

Borough of Doylestown

Environmental Advisory Council

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, August 17, 2021

Attendance: Elaine McCarron and Carol Walsh (Newtown EAC), Heidi Shiver (Doylestown Township EAC), Karen Graziano, Karyn Hyland, Victoria Holderer, George Mullikin, Kristin Winters, Grant Alger, Steve Nelson, Wendy Margolis

1) Call to order: Victoria H. called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

2) Approval of minutes: George M. noted that the second sentence (regarding PVs) under the first bullet in the minutes from the last meeting should be removed, since the action mentioned was already completed. Steve N. moved to approve the minutes, Karen G. seconded, and the minutes were approved with the noted change.

3) Single Use Plastics (Victoria H.):

- Wendy M. reviewed the topic of single use plastics. The EAC had been working on a single use plastics regulations but had to stop due to the PA moratorium. The moratorium has been lifted so we can work on it again. Heidi S. provided us with a draft from Solebury to look at, which is helpful. The local municipalities seem to be getting together on their thinking. Philadelphia did a ban; their ordinance is only 2 pages long. Our draft ordinance is longer and possibly more complicated than it needs to be. We may want to remove some details and be realistic about what we can achieve.
- Heidi S. noted that when the PA legislature meets in September they may put forward legislation that would institute another ban on bans. A municipality that already has something on the books if this legislation is passed could be grandfathered in.
- Victoria H. noted that the scope of the reduction we're looking at is to limit plastic bag use. It might be better to remove straws from our current work to simplify it. We could consider simplifying our draft ordinance, perhaps using Philadelphia as an example. Karyn H. added our draft ordinance and other docs to the Google drive.
- The group agreed to pare down the ordinance to simplify it. Karyn H. said our solicitor has advised us to have consistency with other municipalities from an enforcement standpoint. Stores that are in multiple municipalities are more likely to comply if all have the same requirements. Our ordinance is almost identical to Narberth's, although they may have backed off of some of their requirements due to COVID. We will revise the ordinance but should look at other ordinances to make sure it is consistent. Philadelphia is a good example and there are other smaller municipalities that would be helpful such as Narberth and Lambertville. Ours is very different from Philadelphia's.
- Grant A. asked if the group agrees with dropping straws from the ordinance. The group agreed - we will focus on plastic bags.
- Elaine M. asked if we had discussed teaching the public about alternatives to plastic bags. Wendy M. described how we showed the movie *Bag It* and we talk about plastics at the Farmers Market; the public is aware. Elaine M. said she has looked into what's out there and what products businesses could purchase, and the group discussed that many businesses have reusable bags. Elaine M. asked about fruit/veg bags: have we educated businesses about

alternatives to these? Heidi S. said she was at a NJ business where plastic had been banned, and they offered paper. It is helpful to suggest to businesses to have reusable bags available for purchase so that customers will purchase them, instead of businesses having to buy paper bags (their cost has gone up). Elaine M. said some businesses are better at dealing with this than others. The group agreed this will be something to think about.

- Wendy M. said another option we discussed was that businesses could have multi-use plastic bags available for purchase (made of a heavier plastic). Paper is expensive right now. She noted that Whole Foods now refunds customers who bring their own bags.
- Victoria H. noted that our draft email to businesses and going door knocking and a letter could all be ways to reach businesses to provide education.
- The group discussed the structure of the ordinance – it includes purposes and other introductory info before the requirements. Karen G. asked if a subgroup should work on a draft that's more similar to the Philadelphia ordinance. Wendy M. did meet with Grant A. and Victoria H. to get them up to speed, but they were not a working group. We could take a look at the letter first in advance of an ordinance, since it's just recommendations. The local businesses have some awareness, but it would be helpful to get the info out there. Steve N. noted it would be good to discuss what the process would be to develop a letter or ordinance or both. Wendy M. said she's the liaison, and Council knows we're discussing this topic. The group discussed that having an implementation plan is helpful; we had one last time, although parts changed due to COVID. The County Theater event was our last item on the plan that was accomplished. Karen G. noted that it might be good to refer to the survey in the letter; the survey provided very positive data.
- Carol W. said she relocated here from CT. The towns there started working on this in a small way; by the end of June, the entire State of CT put a ban in place. Large cities are doing this. Large corporations as well as small businesses should be aware that this is in the works.
- Grant A. asked about the resolution (listed on the plan after the County Event) – this did take place, although it was around the same time as the PA moratorium. Grant A. noted our letter could also include that we have a resolution on the books.
- Victoria H. asked about the mission statement and website line (this has actually been done). Wendy M. noted we should probably remove the document from the website if we're going to be working on it.
- Victoria H. and Grant A. will start working on drafting an updated email. The group discussed if we should do another survey. If we are going to follow the same course, Wendy M. noted, we probably don't need another survey. Steve N. said a survey might be helpful to get the idea out there again. Kristin W. noted that a lot of places are switching away from plastic, so people might be thinking about it. Carol W. said a lot of coastal places (water driven) tend to work on this first, and it's spreading. George M. asked if we think we'll see resistance; we got a great result on the survey from the local community and we might have the support already that we need. Wendy M. noted that at the Farmers Market people ask about it a lot. Grant A. said the survey might only be helpful if we were looking to expand.
- A working group (Victoria H., Grant A., Karen G.) will look at the whole issue of single-use plastics, including all of the write-ups, timeline, resolution, letter, and scope. The group will also look at the Philadelphia info.
- Karyn H. will add the last survey (including questions) to the Google drive.

