

Environmental Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 20, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.

Present: Kristin Winters, Karen Graziano, Grant Alger, Patricia West, Steve Nelson, George Mullikin, Borough Manager John Davis, and Borough Zoning Officer Karyn Hyland
Mayor Noni West, Borough Council President Jack O'Brien, Wendy Margolis, Larry Browne, Amy Taylor Popkin, and James Lannon. Also, Faran Savitz of PennEnvironment.

Call to order: George Millikin called the meeting to order at 7:05pm

Welcome and Introductions: George introduced the EAC and explained the goals of the group. He explained that they are tasked with ways to make positive changes in the environment and community.

The **Minutes** of the August 16, 2022 meeting were approved as submitted.

Single Use Plastics Discussion. Faran Savitz, conservation associate and zero waste advocate of PennEnvironment, a nonprofit, reviewed the current single-use packaging concerns and explained the damage being done to our environment, infrastructure and health with the use of plastics. PennEnvironment has been working around the state on research as well as with municipalities to pass plastic bag/straw bans, with 12 municipalities passing bans in PA.

George reviewed the work the EAC has been doing up to this point, including research, community outreach, finding alternatives to plastic bags, and the generation of a draft ordinance. George also reviewed the survey results from 2019, with 80% overall response in favor of reducing plastics. The EAC's goal is to move shoppers and businesses away from single-use bags and toward reusable bags. Switching to paper bags is an option, however, they do bring challenges as well. With a modest charge for paper bag use, the hope is to nudge shoppers toward reusable bags.

Grant Alger reviewed the details of the proposed ordinance, including what businesses are included, bag material requirements, as well as the timing of when the ordinance would take effect, if passed.

Karyn Hyland explained the next steps, which includes gathering public comments, and then passing to the Environment and Recreation Committee to work further on the ordinance details. Once a final ordinance is agreed upon, it would go to Borough Council for final approval and advertisement, and then move to implementation.

Public Comment.

Jona Franklin, Lilies of the Field owner, spoke on the positive community of business owners in the Borough, but wished the Borough and EAC had come to them first to discuss this idea, because they also want good things for the community, without the need for an ordinance. She felt the bag fee puts business owners in a bad spot with customers.

Janelle Morgan, owner of Monkeys Uncle, agreed with Jona, and has no problem with not using plastic bags. She suggested putting the bag fee money into a collection for a local charity to make it a positive.

James Lamb, Evolution Candy owner, stated they have always used wooden spoons for ice cream, paper bags, etc., but the fee for bags feels wrong. He suggested starting this slowly, and maybe rewarding customers for bringing a reusable bag rather than charging for providing one. His customers are often children who arrive with exact change to purchase candy.

Kelly Unger and Alex Dadio of the Doylestown Farmers Market added some of the farmers have started using 'Bio Bags', which could possibly be added as an exception because they are biodegradable. They also asked how this ordinance would be enforced and asked who is responsible for doing so. Karyn noted the Borough would ask the Farmers Market to spread the word to vendors, but enforcement would fall to the Borough. Karyn would need more info on Bio Bags; Farin noted those bags are not easily compostable and are very similar to single-use bags, they incur a huge footprint to

create and they do not recommend exemptions for those.

Nicholas Weremijenko, owner of Nicholas and Alexandra Jewelers, asked what the Borough planned to do with fine money collected. Karyn reviewed the process of all enforcement, which starts as a conversation, moves to a letter with a set time limit for compliance, then a complaint is filed with the court if there is still no compliance at that point. The goal, as with all ordinances, is compliance without the need for court hearings or fines. All fine collections are added to the Borough's general fund.

Maryann Davies, Doylestown Township resident, felt the ordinance is heavy handed and suggested volunteer programs be encouraged first. Also, she remembered the use of cloth bags were not suggested due to the Covid pandemic and is worried about the safety of their use. Large grocers need to be considered; Maryann asked if previous outreach included them. Karyn noted there was a lot of outreach at the beginning of the pandemic, and at the time, the outreach included mostly restaurants in town, and all were invited to discuss their opinions. Only three participants attended at that time. The EAC then did visit many businesses in town to ask for feedback, and had many door to door conversations, but not a lot of input in return at that time. Maryann suggested doing a survey again.

