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**Environmental Advisory Council**  
**Tuesday, November 24, 2015**

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 – P. Ignozzi-Shaffer, A. Molteni, C. Curran-Myers, J. Slifko

Others present – S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag, L. Kissinger

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Curran-Myers called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public present.

**MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer, seconded by Mr. Molteni, to approve the October 27, 2015 minutes as written. Motion carried unanimously.**

**SHADE TREE UPDATE**

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the urban canopy is an important issue to the EAC. She noted the need for a diverse and healthy canopy and stated that the EAC will assist as needed.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the main focus of the next several years will be the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). He stated that the City's plan to address the EAB has been submitted and approved by PA DCNR.

Mr. Kissinger distributed and reviewed the plan. He stated that treatment will begin in 2016 and that 233 trees will be treated at a cost of \$218,000 and 270 trees will be removed and replaced at a cost of \$413,000.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned if there were neighborhoods with large concentrations of ash trees. Mr. Kissinger stated that the largest concentration is along Perkiomen Ave.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned if there were large concentrations in any City parks. Mr. Kissinger stated that there are many but that they are scattered throughout the City's parks.

Mr. Slifko questioned the removal schedule. Mr. Kissinger stated that approximately 90 trees will be removed per year over a three year period. He stated that the trees in fair condition will continue to be evaluated and those that do not survive treatment will be removed as needed.

Mr. Molteni questioned the cost of the project. Mr. Kissinger stated that some State funding is available for treatment costs but not for removal and replacement costs.

Mr. Kissinger explained that the State originally wanted the City to remove 432 trees but the City convinced them to allow the City to use this treatment and removal schedule to address the issue.

Mr. Slifko stated that it is difficult to project what will happen with the EAB but that he is glad that not all ash trees will be removed. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and stated that past issues were not as severe as predicted.

Mr. Kissinger stated that tree inspections have shown the EAB is not in Reading. He stated that the closest location is in Bethel Township. He stated that some of the remediation will be performed by City staff and the rest by an outside contractor to ensure the deadlines are met. He stated that he is applying for State funding.

Mr. Molteni questioned the method of treatment. Mr. Kissinger stated that it will be by bark injection. He stated that the necessary equipment has been purchased.

Mr. Molteni questioned the timing of the treatments. Mr. Kissinger stated that it will be done in late spring and early fall.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned if the treatment and removal/replacements will be noted in the City's tree inventory. Mr. Kissinger stated that the inventory will be kept up to date.

Mr. Kissinger stated that education will begin shortly explaining the project to affected property owners and explaining that the City cannot perform work on private property. He stated that the City has been unable to continue the inventory of City parks.

Mr. Molteni suggested that EAC members and volunteers assist with the park tree inventory. Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer suggested that it would be easier for City staff to manage through interns. Mr. Kissinger agreed and stated that he would welcome the EAC's assistance with outreach.

Mr. Slifko questioned the ash tree population on Mt. Penn and Neversink Mountain. Mr. Kissinger expressed the belief that there were many but that they were scattered. He stated that this is not part of the City's inventory.

Ms. Hoag questioned if the ash trees on the mountains were scattered or clustered. Mr. Kissinger expressed the belief that they are scattered.

Ms. Hoag suggested that Berks Area Mountain Biking Assn assist with finding the ash trees during trail maintenance. All agreed that this would be helpful.

Mr. Slifko and Mr. Kissinger described the visible devastation in western PA from the EAB.

Mr. Kissinger stated that there have been no sightings of the Spotted Lanternfly in Reading. He stated that he continues to monitor for this insect as well.

Mr. Kissinger stated that he sent 250 notices about trees to date in 2015 and that 78 have not complied. He stated that these 78 trees are hazardous and need to be removed/replaced or pruned. He noted the need to continue educating homeowners that street trees are their responsibility.

There was discussion about educating residents about tree issues.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested starting a Go Fund Me to accept donations that can be used to assist homeowners with the cost of maintaining street trees. Mr. Kissinger stated that the Shade Tree Commission has been discussing putting a portion of their budget aside for this purpose.

Mr. Slifko suggested that these funds be used to address street trees in certain zones of the City so that all City street trees are addressed within a number of years. Mr. Kissinger stated that if this approach is used, he would prefer addressing the zones on street sweeper routes first so that the trees remain elevated and are not damaged by the sweepers.

Mr. Slifko suggested that an adopt-a-tree year be dedicated to replacing ash trees.

Mr. Kissinger stated that as the ash trees are removed, placement of the new tree will be re-evaluated. He noted the need to keep the trees away from utilities, wires, intersections, street lights, etc. He stated that adopt-a-tree could be used to replace trees that have been removed.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted her hope that there would be no net loss of trees through this process.

Mr. Slifko stated that the mortality rate of City street trees is high and that replacement must be aggressive. He noted the need to devote additional funds to new plantings.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted the increases in property value, safety, quality of life, and reduction in utility bills associated with trees. She stated that they also help address the City's stormwater issues.

