

**Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council
General Meeting
July 11th, 2019**

Attendees: EAC Members: Lynn Rothman (Chair), Mike Topping (Vice Chair), Elisabeth Cichonski (Secretary), Kathy Fox, Beth Behrend.

Tara Zrinski (Northampton County Councilwoman), Josie Miserendino, Elke Rockwell, Lauren Fosbenner (Lehigh University, Nurture Nature Center), Jackie Cook (Lehigh University).

Meeting called to order @ 7:08 PM

- 1) **Approval of minutes (June):** Elisabeth noted a few minor changes to the June minutes. Motion to approve the minutes with corrections made by Kathy, seconded by Mike. The minutes were approved unanimously.
- 2) **Place citizens' comments on agenda:** None.
- 3) **Chair's comments & amendments to agenda:** Lynn and Mike Topping attended a meeting hosted by the Northampton County Conservation District (NCCD) to provide an atmosphere for municipalities to coordinate their MS4 efforts. Dave Hopkins from Easton spoke about the implementation of their stormwater fee. The next meeting is Sept. 12 from 10-12 AM.
- 4) **Board comments and announcements:**
 - a) The City of Bethlehem Forester, Cindy Smith, has retired and the City is looking for a replacement.
 - b) In his capacity as a private citizen, Mike T. wrote a letter to Senator Toomey voicing his concern with the lack of forage fish, due to over-fishing by commercial fisheries. Forage fish are the prey or bait fish at the bottom of the food chain that feed all the other fish, and an impact to their population may have a devastating impact on large predatory fish and animals.
- 5) **Tara M. Zrinski, Northampton County Council: Single Use Plastic Crisis:** Single-use plastics have been in the news frequently. On July 5th, the State of Pennsylvania put a ban on single-use plastic bans which will not be lifted until July 2020. Relatively recently, China stopped accepting plastic from US single waste haulers, so our single waste haulers are now putting recyclables into single stream. The primary reason that plastic recyclables are being rejected is contamination from food remnants.

Tara presented some astonishing statistics on plastic use in the US and PA:

- 9% of all our plastic waste was recycled in the US in 2015
- The PA standard is to recycle 35% of our plastics but only 19% is recycled
- Plastic production is projected to jump more than 40% by 2028
- Of the 300 million tons of plastic waste produced each year, 8 million ends up in the ocean
- GHG emissions over the plastic life-cycle are projected to quadruple by 2050 from 2015 levels
- Less than 12 states have local governments restricting or regulating some form of plastic and only three states have passed statewide plastic bans.

Tara's presentation reminded us to make conscious consumer decisions and to avoid plastic whenever possible.

- 6) **Committee report**
 - a) **Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (BBFW):** No report.

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- b) **Waste Reduction Committee:** The Bill passed last Friday to ban single-use plastic bans. It was a Code Bill so it had to be signed to pass the budget. However, the duration was reduced from 24 months to 12 months. Chester County is resisting. The EAC discussed composting as another opportunity to reduce food waste.

7) External committee reports

- a) **City Council:** Mr. Kevin Livingston from the Bethlehem Parking Authority spoke about the Proposed Polk St. Garage. This was not a voting item and information is still forthcoming. 470 spaces are proposed with an additional 91 if the project is under budget. There will be room for expansion in the future for up to 750 spaces. EAC members agreed to write a letter recommending charging stations, sustainable design and solar panels.
- b) **Citizens Traffic Advisory Committee:** The bike share program is going well. The most popular location is the Bethlehem library, and the program is currently looking for another location on the Southside. The Walk/Roll LV movement kickoff event was June 12 at the intersection of Broad & New Streets. The Walk/Roll LV master plan is scheduled to be released by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) later this year. It is a blueprint for filling the gaps in the roads, trail and transit system to provide a seamless network connecting every community in the region. The Walk/Roll LV plan will look to change habits, with suggestions that include dedicated bike lanes, pedestrian safety improvements and ways to connect the region's disjointed trail network.
- c) **Planning:** No report.
- d) **Zoning:** No report.

- 8) **Correspondence:** Mary Jane Karabin of Bethlehem Area Public Library (BAPL) is coordinating a program on curbing and decreasing our dependence on plastics in Bethlehem & the Lehigh Valley, where they will show a movie followed by discussion. She is looking for someone from the City to speak on how we as a community can reduce and free our dependence on plastics. Councilwoman Van Wirt suggested the EAC speak at this event. Currently, Mary Jane is proposing a date of Sept. 10 or Sept. 23 from 6:30-7:30. Beth volunteered to speak on September 10.

- a) Beth said the Southside library is accepting donations of reusable bags for their homebound patrons to take books home.

9) Unfinished business:

- a) **Pennsylvania Pollinator Protection Plan (P4):** We still need to decide on a location for the pilot project of the four potential locations. We will follow-up on this at the next meeting.

10) New business:

- a) If anyone is interested in giving a two-minute talk of a historical aspect of Bethlehem that they are passionate about, the Bethlehem Gadfly is coordinating speakers to present these "Bethlehem Moments" at the beginning of each City Council meeting and would like to hear from you. For more information, contact Ed Gallagher at ejg1@lehigh.edu. Ed will assist with topics and research.

11) Agenda for next meeting:

Liberty High School students would like to put recycling bins on the DNL trail and have prepared a presentation for the EAC about this topic.

We will continue our discussion about P4 and discuss opportunities to tour nearby recycling facilities.

Meeting Adjourned @ 8:30 PM.