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**Environmental Advisory Council**  
**Tuesday, November 26, 2013**

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

EAC members present –D. Beane, P. Ignozzi-Shaffer, C. White, C. Curran-Myers

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Beane called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

**MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Ms. Curran-Myers, seconded by Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer, to approve the October 22, 2013 meeting summary as written. Motion carried unanimously.**

**2014 MEETING SCHEDULE**

The EAC set the 2014 meeting schedule so that the meeting advertisement can be placed. Meetings will be held the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of most months at noon in the Public Works building conference room. The meeting schedule is as follows:

- January 28
- February 25
- March 25
- April 22
- May 27 – no regular meeting. A tour of City-owned dams will be held.
- June 24 – Angelica Park
- July 29 – Albright Garden
- NO meeting in August
- September 23 – Egelman’s Park
- October 28
- November 25
- December 23

In the case of inclement weather, outdoor meetings will be held at the Public Works building conference room.

There will be no meeting in December 2013.

### **FLUORIDE**

**Ms. Ignozzi-Shaffer moved, seconded by Ms. White, to table this issue indefinitely. Motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Molteni arrived at this time.

### **RECYCLING PROGRAM**

Mr. Denbowski distributed copies of PA Act 101. He gave a background of the lawsuit and stated that the City has lost its request for a stay. He stated that the City plans to appeal the lawsuit and stated that it will take over a year to get through the process and will result in substantial legal fees.

Mr. Denbowski explained that the decision means that the City cannot assess a recycling fee. He stated that PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is assisting the City and they understand that Reading is classified as a distressed City.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Act 101 states that the City must recycle with curbside pick up and collect at least three materials at least once per month. He stated that the process to opt out of recycling is cumbersome.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the cost of the City's current recycling program is \$2.2 million annually as a weekly curbside pick up. He stated that DEP has complimented the City on its great program.

He stated that the City understands that they must continue the program but now must decide at what level it will continue. They must also closely monitor costs since the fee cannot be assessed.

Mr. Molteni questioned why the cost has risen to \$2.2 million. Mr. Denbowski stated that it is costs for trucks, fuel, employees, etc. He stated that the 2014 budget passed by Council includes \$1 million for the recycling program.

Ms. Hoag suggested that the City work with the County Solid Waste office for a bridge loan to finance the 2014 program. Mr. Denbowski stated that this has not been discussed.

Mr. Denbowski expressed his fear that if the program changes there will be negative effects on the City and its residents. He stated that the recycling program must mirror the trash program and that trash is removed weekly. He expressed the belief that if pick-ups are reduced residents won't wait for recycling pick up and will put recyclables in their trash. He also expressed the belief that the amount of litter will increase.

Mr. Molteni expressed the belief that those who currently recycle will continue and those who don't recycle won't care what changes are made.

Ms. Hoag questioned if drop-off locations would be feasible. Mr. Denbowski expressed the belief that drop-offs are not feasible and cited a few examples of what happens when dumpsters are placed around the City. He stated that drop-off locations would need to be monitored and secured.

Mr. Denbowski stated that currently the City receives \$40/ton for paper and \$5/ton for co-mingled materials. He stated that the negative ruling has stopped all progress that was made in recycling and there is confusion and a decrease in recycling.

Mr. Denbowski stated that City officials are advocating with State legislators but noted that this issue will not be on their agenda until spring 2014. He stated that the Professional Recyclers of PA is also assisting by creating a legal defense fund.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned the percentage the fee represents in the \$2.2 million cost. Mr. Denbowski stated that the fee covers 95% of the program.

Ms. Curran-Myers questioned the amount of recycling grant funding the City receives. Mr. Denbowski stated that the City received \$88,000 which is less than previous years because the new formula to calculate the grant has gone into effect. He stated that an additional \$85,000 is earned through marketing the recycling materials. He stated that the program costs include four trucks, 9 employees, employee benefits, fuel, etc.

Mr. Denbowski requested assistance from the EAC for ways to publicize future changes to the program and ways to keep people recycling. He stated that the City had a 40% recycling rate but that it will decrease with inconveniences.

Mr. Molteni expressed the belief that other more pressing issues are being dealt with by residents and stated that this will not be a priority.

Mr. Denbowski agreed and stated that the City estimates it loses \$100,000 per year from people who remove aluminum from curbside recycling buckets. He stated that the City's program was built on user fees and the additional funds were used for educational purposes.

Mr. Denbowski noted the need for advocates to approach State legislators and to make presentations to community groups. He noted the need to minimize this setback and get a positive message into the community.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested that the City prepare an amendment to Act 101 in case it does not win its appeal. She noted the need to have sponsors for the amendment and the need to know what other municipalities that have similar programs have done.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Reading is unique in that it does not have a single hauler system. He stated those municipalities that have a single hauler lump the two fees together and call it a solid waste fee which does not violate the ruling.

Ms. Curran-Myers suggested that the City move to a single hauler system now and blame the court case for any political fallout.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he will attend a future EAC meeting when the City knows what changes will be made to the program.

Ms. Hoag questioned if the City could get permission to collect the fee since it is financially distressed. Mr. Denbowski stated that PFM is closely monitoring the situation and that DEP knows the City is financially distressed. He noted the need for the City to balance the cost with the environmental impact.

Mr. Molteni noted the need to monitor private contractors to ensure they are not gouging the City. He expressed the belief that reasonable people will be agreeable to recycling every other week. He noted that tenants are not always as responsible as homeowners.

Mr. Beane stated that the EAC should not focus on the legal battle. He suggested that the EAC contact their State legislators to find a long term solution and focus on ways the City can modify its program and effectively communicate with residents.

Ms. Curran-Myers agreed and noted her willingness to assist with addressing State legislators and any lobby work as she was formerly employed at DEP.

Mr. Denbowski also suggested that the EAC guide and advise City Council through the process.

Ms. Hoag suggested that talking points be prepared and used by all to keep the message consistent.

Mr. Molteni agreed that the single hauler system would be best.

Mr. Beane suggested that the EAC identify forums which can be used for communication purposes including water bills, community meetings, BCTV programs, newspaper editorials and op eds, and a flyer which is sent home with all RSD students.

Other suggestions were to place messages on the billboard on the Penn St bridge, public service announcements (in English and Spanish) and a billboard campaign.

Ms. Curran-Myers noted the need for the City to have a consistent message.

Mr. Denbowski expressed the belief that the appellate judges may be affected by public opinion.

### **BCTV PROGRAM**

Mr. Beane suggested pre-taping the program for December. He stated that this program will feature Mr. Denbowski and will focus on the recycling program.

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council will be held on Tuesday, January 28 at noon at the Public Works building conference room.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by  
*Shelly Katzenmoyer*  
Deputy City Clerk