
Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, April 26, 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 – J. Slifko, D. Beane, P. Ignozzi-Shaffer, A. Molteni

Others present – S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag, F. Denbowski, B. Twyman, D. Ruyak, S. Harrity

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm. She noted that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Aaron Thomas stated that Reading Green made a presentation to the EAC on March 22. He stated that there has been no further action and no update provided to Council. He stated that Reading Green has a solution to the electronics recycling problem. He also stated that there has been no email conversation about it. He stated that the EAC must provide a report to Council. He stated that Reading Green has been working on this issue for three years.

Ms. Butler arrived at this time.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer requested clarity on Mr. Thomas's comments. Mr. Thomas stated that there has been no community update on the hazards created by dumping of electronic waste and that the EAC should not be concerned with how the County handles electronic waste. He questioned why there was no public report made by the EAC.

Ms. Hoag referred to the EAC bylaws. Mr. Thomas did not want to hear the bylaw information. He again stated that the EAC did not report Reading Green's information to Council.

Mr. Beane questioned what information Mr. Thomas was referring to. Mr. Thomas stated that it was the study provided at the March meeting.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer again asked for clarity about what Mr. Thomas was asking for. She stated that Mr. Thomas referred to working on this issue for three years. She stated that the EAC had its presentation only last month. Mr. Thomas stated that the EAC has taken no action on this issue that he has been addressing since 2010.

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that the EAC minutes are not posted on the City's website until they are approved at the following meeting. She stated that the March meeting summary will be posted after today's meeting. She explained that there will always be a one month delay.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer again questioned what Mr. Thomas was looking for the EAC to do with this issue. Mr. Thomas noted the need for the EAC to address lead and electronics issues.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned exactly what was being requested. Mr. Thomas stated that the EAC must make recommendations to the public.

Sheila Perez stated that she has lived in Reading for over 20 years. She stated that she has seen an increase in health issues near the former site of the American Chain and Cable location as the demolition contractor did not follow protocol. She stated that this neighborhood may be poor but that the residents are still human. She stated that this is a brownfield site and that there are people on site moving barrels of contaminated items between 1 am and 5 am. She also stated that Reading Green presented a plan for the City and there has been no follow up. She stated that she cannot believe that the City received only \$100,000 from the sale of recycling materials and that this is why residents must pay such a high fee for recycling removal. She stated that Reading Green made a presentation to the State but that the City is not embracing it. She stated that their plan would employ the unemployable but that no one has contacted them. She noted the need for innovative solutions and that children are suffering. She stated that the EAC's meeting time is not convenient for residents to attend for public participation. She called for members to resign or meet in the evening. She stated that others are making money on recycling. She disagreed that a criminal background check should be part of the contracting process. She stated that if this is policy she wants to see that policy and see the results of all the background checks.

Evelyn Morrison questioned how many seats were on the EAC. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that it was seven. Mr. Denbowski explained that some in attendance were City employees.

Ms. Morrison questioned if any members were bilingual or minority. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that there are female members.

Ms. Morrison questioned if all members were City residents. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that they are.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that there are vacancies for both the EAC and its subcommittees. She stated that the EAC would embrace minority members and advised Ms. Perez and Ms. Morrison to encourage community members to apply.

Ms. Perez questioned who appointed members. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that it was Council.

Ms. Perez noted the City's admin policy requiring monthly reports which are not completed. She stated that this is a way to keep people out of the process.

Mr. Molteni stated that this is untrue. He stated that anyone can apply.

Ms. Perez questioned why someone would apply if they would be rejected.

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained the application process. Mr. Slifko agreed and stated that since his time with the Nominations & Appointments Committee no candidate has been rejected.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Beane, seconded by Mr. Slifko, to approve the March 22, 2016 minutes as written. Motion carried unanimously.

RECYCLING UPDATE

Mr. Denbowski stated that he would be giving a legislative update. He stated that Commonwealth Court has recently rendered its decision. He stated that the issue has been vacated and remanded. He stated that a sustainability study is needed to demonstrate the need for a fee. He stated that the City is optimistic and that the decision reaffirms the City's power to charge a fee for recycling. He stated that the City will be doing an RFP for legal services for representation on this suit.

