

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Committee

General Meeting

December 6, 2018

Attendees: Council Members: Lynn Rothman, Brian Hillard, Mike Topping, Kathy Fox, Elisabeth Cichonski, Beth Behrand (newly appointed EAC member). Also in attendance: City Councilman William Reynolds, Martha Christine from Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (BBFW), Jackie Cook, Amanda Allekotte, Katrina Prutzman, Ed Gallagher, Greg and Jane Cook (BBFW& Master Watershed Steward).

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM.

Approval of November Minutes: Motion to approve by Brian, seconded by Kathy. With the correction of the spelling of Beth Behrand's last name, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Citizen's comments: Mike Topping mentioned that the format for the meeting minutes in November differed from previous months' minutes. Mike would like to reformat the minutes, so they look like the others. Mike requested that Lynn send a word format copy for him to edit.

A new bill has been introduced in the house (Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act). This was a bipartisan bill that has the support of the Nature Conservancy, the Environmental Defense Fund and many other environmentally-conscious non-profits. Citizens Climate Lobby is hoping to gain some support (Bill 7173); citizens can write to Representative Susan Wild to show their support. Bill 7173 is a federal bill, and the dividends are distributed evenly across the country.

Chair's Comments & Amendments to agenda: None.

Board Comments and Announcements: Mike Topping announced that the Shadfish Association is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to high school students who can write an essay about Shad. The essay should be submitted to Mike Topping and the scholarship will be awarded at the banquet in January.

Committee Reports: Martha Christine said that BBFW has been active in applying for grants. They have already met with the Trexler fund to get money for the rose garden renovation in Lehigh County on the west side of Bethlehem. They did qualify for the Trexler Trust Grant and will be pursuing that. BBFW also met with State Representative Jeanne McNeill to discuss how to get funding from the state. Representative McNeill felt it would be more effective to get support from the city offices before pursuing state funding.

Mike Topping asked if the grants are still being written by the Planning Department. Councilman Reynolds said that public property is now with Mike Alkhal, Director of Public Works, and the Parks is now with the Bureau of Recreation.

Councilman Reynolds went on to mention that the sale of the casino to Wynn Creek may influence available funding. He mentioned that there were a bunch of capital projects that have been brought up at city council meetings, but mentioned that perhaps these projects can be covered by some of the proceeds from the sale.

Currently, the City gets tax money from the casino (roughly 11 million dollars in taxes). Mike questioned whether the casino might consider sponsoring some of the south side improvements and suggested it could be good PR for the casino.

External Committee Reports: None.

Correspondence: None.

Lynn Rothman asked who we could ask to keep us in the loop when large development plans are sent in for approval. In general, the EAC hears about the impacts of these developments when there are public complaints and it is too late to influence the outcome of these situations. Lynn volunteered to draft a letter.

Greg Cook brought up Act 167, which involves regulation on new construction, in particular with regard to stormwater runoff. Brian commented that he thinks that many regulations will influence how new developments think about stormwater in the future.

Greg Cook asked if the EACs were communicating to municipalities and EACs upstream of us to avoid flooding at Musikfest etc.

Unfinished Business- Climate Action Plan (CAP): Councilman Reynolds held a meeting of the Human Resources and Environmental Committee on Dec. 4. He mentioned \$30,000 is proposed in the budget for next year's Climate Action Planning. The City received their data from PPL on City-wide energy use. The City now has data from PPL, UGI and the LV Planning Commission.

Brian provided a breakdown that showed 1.2 million tons of carbon were emitted from the City of Bethlehem through their electricity consumption in 2017 alone.

Katrina Prutzman commented that there are regional calculators on the EPA's website that we could use to get a better estimation of the total tons of carbon emitted.

Councilman Reynolds commented that he was pleased that the utilities were providing data to help us with the development of the plan. He mentioned that if the utilities had not contributed this information, it would have taken away from the \$30K in the proposed budget for a CAP.

Councilman Reynolds mentioned that the money that the Bethlehem Authority is set to get for the pipeline easement is on hold because there have been some issues with the construction in NJ. There is a lot of benefit if some of that money is dedicated to the CAP.

Brian commented that there is also a wind turbine proposal in the same area. Penn Forest will have their hearing on Dec. 17th to make a decision.

Councilman Reynolds said the data collected helped us meet the Compact of Mayor's Agreement and may help set internal energy reduction goals. He commented that the Mayor believed it would be easier to set goals with the help of a third party.

Councilman Reynolds has mentioned at previous meetings that he believes that the position of Director of Recycling should shift into a position as Director of Sustainability. Martha asked how we can make it happen. He suggested that the Director of Recycling become highly involved once the request for proposal (RFP) is created for the CAP consultant. He also mentioned that this name change would be very symbolic in showing that Bethlehem is becoming a more progressive city.

Ed Gallagher mentioned that he recorded the Dec. 4th meeting and will post to the Gadfly.

Waste Reduction Task Force: Beth Behrend met with Tara Zrinski, Northampton County Council Woman, who is also attempting to pass a resolution on single-use plastic bags, including plastic straws. Beth also met with Missy Hartman (Manager, SouthSide Arts District) to get some input and information from businesses. On the 13th, Beth is meeting with the Downtown Business Association and hopes that by the next EAC meeting she has all the information she needs to create a proposal for a resolution and send it off to the City. Currently, Styrofoam is not presently being considered, but Beth (and Kathy) hope to include this, since styrofoam containers with grease cannot be recycled in the City of Bethlehem.

Councilwoman Zrinski mentioned that in another local city, there is a movement to use recycled Styrofoam for battery cases.