- Heidi S. asked if there is a way for us to collaborate; maybe we could share the Google drive to share resources among municipalities? The group decided it would be better to wait for more finalized documents to share them, rather than working docs.

4) Ready for 100 (Steve N.):

- Steve N. reported that Grant A., Karen G., and he have worked on a draft that is now on the Google drive. He summarized the doc for the group.
- The problem statements are first, including the risks and impacts of climate change and how utilities impact it. The document moves into actions – large scale down to Borough level – and outlines why we want the Borough to get involved and what good things we have already done. The documents also notes money savings. Steve N. outlined the goals (resolutions), including the first steps in an energy transition plan and calling on the State of PA to move toward sustainability in measurable ways.
- If we approve this doc it will go to Wendy M.'s committee first, then to Council.
- Wendy M. noted that an energy audit by next summer might not be realistic with the Borough moving into new building later this year.
- Karyn H. asked about the cost of an energy transition plan. Steve N. noted that there haven't been any energy transition plans completed locally as an example (the closest is West Chester). Some of the work can be completed by volunteers. Heidi S. noted that this could be something that local municipalities could get together on to share costs; there are other local municipalities that have passed resolutions. For instance, there is cost savings in numbers for solar.
- Elaine M. asked if we've moved to LED lighting; the Borough has. Newtown is looking at this right now. Karyn H. said the Borough did a study for the lighting throughout the Borough.
- The working group will include LED lighting in the resolution.
- George M. asked about the resolution; it is intent, but no money is spent until other actions are taken? Steve N. agreed – this is a moral but not a legal commitment.
- For the audit, Steve N. said that if Council passes the resolution, that establishes a commitment on their part. We could go to them and ask them to include items in the budget to start the audit and start the 2023 tasks, for example. George M. said we should focus on the intent; Wendy M. noted her group will ask about costs. Steve N. noted we could have this conversation with Wendy M.'s group through Wendy; often there is a cost for the audit, but then a savings with increased efficiency. The Borough actually had an audit within the last decade or so; LED lights were installed 8 years ago. Karyn H. noted it would make sense to look at this last audit.
- Karen G. said their group thought it made sense to have intermediate goals before the end date goals.
- The group agreed that it makes sense to push the audit to July 2023 instead of 2022 with the new building opening in October 2021. Wendy M. also noted that the Borough Comprehensive Plan will be taking priority; staff is stretched.
- If we push the audit to 2023, the transition plan could be pushed to 2024. Steve N. said that 6 months to do a transition plan is doable, but a year is more reasonable to get more community input and political support. The energy audit needs to happen, so July 2023 is probably reasonable for the audit and July 2024 is probably reasonable for the transition plan.
- Karyn H. asked about the contents of the transition plan. Steve N. noted that even if all dates aren't met, it's helpful to have them in there to provide direction.
- Steve N. and the group will change the dates on the resolution.

