code. He stated that if the 3rd Class City Code allows the fee that a Home Rule City may also enact the fee.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the facts seem to be in the City's favor. He stated that the City is expecting the decision in May.

Mr. Molteni questioned how many plaintiffs were involved. Mr. Denbowski stated that there are five plaintiffs. He stated that a motion to make it a class action suit was denied.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the decision is appealable. He reported that the legal fees to date for this suit are approximately \$35,000.

Mr. Molteni stated that the former Mayor spent close to \$3 million during his tenure and that, as a taxpayer, he's tired of his taxes being used for legal proceedings.

Mr. Denbowski stated that recycling fees continue to be collected during the proceedings.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Act 108 states that electronics and "covered devices" cannot be landfilled. He explained that Act 108 also provided for funds to cover the cost of recycling electronics but that the fund has been depleted. He stated that this has led to many electronics recyclers to cease operations. He stated that the unintended consequence is that the devices are being illegally dumped.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Professional Recyclers of PA (PROP) is working to amend Act 108, that several amendments have been brought forward, and that the County Solid Waste professional has met with Senator Schwank on this issue.

Ms. Curran-Myers requested the amendment information so that she can follow up on where they are in the process and reach out to her contacts in Harrisburg. Mr. Denbowski stated that he will provide this information to Ms. Katzenmoyer to share with the group.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the last electronic pick up was the end of December. He stated that electronic recycling has become very expensive but that residents need it. He stated that the Operations Division Manager is working on specifications to bid the cost to a private contractor.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned if it would be curbside pick-up. Mr. Denbowski stated that he is unsure at this time. He stated that this will be evaluated during the bid process but that this cost is not budgeted for 2016.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned if the County collects electronics. Mr. Denbowski

stated that they do and that the facility is open several days per week for drop off.

Mr. Denbowski stated that another possibility would be drop off at the 14th & Walnut facility.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that residents are willing to recycle these items even if it is inconvenient.

Mr. Molteni suggested offering residents several options.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned when the bid would be complete. Mr. Denbowski stated that the bid must go through the Purchasing office and he hoped it would be public in 2-3 weeks.

Mr. Molteni noted the need for a national approach to this issue. He stated that small, sporadic approaches are not enough.

Ms. Hoag stated that in Europe consumers pay the costs of recycling when these items are purchased putting the onus on the consumer. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and stated that recycling fees are also added to vehicles when purchased in Europe.

Mr. Slifko questioned what the City does with items it picks up that have been dumped. Mr. Denbowski stated that there are parts within the electronic devices that have value and that they are generally scavenged. He stated that if the device is broken it cannot be recycled at all.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he will share the results of the bid with the EAC when they are received.

Mr. Molteni stated that many electronic items are shipped to developing countries where they are not regulated.

Mr. Denbowski left the meeting at this time.

STRATEGIC PLANNING – NEW MEMBERS

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that there are two vacancies on the EAC and that the EAC also needs additional subcommittee members. She stated that standard subcommittees will be established.

Mr. Molteni expressed the belief that many times ad hoc committees are more effective.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and suggested that there be both standard and ad hoc committees. She stated that subcommittees will have an EAC member in the leadership role.

Ms. Katzenmoyer reviewed the names and areas of expertise that have been submitted. Mr. Beane stated that Liberty Environmental would like to remain involved and have recommended Chris Kern.

Mr. Slifko stated that the Charter allows non-residents to serve if they have a property or business interest in the City.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned receipt of the Financial Interest Statement. Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that in the past only the chair of the EAC had to file this form but that a policy change now requires all members of all City BAC's to file. She stated that this is a form mandated by the PA Ethics Commission.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer noted the need for EAC members to have balanced skill sets. Mr. Molteni agreed.

Mr. Slifko left the meeting at this time.

The EAC voiced support of Mr. Vitale.

Mr. Beane stated that he will follow up with Mr. Kern.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested that application forms be sent to Mr. Vitale and Mr. Kern for EAC membership and letters to the others inviting them to become members of a subcommittee.

Mr. Beane moved, seconded by Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer to send an application form to Mr. Vitale. Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer noted her strong support. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer moved, seconded by Mr. Beane, to request resumes from the other candidates, circulate them via email and determine their best placement. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested that additional subcommittee members be recruited.

RAIN GARDEN

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the subcommittee met with Brian Kelly as he is pursuing a rain garden project in the 18th Ward of the City.

Ms. Hoag explained that Mr. Kelly's group has applied for an alternative transportation grant which will be discussed at the March RATS meeting. She stated that the project will address storm water issues and also address accessibility in the neighborhood. She noted the need to connect the 18th Ward corridors.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that this is a great project as it addresses multiple aspects of community quality. Ms. Hoag agreed and stated that this is a diverse and dynamic group.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the EAC can assist with outreach and education. She stated that the meeting was very informative.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that as the EAC has limited resources, they should support this project.

Ms. Hoag stated that the Berks Nature project at Angelica also includes a rain garden. She stated that this is an excellent location. She stated that several plans under review by the Planning Commission include rain gardens.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested that rain garden locations be mapped and publicized as a "trail" and for inventory purposes.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer suggested that there be follow up with those who participated in the rain barrel workshops and that those in use should also be mapped as a "trail" and inventoried. She noted the need for standard wayfinding and educational signage.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested that there be a QR code for additional information via tablet or smart phone. She suggested that this would make a great student project.

There was a brief discussion about the situation with DCNR at Angelica Park.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she will be following this issue as a representative of Alvernia. She stated that she understands how this grant works and still has contacts. She stated that the land use is difficult to track.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that the issue is currently under legal review.

Ms. Curran-Myers expressed the belief that the most problematic area will be the Fire Training Center. She stated that the lake is also gone now but that the Berks Nature project is within the spirit of the purpose of the grant.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned the possible outcome. Ms. Curran-Myers opined that the Berks Nature Center will proceed as it is within the spirit of the grant and that there will be a land swap.

BUSHONG DAM PROJECT

Ms. Hoag stated that the contracts for all the City's dam issues have been put on hold.

SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that the group has begun meeting and appears to be stronger. She stated that Ms. Rossman from the County Planning Commission is spearheading the group and that they are currently working on a web presence. She stated that she regularly attends meetings and will provide updates to the EAC.

Ms. Didow and Mr. Beane left the meeting at this time.

PA LAND INSTITUTE

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer provided the details of the PA Land Use Institute and encouraged all to attend.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that the City is a sponsor and members could register at the reduced rate. She stated that she will be attending and that the Institutes are very informative.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council will be held on Tuesday, March 22 at noon at the Public Works Building.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer, CMC
Deputy City Clerk