

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council

General Meeting

Meeting held at Town Hall, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA

April 5, 2018

Attendees: Council members: Lynn Rothman, John Brunner, Jack Gambino, Kathy Fox, Brian Hillard, and Mike Topping. Also in attendance: Councilman William Reynolds, Assistant City Clerk Robert Vidoni, Michael Alkhal (Director of Public Works), Matthew Dorner (Deputy Director/Chief Engineer, Public Works), Edward Boscola (Director of Water and Sewer Resources), Martha Christine (Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife), Elisabeth Cichonski, Katrina Prutzman, Joe Lule, Ed Gallagher, Jackie Cook, Karen Kapral, Stanley Kapral, Jessica Morris, Dan Sobrinski, Nancy Topping, Kristi Youst, Chris Bartleson, Peter Crownfield, Bill George, Amy True, Greg Zebrowski, Laurel Mikovits, Carol Obando-Derstine, Mark Stein, Lisa Ditalia, Erin Fox, Tori Fernández, Kasy Riordan, Brielle Paul, Paige McCloskay, Ilan Bley, Eli Jacobson, Marina Long, Tom Milcetic, Shana Rose, Tinku Khanwalkar, Caroline Weissstich.

Approval of March Minutes: Moved by Brian; seconded by Jack; approved.

Chair's Comments: Lynn noted that the EAC meets the first Thursday of every month. At the July 5th meeting, Stephen Repasch, Executive Director of Bethlehem Authority, will update the EAC on both the PennEast pipeline, which crosses some of the Bethlehem Authority property, and the proposed wind turbines on that property. At the August 2nd meeting, Kate Ebel, Senior Environmental Scientist and Kristie Fach, Director of Ecological Restoration, for Wildlands Conservancy will speak about the Monocacy Assessment and Management Plan, in addition to other projects.

Board Comments: John reminded everyone that May 5th will be Monocacy Park Day and that a number of activities are planned for the day. April 14th a March for Science event is planned for the City Center Plaza and the Bethlehem Food Co-op will hold an Earth Day festival and craft fare at the Sisters Retreat Center on the west side of the Monocacy Creek.

City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan and Climate Agreements: Councilman Reynolds thanked everyone for attending this meeting and gave a brief history of the City's efforts to create a Climate Action Plan. With the present administration in Washington, he, along with many others he talked to, recognized the need for a concerted effort to do something about global warming and the various activities, which contribute to it. Soon it became clear that a plan, including a structure whereby it could be modified according to changes in the environment, technology, various social activities and government regulations should be created for the City. Thus, this plan would be a living document, structured to adjust as the conditions and needs of the City change or become more focused.

In 2006, the Mayors of Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton signed a Climate Action Agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Bethlehem reduced their municipal operations emissions by over 20% within five years, but now the challenge is to reduce emissions city wide with everyone, including local industries, educational institutions, business, healthcare facilities and residents, involved in reducing emissions. Transportation policies, building codes, subdivision & development regulations and personal habits can all have an effect. The EAC has always taken a lead role in this effort, but much more can be done. The ultimate goal is have a sustainable city, which can act as a blueprint for other cities in their efforts to control and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Councilman Reynolds noted that there is broad based support for this goal in the city and stated that we all must become involved in order to see it happen.

Presentation of the City's Greenhouse Gas (ghg) Inventory: Director of Public Works, Mike Alkhal, presented information on the following topics for discussion: water and sewer operations, waste reduction & recycling, green building & infrastructure, transportation, open space and individual actions, as they can all have an effect on the amounts and kinds of energy

used. The City has installed LED street lights & traffic signals and is in the process of replacing windows and light switches as means to reduce our energy use. Efficiencies have been made to reduce the amount of water used, as well as upgrading certain treatment facility operations to reduce energy use. The wind turbines proposed for the Bethlehem Watershed will help to produce clean energy. The City has operated a robust recycling program for many years, which has reduced the need for landfill space. The City has used renewable energy sources and will continue to support energy efficient heating and transportation options, including mass transportation and the use of solar energy. The expansion of the Greenway thru the South Side and the use of shared bike lanes in our streets have promoted non motorized travel in the City. A well planned city can encourage walking, biking and mass transit to local community activities and thus reduce green house gas emissions. The City contains many open spaces and parks, which help to reduce our carbon footprint and provide opportunities for exercise and recreation. Mr. Alkhal presented a number of charts, which indicated baseline information on the City's internal gas emissions and costs from municipal operations. All sources were itemized, except the City vehicle fleet and the waste removal from the sewage treatment plant. The charts indicated a consistent downward trend for energy use and costs since 2005. By 2017, the City has achieved a 53% reduction in energy use. Although this information was not previously measured, now the City can also measure the emissions from the City vehicle fleet. The goal is to measure the entire city's use of gas, oil, propane, and gasoline on a yearly basis and see where and how to better utilize available efficiencies by those individuals and organizations in and outside of city hall.

EAC Board Comments: John Brunner reiterated his concern for the “greening” of the City, by promoting extensive planting projects throughout the City, especially in the South Side. This would help beautify and provide “carbon resiliency” for the City. Mike Topping noted that the City Zoning and Subdivision & Development Ordinances require landscaping as a part of the review process for all major development projects and stated that improvements could be made to these ordinances and their enforcement. Brian Hillard promoted the involvement of the various environmental organizations in the area to help bring about the “greening” of the City. Mike recommended that the City seriously consider green technology for city vehicles, especially for the use of all inspectors who primarily travel within the city limits. Kathy Fox recommended that Public Works use “green infrastructure” concepts in the design of streets and storm water control improvements.

Public Comments: Various questions were asked concerning the graphs used in Mr. Alkhal's presentation. Mr. Alkhal stated that the information for some of the years was unavailable and that some categories had changed over the years, so that proper comparisons were hard to make. However, the overall comparison from 2005 to 2017 was accurate. Collecting city wide data will be a challenge and will require the help of a consultant to help develop a plan for the use of the collected information.

Those in attendance took the opportunity to make supportive comments and useful suggestions. For example, the use of “bump outs” in streets and street closings in order to help meet MS4 requirements, as well as provide safety to pedestrians and help control traffic, was discussed with a reference to the standards developed successfully in Lancaster. Also discussed was the negative effect on air quality caused by motor vehicle emissions and the positive effect proper landscaping can have.

Lynn Rothman expressed appreciation on behalf of the EAC for those who attended this evening and encouraged all to attend future EAC meetings at Illick's Mill. Individuals are welcome to serve on committees of the EAC without being council members.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.