Mr. Denbowski stated that there has also been action at the State. He stated that Senate Bill 1041 will amend Act 101 to allow municipalities (but not counties) to charge a fee. He stated that this has been voted out of committee and there will be

further debate on the floor. He stated that House Bill 755 will amend Act 101 allowing a fee for recycling and will allow the fee retroactively. He stated that this is still in committee but that the issue is being addressed.

Mr. Slifko questioned the purpose of these amendments to Act 101 since the court decision allows the fee. Mr. Denbowski stated that the amendments would enhance the decision and cover all bases.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned how far back the retroactive clause would go. Mr. Denbowski stated that it would go back to the beginning of Act 101. He stated that these are companion bills and that they would most probably be combined.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he will be reviewing work on education. He stated that he hopes to hire a part time bilingual employee to make presentations on recycling and environmental issues. He stated that presentations would be made at schools, the Housing Authority properties and community groups.

Mr. Molteni requested information on the price of saleable recycling.

Mr. Denbowski excused himself for another meeting and stated that he would return with this information.

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

Mr. Ruyak introduced Mr. Harrity and explained that Mr. Twyman was working on similar issues before he became a member of City Council. He stated that the stockpile of electronics at the City's 14th & Walnut location has been recycled. He stated that the City had been relying on the County but there were limitations and stated that the City needs a long-term solution. He stated that a curbside collection program is being considered similar to the yard waste program. He stated that the laws have changed causing many electronics recycling businesses to close. Mr. Harrity agreed and stated that contrary to attendees' beliefs there is no money in recycling.

Mr. Ruyak stated that in the past manufacturers were required to recycle a percentage of the weight of their sales. He stated that they quickly hit their State mandated caps and stopped collecting electronics for recycling. He stated that he and Mr. Harrity have researched several options.

Mr. Harrity stated that he began work on electronic recycling in January. He

distributed two memos outlining his work. He stated that he has located one firm that can handle the City's volume and keep the costs low. He stated that the City has also addressed its storage issues and has established a sorting procedure. He stated that this plan is both economically and ecologically sound.

Mr. Ruyak stated that City operations will soon include electronic recycling.

Mr. Harrity stated that he also worked with the City's Citizen Service Center to educate callers on how to properly dispose electronics. He stated that they first tell the caller to use the County recycling program. He stated that if this is not possible, the City will pick the item up.

Ms. Perez stated that she has performed many clean-ups and is passionate about this issue. She agreed that Mr. Harrity picks the items up quickly when she reports them.

Mr. Ruyak explained that the County electronics recycling uses free labor to keep costs down.

Mr. Harrity stated that when the City is made aware of dumped electronics they are picked up quickly. Mr. Ruyak stated that the key is making the City aware.

Mr. Harrity noted the need for a firm to perform the electronics recycling. He again stated that many are closing. He stated that he found a firm – UNICOR – who uses labor from the federal prison in Lewisburg, PA. He stated that they use proper processes and are certified to demanufacture electronics.

Ms. Perez stated that Reading Green wants this contract. Mr. Harrity stated that prior to last week, he had never heard of Reading Green.

Mr. Thomas questioned who cleaned up the electronics from 14th & Walnut Sts in the past. Mr. Harrity stated that he used Vantage but that they are now closing.

Ms. Morrison questioned the cost for Vantage. Mr. Ruyak stated that it was approximately \$2,500.

Mr. Harrity stated that UNICOR will not charge a fee except for CRTs at 20 cents per pound. He stated that this price is far lower than all others. He stated that most others charge \$30 for each 32" TV which is the most common electronics item the City recycles. He stated that UNICOR has all of its certifications.

Ms. Perez questioned the cost to ship the items to Lewisburg. Mr. Harrity stated that the Water Authority has agreed to let the City use one of its trucks once per quarter to transport the items. He stated that the cost will be \$1,000 per year plus the cost of the driver. He stated that they will accept up to 22 skids per quarter.

Ms. Perez questioned the number of prisoners used. Mr. Harrity stated that he did not have this information. He stated that this is part of the prison's vocational training program and that the inmates are paid for their work.

Mr. Molteni stated that he does not support using prison labor.

Mr. Slifko questioned if 22 skids was enough. Mr. Harrity and Mr. Ruyak stated that it is. Mr. Harrity explained that the City performed a collection event in May 2014 and that the City did not reach 22 skids. He stated that the City can take more than 22 if needed but that it would be at an extra cost. Mr. Ruyak stated that the City recycled 12 skids in 2015. He noted his hope that the City hire two part time employees to handle electronics recycling in combination with its yard waste collection and the baler program.