Ms. Hoag suggested a flyer in water bills to educate residents. She suggested that it be sent near Arbor Day/Earth Day.

Mr. Kissinger stated that Olivet is interested in adopting a portion of the trail near Northwest Elementary School. He stated that in order to make this happen, work needs to be done in the area and that there are issues with Norfolk Southern in the vicinity and at the crossing.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the City will be planting an orchard in Yarnell Park. He stated that irrigation is an issue at this location. He stated that the Housing Authority stated that they would assist with maintenance.

Mr. Denbowski arrived at this time.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested drip irrigation at Yarnell Park.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the plan is to plant the orchard in 2016 so that the trees begin growing that spring. Ms. Curran-Myers stated that drip irrigation is easy to install. Ms. Hoag stated that this will also assist with storm water issues in the Oakbrook area.

Mr. Kissinger stated that there are many locations where the wrong tree has been

planted in the wrong location. He stated that the City has a recommended tree list.

Mr. Slifko stated that the Shade Tree Commission does review new plans for development/redevelopment. Mr. Kissinger stated that the City Planner shares the plans with the Shade Tree Commission. He stated that there have been no complaints about suggestions made by the Shade Tree Commission. He stated that when plans are not needed, there is no City input.

The EAC thanked Mr. Kissinger for his great work.

Mr. Kissinger left the meeting at this time.

### **RECYCLING UPDATE**

Mr. Denbowski stated that his new title is Solid Waste Program Administrator. He stated that he reports directly to the Public Works Director. He stated that he was transferred to this position in September and then needed to be out on FMLA. He stated that he is now located in the Public Works building and that he is excited to be back. He stated that he will make a formal presentation at the December meeting after he has had time to get caught up.

Mr. Denbowski questioned if all received the recycling mailing. Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the mailing looks great. She expressed the belief that it is great that the information is provided in Spanish.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shafer questioned the status of the lawsuit. Mr. Denbowski stated that there has been no movement. He stated that there have been several delays and that the next date for possible action is in January 2016. He stated that the City's position is much better defined this time.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he has been elected to a two year term to the Board of Directors of PROP and is working with the National Mayor's association. He stated that this will provide additional resources and networking opportunities and a larger voice to Reading.

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that Council passed the Zero Waste resolution. She stated that her formal comments about the draft Comprehensive Plan included comment that solid waste issues should be included.

## **BUSHONG DAM PROJECT**

Ms. Hoag stated that two proposals have been received and are under review.

Mr. Molteni questioned the cost. Ms. Hoag explained that the proposals are reviewed on the merits of the project before the cost is revealed.

Mr. Molteni suggested that this be converted into a hydro-electric plant instead of being removed. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed but stated that this is not financially feasible at this time.

Ms. Hoag stated that a plant would also require City maintenance. She stated that the City land ownership is being reviewed in the area of the dam and that the survey is complete. She explained that this RFP also included projects at other dam locations.

Ms. Hoag stated that RAWA has been asked to address a dam along the Willow Creek which has brook trout designation but is in terrible condition. She stated that there are also source water protection issues with this dam and that further studies may be needed.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned if the dams were at critical locations on private property. She suggested that the EAC work with the landowner on riparian buffers. Ms. Hoag stated that this may apply at one location.

Ms. Hoag stated that the plan drafted by the intern for Bushong Mill is not available.

Ms. Hoag explained the dam overview that was performed. There was a discussion about dams and hydro power.

## **BCTV**

Mr. Beane sent a note that the next show would be taped on Monday, November 30. He, Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer, and Ms. Keppen will be speaking generally about rain gardens.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer stated that a January topic is needed. Ms. Hoag suggested discussing salt and other ice/snow contaminants. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed.

## **DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that formal comments were submitted. She stated that there will be no further action until the updated draft is received and reviewed.

### **STEEP SLOPE ORDINANCE**

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that the EAC must decide how to move forward. She suggested that it may be a land development issue and not a zoning issue. She stated that work also needs to be done on a map.

Ms. Hoag suggested that the issue be referred back to Committee. Ms. Curran-Myers agreed.

### **RAIN GARDEN PROJECT**

Ms. Hoag suggested adding a transportation alternative as a component to the project to access TAP grant funding. She stated that these grants are due by the beginning of January. She suggested adding bike lanes and using the area as a trail connector.

The EAC agreed with this approach.

Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer questioned if an RFP was necessary for the project. Ms. Hoag stated that it is necessary along with a concept plan.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Ms. Curran-Myers stated that she will be prepared to address this at the December meeting.

### **2016 MEETING SCHEDULE**

The EAC will continue to meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at noon at the Public Works building. There will be no meeting in June.

The summer schedule will be July, August and September and will take place at Pendora Park.

Ms. Katzenmoyer will supply a list of the 2016 meeting dates to members.

### **NEXT MEETING**

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by  
*Shelly Katzenmoyer, CMC*  
Deputy City Clerk