Lynn suggested we invite Mike Halbfoerster, Bethlehem City Director of Recycling, to attend one of our next meetings.

Community Energy Efficiency Initiative Task Force (CEEI): The task force has met twice so far since the last EAC meeting. Brian distributed copies of meeting minutes. The task force is currently targeting groups to reach out to and figuring out the best way to approach them. The CEEI Task Force would like to include a low-income component and connect with the Hispanic Center and has received guidance from Anna Smith, director of Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (a subsidiary of Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley).

The task force has been looking into PPL programs. Brian connected with individuals from PPL at a recent information session on Act 129 Rebates Programs for businesses and will do some further investigation. The information session identified 3 separate avenues businesses could take to obtain rebates for energy savings: the first was point of sale, where businesses could recognize savings when purchasing directly from authorized retailers; the second option allowed contractors (from a pre-approved list) to receive rebates for installation of new equipment; and the third option was a prescriptive rebates program for which customers must submit an application and receive rebates based on calculated or measured savings.

Brian plans to reach out to Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) to gauge their interest. He intends to speak with Mark Stein, Chief Facilities & Operations Officer, and Sean McKenna, Energy Manager, both from BASD. The Bethlehem Housing Authority, Lehigh

Housing, and Northside Bethlehem Community revitalization (Bethlehem 2027) are also on the list of organizations to be contacted to see if we can piggyback or otherwise support on their efforts.

Brian also wants to contact some healthcare facilities to see what strides they are taking to reduce their energy consumption. Councilman Reynolds wondered if the St. Luke's Facilities are mostly rented and that is why they have not been more proactive in energy efficiency. CM Reynolds also mentioned that he would like to also include this networking idea into the CAP because there are plenty of groups that are interested in these energy efficiency measures or have already taken strides to save energy.

Katrina suggested referencing the NYC carbon challenge, for which there is a template online which businesses are asked to fill out to submit their annual energy use. In NYC this is simply an emailed spreadsheet, but it may be helpful if we want to create something similar. Martha thinks there is a similar template for recycling in Bethlehem.

Martha mentioned to Brian that he should contact MANA (Mount Airy Neighborhood Association) if the CEEI wants to start reaching out to neighborhood associations.

Brian also revisited the idea of incorporating pollinator habitats around solar arrays. Brian suggested that Buchannan Elementary might be a good place to start.

Martha suggested that BBFW could help figure out the best way to eliminate the grass for this project. Currently there is grass which needs to be mowed every other week. Perhaps we could get a corporate sponsor. This is a great educational opportunity and could help develop more outdoor classroom space.

Lynn also suggested reaching out to Moravian Academy even though their solar array is not in Bethlehem City. Brian is also working towards getting the City to agree to install some EV charging stations. Willie mentioned that this is on Mike Alkhal's radar.

Ed is attending the Parking Authority meeting and suggested if Brian has anything that he would like Ed to bring up, Brian could share his ideas with Ed.

Regarding space for solar array, Kathy suggested that Edgeboro has some space available, and the school district should use this space for solar panels.

Some members questioned why solar panels were not installed at Nitschmann Middle School. Kathy mentioned that someone had explained to her that the Nitschmann Middle School is so energy efficient, that there was no great benefit to installing solar panels on the roof.

Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition: Kathy went to Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition meeting to share that we are attempting to build more EACs. Kathy will be presenting at the Lehigh Valley for All to present on this in hope that others would try to create EACs. Brian suggested we help other municipalities create EACs by creating an EAC Toolkit. Kathy found someone who would be interested in starting an EAC in Bethlehem Township. Brian and Mike agreed we would love to support Bethlehem Township in their efforts to develop an active EAC.

Nov. 14th Green Drinks Stormwater Forum: Last month, the Allentown EAC held a stormwater panel discussion. Both conservation districts, the DEP, and multiple EACs were in attendance. Brian suggested that it would be helpful to work with the watersheds to help pinpoint where the problem areas were. Geoff Reese reminded the forum that ultimately it was the municipalities' responsibility to handle MS4 compliance; However, Sharon Pletchan from the Northampton Conservation District appreciated the idea and will be working with Brian and others to see where the idea could go. Brian has contacted multiple groups and municipalities to get this idea going.

New Business- 2019: The PA Land Trust holds an annual EAC conference. In preparation for this conference, Brian has been working with others on their planning committee on discussion topics, including lantern flies, building other EACs, gaining community support, water quality, and more. Brian will keep us in the loop to let us know when the EAC Network Conference will be held. He believes sometime in April.

Kathy suggested that while she is presenting at the Lehigh Valley For All January meeting regarding the formation of EAC's, other topics could be mentioned as well, such as, the Energy Efficiency working group's energy efficiency initiative. She was also hoping to develop a handout sheet with actions individuals can take to improve their actions/energy use/etc.

Congratulation to Beth, Brian and Mike on her new appointment and their reappointments to the EAC.

Agenda for next meeting: Jack Gambino has been a great asset to the EAC over the years, but has not requested to be reappointed. The EAC thanks him for all his contributions over the years. Jack Gambino was the Vice-Chair so we elect a new Vice-Chair at the next meeting. Mike Topping will also be stepping down from his position as Secretary. We thank him for his contributions. The EAC will continue to meet on Thursdays, except in July because the first Thursday is July 4th, so the EAC will plan to meet on the second Thursday in July.

All supported City Council's decision to keep Lynn in place as Chair.

Meeting adjourned at 8:17.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elisabeth Cichonski