Mr. Molteni noted the need for the City to have collection programs. He stated that most City homes do not have the room to store old electronics and that many times this is why they are dumped. Mr. Ruyak stated that staff recognizes that and that this is why they are proposing collection.

Mr. Thomas questioned if UNICOR had a website so that he could review their information. Mr. Harrity stated that they do.

Mr. Thomas stated that Reading Green could perform this work. He stated that they recycled electronics stored at 14th & Walnut in the past.

Ms. Morrison questioned if City employees would be certified. Mr. Harrity stated that they would be trained on how to collect and sort the materials. He stated that no certification is needed. Mr. Ruyak agreed and stated that there is also no special requirement for the trucks or drivers to transport the materials.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that UNICOR is ISO 9000 certified. Mr. Harrity stated that this is not required but that they are.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned when the plan would be approved and would

begin. Mr. Ruyak stated that he is currently reviewing the information with the Public Works Director and the Mayor.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned if the contract was bid out. Mr. Ruyak stated that the City's purchasing policy does not require a public bid for projects with this low of a cost.

Mr. Twyman questioned if the 14th & Walnut facility was still condemned. Mr. Ruyak stated that it is partially but that the section used to store the electronics is not.

Ms. Perez questioned if a bid was needed. Mr. Ruyak stated that the cost of the project did not require a public bid.

Ms. Perez questioned when this plan was finalized. Mr. Ruyak stated that it was finalized in early March. Mr. Harrity explained that this is not a contract. The City will pay the fee each time items are delivered to UNICOR.

Mr. Thomas stated that Mr. Harrity indicated that City employees will not need to be certified. He questioned how they would handle broken items and spills. Mr. Harrity stated that they will be trained on how to safely handle items and how to deal with spills.

Ms. Perez stated that she has been sweeping up broken glass from electronics and did not realize it was hazardous. She noted the need for the community to understand this. Mr. Harrity agreed.

Ms. Perez stated that she and Ms. Torres worked on this project in the past and she questioned why Reading Green was not chosen. Mr. Harrity again stated that he had not heard of Reading Green until last week. He stated that he was assigned this project in January. Mr. Twyman suggested that the new administration was moving this forward. He commended Mr. Harrity on the plan but suggested that there were things that were missed.

Ms. Morrison expressed the belief that collaboration is key. She stated that a goal of the City should be to support local businesses. She stated that she does not support prison labor. She stated that using local business means more money spent locally. Mr. Harrity stated that the City is financially distressed and all projects must be cost effective.

Mr. Thomas expressed the belief that the City has failed. He stated that there is a local company to demanufacture electronics and that the City will be sending its business elsewhere.

Mr. Harrity expressed the belief that the manufacturer should be solely responsible to recycle electronics.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer noted her support of the project and commended Mr. Harrity and Mr. Ruyak for their work.

Ms. Perez noted the need for the City to collaborate with local companies. Mr. Harrity stated that he is now aware of this option. He again noted the need for the project to be both cost effective and environmentally sound. Mr. Ruyak noted his willingness to review Reading Green's proposal but that it must be an oranges to oranges comparison.

Mr. Molteni stated that he understands the task and that consumers must be conscious of the mess this has caused. He commended Mr. Harrity and Mr. Ruyak for their work.

Mr. Twyman stated that he agreed with Mr. Molteni. He stated that he does not support using UNICOR and prison labor. He stated that Public Works will do what they're going to do.

Mr. Thomas and Mr. Harrity left the meeting at this time.

STRATEGIC PLANNING – NEW MEMBERS

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer again stated that members are needed.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that the application from Mr. Kern is being processed. She stated that she has not yet received an application from Mr. Vitale. She stated that a letter has been sent to Ms. Sellers.

Ms. Morrison questioned if any of these people were minorities. Ms. Hoag explained that you cannot tell from an application form. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that all are able to apply. She suggested that if Ms. Morrison and Ms. Perez knew of anyone who was willing to serve that they complete an application form.

RAIN GARDEN

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that she attended a Conservation District event which highlighted rain barrels. She stated that the City should embrace a decoration contest and develop a walking trail to City locations with rain barrels. She stated that the EAC should collaborate with the Conservation District.