Resident Richard Tems noted that thermal plastics are recyclable and he is strongly opposed to enforcing this ordinance.

Peter Cox, Doylestown Township resident, noted dog waste bags are biodegradable and should be an option. He is concerned businesses will leave the Borough. He suggested charging for plastic bags and also suggested a second survey in addition to encouraging more recycling. Karyn noted there was a weekly bag collection at the Farmers Market previously for several years.

Kristine Longshore, Borough resident and Township business owner, explained small items such as contacts need a bag and reusable bags carry germs. She suggested focusing on litter instead.

Jim McGowan, Buckingham Township resident, expressed his desire for this to be a County-wide ordinance. Faran noted it would be ideal but it gets difficult to pass on a larger scale at this point. It is a regional effort currently, but it is expanding.

James Frasier, owner of Cyborg One, is against the paper bag fee although he fully agrees that less plastics is better. He doesn't feel the small businesses are where to start with this plan, as their use is minimal. Regarding the requirement of a '40% Recycled' stamp on the paper bags, he isn't sure all bags have that stamp and asked if that could be proven in other ways. Karyn and John Davis both explained that information from the supplier would be sufficient. James feels all will comply willingly, but the ordinance seems heavy handed.

Another resident suggested this issue has been coming for a long time and individuals should be more responsible to do the right thing without being forced to do so. This should have been done electively, and is all for using reusable bags.

Elaine McCarron, Newtown Township EAC member, spoke regarding Newtown's desire to work with several grocers in Newtown, although it has not happened willingly at this point. She noted health will be affected with continued use of single-use plastics and attended this meeting to gain more insight; she thanked the community for their input.

Terese DeLuca, owner of Bella's Boutique, is worried for fellow retailers, as they have had a rough time since the pandemic and are just beginning to bounce back. Doylestown needs to encourage businesses and suggested a printed, reusable 'Doylestown' bag of some sort to encourage shopping in town as well as reusable bags.

Resident Steve McConnell did research on micro-plastics and doesn't agree that it comes from plastic bags. Faran noted he did research as well, and the plastic bags are just one part of the bigger picture.

Fabby Doo owner Robin Brackbill has a hard time with the bag charge. Small items provided at a party or art class, such as in her business, need a small bag to contain them. Faran noted those little recycled bags may be considered exempted, such as produce bags etc. The ordinance is to cover check out bags.

Scott Sollazzo, owner of Smith & Scott Boutique explained a shopping bag is part of the shopping experience. Bags are ordered in bulk in advance, and would like the current inventory grandfathered in. With supply chain issues, shipments can take a long time, and merchants may have a large supply.

Lee Rutherford/Rutherford's Camera Shop spoke regarding the years' worth of plastic bags he currently has on hand and brought a sample. Karyn noted they seem thick enough to be not considered single-use. Faran suggested in other towns, businesses can apply for a waiver for exemption because the inventory was already on hand.

Glenda Childs, of The Doylestown Bookshop, is in favor of plastic bag bans, but feels the bag fee is punitive. Doylestown has done a great job of promoting small business but would like to put off the fee a bit to give people the opportunity to forgo them willingly.

Nerice Kendter of Busy Bee Toys has always used paper bags, printed with their logo, and purchases them once a year. She does not want to charge her customers for them, as her bags are often used as gift wrap. Gift wrapping is a service she provides for her customers and it is not something she wishes to charge for. She is waiting for confirmation from her paper bag distributor of the recycled content.

Resident Jamie Wood brought her school-age daughter to the meeting, as she is interested in the environment. They love shopping in the Borough and supporting local business.

Resident Jane Rollo is not offended to pay a small fee for a bag and feels most would be more than happy to pay it.

Patty White, resident and owner of the Paper Unicorn uses several different types and sizes of bags. She doesn't feel her customers want to pay 15 cents for a bag and does not want to charge. Her concern is customers will go elsewhere.

George Mullikin thanked the community for their helpful participation. There will be upcoming social media posts, D-Mails, etc., regarding the issue. John Davis reminded all to sign up for the updates as well.

Adjourned: 8:55 p.m.