- Wendy M. asked if it would be better for this group to ask for an energy audit first, then do the resolution. Karen G. noted that other municipalities have done this. Heidi S. said that in Doylestown Township one of the EAC members took all of the energy bills and put them into a spreadsheet to estimate how much energy the Township uses each year. Before it goes to Wendy M.'s committee we should have the resolution along with some backing materials about what other municipalities have done. Karyn H. will pull up info from the last energy audit (Johnson Controls study) as background.
- Heidi S. and Steve N. summarized that West Rockhill has gone to solar energy in their municipality. In about 11 years of use, they're now selling the solar credits. It's now saving them significant amounts of money. They built a solar system.
- Karen G. noted that the group feels like their goal dates are fairly reasonable.
- George M. asked if this includes the most recent IPCC data; Steve N. said there is some info in there. George M. said it would be good to include the local impacts of climate change, such as flooding and increased costs of cooling. The DVRPC has some info; Steve N. said it's at least a few years old. This could be used as backup material (but not added to the resolution) and could help inform the part about how this would impact the Borough. We can add an intro with this info. Heidi S. said they did a white paper about this, and she'll share it with us.
- Karyn H. will pull the old audit. We may be able to change the language in our document to "update the audit" or something like that.
- Wendy M. suggested that the "Be it resolved" section be written as bullets for ease of reading; the group agreed.
- Grant A. noted that maybe we could just buy renewable energy through PECO/a third party; George M. noted that this might be cheaper than generating our own energy. This will work better for some parts of the resolution than others.
- The group discussed that this is aiming to make the Borough a leader, and some of this is intended for community-wide implementation, but some is not. Our focus may be encouragement, not enforcement. The working group will go back and rework the document.

5) Farmers Market (Victoria H.):

- Victoria H. reported that we are still struggling to keep a consistent schedule of representation at the Market.
- Kristin W. asked if we are telling people who drop off plastic bags where other community drop-offs are (like the supermarkets). The group discussed that we are, but there are still many people dropping off bags. Karen G. noted that people are still using a lot of plastic bags.
- Wendy M. noted it might make sense to be present on the 1st Saturday of the month or something like that (regular schedule) so people would know when we'll be there.
- Karen G. said it would be good to have some more topics to draw attention.
- George M. asked if we can ask members of the public to help man the booth. Karyn H. said it makes sense for just collecting bags, but we'd need the EAC there for EAC info.
- Heidi S. said an EAC is allowed to have associate members; they have some to help them with some things. George M. noted that we've had a lot of people provide emails; Kristin W. noted youth could also be helpful. We'll discuss this going forward.

6) Outreach & Communication (Grant A.):

- Grant A. continues to work on updates. He wants to update the Bird Town info.

- Grant A. will provide an update on the Farmers Market for this weekend.

7) Public Comment:

- Karen G. brought up pesticide use. She said people don't know all of the info about how to use vinegar; this might be a good opportunity for education. Heidi S. said that the Township is trying to change what they use to treat 75 miles of highway. They are also putting info together for distribution about pesticides. Wendy M. noted that the Borough Public Works doesn't use chemical pesticides. Heidi S. asked if an ordinance would be in order. Wendy M. said that Public Works has a good relationship with the community and there is nothing written right now.
- Wendy M. asked about the meadow on S. Chubb. The EAC looked at it a few years ago. Right now it is full of invasives. Kristin W. recommended mowing once per year. Wendy M. will talk to Dave in Public Works.
- Steve N. spoke to Commissioner Harvey about the County's solar plan. Right now solar is too expensive to be used to power all of the County buildings; it is not being actively pursued right now, but Steve N. will continue to look into this.
- Heidi S. discussed Bird Town and said that Bird Town is no longer being supported by Audubon Mid-Atlantic. There is a meeting this week to discuss the direction forward. Bird Town works with municipal leaders to get info out to residents. We used to have a member (Steve R.) who was our representative. They are creating a website that will have a lot of info on it. Grant A. can include info that is current in our Outreach. The new website is birdtownpa.org. There is one annual meeting each year. Kristin W. and Wendy M. will serve as point people for the EAC. Heidi S. will provide info to the point people. The meeting is this week; the EAC point people are not sure if they'll be able to attend, but Heidi S. will give them info from the meeting.
- Wendy M. said the Game Commission noted that die off (a recent bird issue) seems to have stopped. Karen G. will send Grant A. info about this. Heidi S. said there is also info about this on the Bird Town page that can be added; Grant A. will look at this.
- George M. asked if the group is aware of what PECO is doing re: appliance energy efficiency. There are many rebates available. It's not just good will; PECO is required by the State to reduce the energy demand from their customers, and they get penalized if they don't meet their goals. This is for all large utility companies in the state. George M. asked if we want to get this info out to customers. Some municipalities (West Chester, Narberth) advertise this to residents so they can take advantage of rebates and decrease energy use. The group agreed that it would be good to include info about ACT-129 (a State law, rather than a private co. decision) on the website so residents are aware of the opportunities.
- Victoria H. announced that she is moving out of the Borough and will no longer be our chair. The group thanked her for her service as chair.

8) Adjournment: Steve N. moved to adjourn the meeting, George M. seconded the movement, and the meeting was adjourned by common consent at 9:23 pm.

9) Next meeting: The next EAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 21st, 2021, at 7:30 pm.