

Bethlehem EAC Meeting Minutes
October 4th, 2018

Attendees:

Lynn Rothman (EAC chair), Elisabeth Cichonski (EAC), Kathy Fox (EAC), Jack Gambino (EAC), Brian Hillard (EAC); William Reynolds (City Council); Amanda Allekotte, Jackie Cook, Ed Gallagher, Jessica Morris, Katrina Prutzman.

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

As first order of business, Lynn addresses minutes from previous meeting. Minutes were reviewed by several members prior to the meeting, and necessary edits were done. Brian motioned for approval of minutes, and Jack seconded. Minutes approved by all members.

Citizen's Comments

Ed Gallagher has started a blog titled the Bethlehem Gadfly. He started this as a way to interact with community and government. He recognized the need for a place for people to talk about issues. It is of his opinion that City Council meetings can be too formal, and not the best way for others to interact. Wanted to have a site for people to have "a healthy dialogue, public participation, and good conversation makes good community". Main thing is serious issues, including the parking fee being raised (30 posts already), the City's concern over AirBnB buying properties, and others. There is a concern that sometimes people find out about issues too late and do not get their say. He wants a place for all sides to talk about an issue; to do so he also wants more followers and traction. Already the President of the Bethlehem School Board, President of Moravian College, Mayor Donchez, and others have joined, and Mr. Gallagher would like many more of the "players" of Bethlehem to join as well. He welcomes discussion on issues pertinent to the EAC when the occasion arises. There is also a section for "fun stuff", including a place for photos and commentary.

Board Comments and Announcements

Jack reminded us that the speaker series at Muhlenberg College is continuing, with Dr. Atiq Rahman speaking next Wednesday. Dr. Rahman is a prominent climate scientist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient from Bangladesh and will be speaking on climate related matters. The speech is at 7pm on Wednesday, October 10th. Jack noted that Bangladesh has an advanced Climate Action Plan, and has been taking climate issues seriously.

Committee Reports

Martha Christine not present, cannot update on BBFW.

External Committee Reports

No council reports.

Waste Reduction

Beth Behrend was not able to make tonight's meeting but will continue researching ordinances aimed at waste reduction for the EAC's consideration subsequent recommendation to City Council. In accordance with EAC bylaws, Lynn made motion to create a Task Force, chaired by Beth Behrend, to study and make recommendations to the EAC regarding ordinances that limit or control the use of "single-use" plastic, such as bags and straws, and Styrofoam containers. Kathy seconded; all approved.

EAC Facebook Page

Elisabeth, who has been working on the EAC's Facebook page, expressed her appreciation for everyone's support. She mentioned how it would be great if we could have new content at least once a week. Keep posting!! Get more involvement from community. Will reach out to other groups – LV Sustainability Network, CCL, Sierra Club, etc. Will also post agendas, minutes, etc.

She also reminded us to share on our personal pages! This will facilitate more interest in both the content and the Facebook page itself.

Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition

Kathy had the opportunity to attend a Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition meeting. She affirmed that Bethlehem EAC will help in the creation of other EACs along the watershed. She was told to contact Nathan Pritchard, Watershed Specialist/Agricultural Technician for Northampton County Conversation District, who Kathy contacted.

All the municipalities in the Monocacy Creek Watershed were listed, including the City of Bethlehem, Hanover Township, Bethlehem Township, East Allen Township, Upper and Lower Nazareth, Borough of Nazareth, Bath, Chapman, Moore Township, and Bushkill Township.

Climate Action Plan

City Council member William Reynolds arrived to provide a Climate Action Plan update:

The City has hired new recycling coordinator, Mike Halbfoerster. In the first few weeks he will be focusing on the recycling program and will then look towards taking up some sustainability issues. He is very enthusiastic about the position, and will look to meet soon.

The EAC's welcome letter to Mike Halbfoerster was reviewed and approved (via email) and sent.

With recognition of the City's obligations under the Compact of Mayors, the City reached out to LVPC, UGI, and PPL for information, but has not yet gotten info from PPL.

Councilman Reynolds has had several conversations with the mayor to advocate for funding of climate action plan initiatives. In reviewing Philadelphia's Climate Action Plan, many of the goals and the timelines could be replicated in Bethlehem. He also noted that when a city has a dedicated department, and someone hired specifically for this role, much more can be achieved. Brian commented that with energy reduction measures other cities have taken, these initiatives end up paying for themselves. It was also noted how transparency and quantifying and displaying data can help residents understand the value of these city initiatives. Also mentioned were the opportunities for public conversations and how that could benefit public understanding and foster support.

Discussed renewables purchasing. Councilman Reynolds still thinks that we are getting at least, maybe more, than 50% from renewables. Having a sustainability coordinator to follow up on the City's bulk pricing will make the process easier.

It was also noted that all of the city's internal savings should be displayed on city website.

Brian commented that energy costs are still coming down.

Councilman Reynolds also commented we can still show up to city council meetings to address council on issues.

Community Energy Efficiency Initiative (CEEI)

Brian has begun forming framework for a CEEI; he has created an outline as a Google doc, researched various publications, and has initially reached out to the EAC for support in working on this. He will continue to reach out for others support. Wants to create task force for this. Will be focused on both residential, commercial, and non-profits, including low-income households. Already meeting with Chris Cassidy from CACLV in order to gain insight as to how to reach out to low-income households.

Brian made motion to start task force for the Community Energy Efficiency Initiative, Lynn seconded, and all approved.

Brian also noticed that the PA driving forward VW grants are open, and the City might be eligible to apply for EV DC fast chargers. He is currently reviewing the documentation and can review with city council, make recommendations. Kevin Lingston should be the contact.

Brian also attended another regional EAC meeting for Plainfield, Lower Mount Bethel, Upper Mount Bethel, Moore Township and Bushkill twps. that was hosted by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Many regional issues were discussed, including land preservation, water quality, recycling, and other issues.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hillard