

Bethlehem Environmental Action Committee
General Meeting
June 6, 2019

Attendees: EAC Members: Lynn Rothman (Chair), Mike Topping (Vice Chair), Elisabeth Cichonski (Secretary), Brian Hillard, Beth Behrend, Brian Nicas.

Martha Christine (Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife [BBFW]), Julie Pineiro (Monocacy Creek Watershed Association [MCWA]), Jane Cook (MCWA & BBFW), Greg Cook (Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition), Ed Gallagher (Gadfly Blog), Brian Treston (Lutron), Karen Norvig Berry (Lehigh University), Ben Felzer, Ellie Rockwell, Josie Miserendino, Bill Schreirer.

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve minutes made by Mike Topping. Seconded by Beth Behrend. Motion approved. Elisabeth will send out approved minutes to everyone on list from last month.

Place Citizens comments on Agenda:

There will be a presentation of a Global Climate change feature called “great decisions”. Karen Norvig Berry would like to arrange an Introductory lecture on climate change at Kirkland in the middle of the day on October 16th, 2019. She asked what steps our EAC has taken to abate climate change and invited a member of our EAC to speak on this.

Chair’s comments & amendments to agenda: The Northampton County Conservation District has been hosting meetings to engage municipalities within the Saucon Creek watershed to coordinate their Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer Systems (MS4) efforts. They would like to expand the meeting to the Lehigh River watershed municipalities in Northampton County to work towards a county-wide MS4 Roundtable meeting. The next meeting is July 11th 10-12 at Northampton County Conservation District. Lynn and Mike will be attending.

Board comments and announcements: Mike Topping gave the update on shad release.

Presentation by Rachael Rosenfeld, Outreach coordinator for local Sierra Club on threats to clean water. She is working to build a grassroots community of advocates. The Delaware water basin supports about 5% of our public drinking water, and is impacted by water pollution, industrial development, and fracking pressure. There are many stresses on clean water—major ones are pollutants (agricultural, industrial, sewage), fracking, stormwater

Currently stormwater surges are more drastic than ever and exceed original capacity of the storm water system. Rachael suggested some solutions: Organize clean ups, attend water quality training, educate and advise municipalities to comply with MS4 requirements, plan and plant green stormwater infrastructure. We could organize riparian buffer plantings throughout the conservation district and invite our municipality to be a part of it so it will count towards their MS4 requirements.

To maintain MS4 permit as a town we need: Public education, public involvement, illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDDE), construction runoff control, post-construction management, pollution prevention and good housekeeping.

Most residents don’t realize that sanitary sewers and storm water sewers are separate. If any questionable activity is going on in this area, Mike T. recommended talking to the Conservation District or the City to make sure they are doing it legally, reiterating the “see something, say something” mentality of IDDE.

Mike suggested that the EAC may consider creating a newsletter or flyer to help spread awareness. Rachael closed her presentation by inviting those interested in joining Water Defenders, an organization aiming to: Build a grassroots community to engage local watersheds, develop and implement advocacy, organize monitoring and outing activities, cultivate, motivate, and activate new and existing volunteer leaders, defend clean water protections, spread the word about water issues in the watershed, and more. (Visit <https://act.sierraclub.org/actions/Pennsylvania?actionId=AR0118922&id=70131000001Lp1FAAS>) to sign up for newsletters). Water Defenders meet once a month on the 2nd Thursday of every month.

Presentation on the Pennsylvania Pollinator Protection Plan (P4) by Brian Nicas: P4 recommends best practices to protect local pollinators. Agriculture and our local economy are dependent on pollinators to help increase crop yield (75% of our flowering plants and crops are pollinator dependent). Beekeepers reported losses of 52% of their population in 2016-2017.

The goals of P4 are to: Plant, Protect, Partner, Promote. PennDOT's Adopt and Beautify Program is an expansion of the roadside clean-up program. A group can adopt and beautify open space beside a highway (presumably a state road) by filling out an application on PennDOT's website. PennDOT will provide materials for your team to develop the space into a habitat for local pollinators. Benefits to region include reduction in use of time and resources by city personnel to maintain and greenhouse gas emissions reduction from maintenance equipment. Bethlehem is already an official "Tree City", why could we not also become a "Bee City"?

To gain momentum for this program we would need to educate public to create pollinator gardens on their properties, potentially add this to the Climate Action Plan, and create a trial plot area. All present at the meeting agreed that the EAC should identify the next steps to put this plan into action at our July meeting and form a committee. Brian N. said that the state will help select species of plants. He suggested 412 and 378 as top contenders for the first test plot. The EAC will decide at the July meeting.

Committee Reports:

- a. **Waste Reduction Task Force:** No report.
- b. **Lehigh Valley Birdtown Coalition (LVBTC):** Purpose to promote healthy environment using birds as an indicator of their success. LVBTC is looking for someone to organize the Native Plant Sale at the Unitarian Church in the future since their coordinator is stepping down.

External committee reports: None.

Unfinished Business: Lynn presented solar ordinance on Tuesday to City Council. She suggested that one person from the EAC be at every City Council meeting to keep up to date on all issues. An email will be circulated to all EAC members to sign-up.

New Business: Tara Zrinski will be here next month to talk about renewable energy.

On June 15th at 9:30 AM, and June 26th 9:30 am at the Hoover Mason Trestle: BBFW will be holding maintenance/clean-up parties.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.