Ms. Butler left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Molteni voiced support for these projects.

BUSHONG DAM PROJECT

Ms. Hoag stated that the RFP has begun the review process implemented by the new Administration. She stated that she recently met with the Acting Managing Director to update him on all the City's dam issues. She noted her hope that the RFP would be moving forward soon.

STORM WATER ISSUES

Ms. Hoag stated that there are five plans before the Planning Commission this evening. She stated that more and more projects are being presented where storm water runoff is being retained on site.

Mr. Twyman left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Slifko questioned if the City had enough teeth in its storm water regulations. Ms. Hoag stated that it does. She explained that the City has its own storm water regulations and must also comply with Act 161. She stated that projects must meet the criteria of both sets of regulations. She stated that the Planning Commission is very receptive and aware of storm water issues.

BCTV

Mr. Beane explained that the EAC does a BCTV program every other month. He stated that the January program covered the Paris climate change agreement and the March program covered sustainability. He recommended that the May program cover electronics recycling and invited Ms. Perez to participate. Ms. Perez stated that she will consider the invitation.

Ms. Hoag stated that this would give a grass roots perspective on the issue. Ms. Perez stated that she has been working hard. She stated that she has been working

to obtain more planter boxes and works with Wood to Wonderful for additional cans. She noted the need for more residents to take pride in their surroundings.

Mr. Beane stated that the program is part of the EAC's educational outreach. He stated that the program is 30 minutes long.

Ms. Morrison stated that Mr. Harrity provides all supplies needed for clean-ups. She noted the need to change residents' attitudes about trash and litter and for behavior changes. She noted the visible difference in neighborhoods with a high rate of home ownership rather than renters. She stated that all neighborhoods should look the same.

Mr. Beane stated that he has a Wood to Wonderful can on his sidewalk and that he has noticed a difference on his block.

Mr. Molteni suggested that the rain barrel trail be a future program topic.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer explained that BCTV programming is an example of one of the EAC subcommittees.

STEEP SLOPE ORDINANCE

No report.

SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that the July EAC meeting will be her last as she is relocating out of the area. She noted the need for a replacement liaison to this group. She stated that they are doing good work.

WEB AND FACEBOOK

No report.

RECYCLING SALES

Mr. Denbowski stated that the amount the City receives depends on market conditions. He further explained:

- Paper – most paper was shipped to China in the past to be recycled. He stated that their economy is slowing down and that they have reduced what they will accept. He stated that this has lowered the price for paper.
- Plastics – the price of plastics is tied to oil prices. He stated that as the price of oil has been down the cost of recycling plastic has increased. He stated

that in some cases recycling plastic now costs more than making new plastic. He stated that the City recycles plastics #1 - #7 and explained that the higher the number the lower the quality.

- Glass – most municipalities are now paying to have their glass taken as there are limited aftermarket uses.

He stated that prices are influenced by supply and demand.

Mr. Molteni questioned if it costs more to separate recyclables only to have them landfilled. Mr. Denbowski stated that this should not be considered. He stated that the marketing will change and that everyone should continue to recycle. He stated that the City's current contract contains floor prices but that will not be in the next contract. He stated that this will allow collectors to charge municipalities for certain items. He stated that a slight improvement is predicted for 2017.

Ms. Perez suggested that the co-mingled items be further separated. Mr. Denbowski stated that this gets overcomplicated and then people stop recycling.

Ms. Perez expressed the belief that there are cities that have sustainable recycling programs that do not charge a fee. Mr. Denbowski disagreed and requested this information. He stated that there are municipalities in other states which may claim to be sustainable but that they are highly subsidized. He stated that when Act 101 was written in 1988 there was speculation about market value. He stated that the market is now in effect and the price received is not enough to sustain programs. He stated that he will provide additional information on this topic at the next meeting.

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer explained this program to Ms. Perez and Ms. Morrison. She stated that funding is through the Berks County Community Foundation to involve students.

Ms. Perez suggested Glenside Elementary School. Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that she contacted this school but that they have not responded. She stated that it must be a science teacher and there is a one day training session. She stated that the training does count for continuing education credit.

Ms. Perez stated that she will follow up with Glenside Elementary.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council will be held on Tuesday, May 24 at noon at the Public Works Building.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer, CMC
Deputy City Clerk