

**Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council meeting
November 1st, 2018**

Meeting called to order 7:05pm

Attendees: Lynn Rothman, Brian Hillard, Elisabeth Cichonski, Jack Gambino, Kathy Fox; Beth Behrend, Jackie, Amanda, Ed Gallagher,

Approval of October minutes: Jack motioned to accept the minutes, Kathy seconded. All approved.

Plastic bag ordinance: Beth Behrend presented the Waste Reduction Task Force's work on her proposed plastic bag ordinance, which would ban or restrict plastic bags sold at the point-of-sale and a possibly place a fee on paper bags. Task force members include Jackie Cook and Amanda Allekott. Lynn questioned where the fees collected for purchase of single use paper bags for patrons that don't bring reusable bags would go; part of the fees would go to the City, and a portion would go back to retailer as incentive. Other cities started with low fees, realized it was not as effective, then increased the price. It was also asked if we should include restaurants. Ed Gallagher suggested reaching out to local retailers to get input and gain support. Brian suggested that getting feedback would also let us know where improvements could be made. The task force will contact the City to find out how best to connect with local businesses.

Brian suggested finding an article to post on Facebook to gain some interest.

Citizens comments: None.

Board comments: Kathy discussed the Stormwater Solutions presentation from Citizens' Climate Lobby. She mentioned that the main speaker from the Nature Conservancy was not able to attend. As a result, Geoff Reese from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) gave a lengthier presentation. Handed out Green infrastructure Guidelines from LVPC. He was asked what LVPC can do to get things to happen, but they're only advisory and cannot mandate anything. Kathy wondered how do we know what the city is doing with the suggestions made. 60+ people attended, considered it successful.

Brian added the Allentown EAC and LVPC would be holding their Stormwater Discussion Forum at the Lehigh Valley Sustainability Network's Green Drinks event on November 14th. He was assisting them in the effort, contacting various other officials to contribute to the discussion and will be taking minutes. He can update the EAC next month.

Jack Gambino mentioned that on Monday Nov. 5th at Muhlenberg College, Professor Mona Bhan will be presenting on environmental issues and how politics plays into that in India. She has done a lot of environmental work and should be interesting.

Committee reports: No reports.

City Council: No report.

Unfinished Business:

Climate Action Plan: There will be a meeting of the Human Resources and Environment Committee, chaired by Councilman J. William Reynolds, on Tuesday, December 4, 2018, 6:00

pm, at Town Hall (10 East Church Street, Bethlehem). The subject will be an update of the Climate Action Plan.

Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition: Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition - Next meeting to be held on 11/20/18 at Illick's Mill, 7:30 p.m. The Bethlehem EAC agreed to help the Coalition in their intention to establish EACs in towns within the Watershed that do not currently have any. We are seeking residents of specific towns to approach their supervisors or commissioners with a copy of the PA "The EAC Handbook", A Guide for PA's Environmental Advisory Councils. Kathy reported that she reached out to the Coalition and others outside Bethlehem for people to contact, but did not have much success. So far the contacts made are two of the commissioners from Bethlehem Township and a concerned citizen in Upper Nazareth.

Community Energy Efficiency Initiative Task Force: Brian updated the EAC on his Community Energy Efficiency Initiative (CEEI) Task Force. He, Elisabeth and Jackie will be meeting to start working on a foundation for the initiative. Brian expressed his optimism that it could have a real impact on reducing energy and emissions while benefitting the residents. He will update on the progress at the next EAC meeting.

Follow-up letters: The City of Bethlehem has committed to purchase 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources (as recommended in EAC's letter of July 10) beginning in 2019. It was decided that we would send a follow-up letter commending the City, as well as suggesting next steps, for example, we should strive to use renewable energy that is generated locally, rather than from third party suppliers.

Regarding locally generated energy, it was mentioned that Philadelphia will be installing a solar farm in Adams county which will power 20% of city buildings. Kathy suggested the city should look into getting their own system. Other regions, like New Jersey, have solar panels right on the telephone poles. Brian commented that as the price for solar panels continue to drop, the price could be more favorable. He also mentioned that there is likely land the city owns that is available for solar development, possibly by the wastewater treatment plant.

Lynn is going to send the EAC 2018 year-end report, once edited, to City Council and the Administration. She will also present the report orally at a City council meeting.

New Business: Brian also mentioned another idea for the Climate Action Plan: a Panels & Pollinators Initiative, aimed at having pollinator habitats installed with solar arrays. This has been done in more rural areas, complementing the environmental benefit of solar panels with native pollinator habitats. This could be done at any ground-based solar system. Bethlehem School District took advantage of the renewable energy tax rebates years back to install solar arrays on several schools' properties, including Buchanan Elementary. The EAC could initiate a project to turn the turf below that array into a pollinator habitat. This could have a variety of benefits, including educational opportunities with the school. He will investigate some of the costs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hillard