

Borough of Doylestown

Environmental Advisory Council

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Attendance: Mike Moscherosch, Karyn Hyland, George Mullikin, Kristin Winters, Steve Rubenstein, David Kapturowski, Wendy Margolis, Joe Frederick, Mayor Ron Strouse, Kris Boger

1) Call to Order: Mike M. called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

2) Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the last meeting were approved as written.

3) New Business:

Green Business Practices

- Mike M. noted that there are life cycles for all of the items we are choosing to address. Life cycles track the environmental impact of that product – in other words, what the difference is in the world with or without the product. These life cycle assessments may not be helpful by themselves for our goal to reduce plastic bag use; some assessments show that plastic is better to use than paper because plastic so lightweight. However, we are also looking at other variables, like plastic bags being an issue with recycling.
- The life cycle for straws paints a different picture. Since we would be replacing the straws with nothing, the environmental benefit is more evident, even if we still need to use some straws. There is a lot of imagery (e.g. the harm straws cause to sea turtles) that can be helpful to “sell” our message to the community.
- As for the styrofoam life cycle, styrofoam is also lightweight, so the life cycle assessment also doesn’t include as many issues as we might expect.
- Wendy M. and George M. noted that it will be important to emphasize the benefits of reducing the overall use of these products, rather than just substituting one product for another.
- David K. spoke to some supermarkets in the borough. Some have concerns with competition from markets just outside the borough if they put something in place like a charge for plastic bags. Some like McCaffrey’s are already using post-consumer products or compostable/ biodegradable products. These products cost about twice as much as less sustainable products. McCaffrey’s also gives a percentage back to the consumer for using reusable bags (a benefit rather than a penalty). Wendy M. noted that we should emphasize using reusable products, like reusable produce bags.
- Wendy M. reported that a meeting is being set up with Narberth, which anyone in the EAC would be welcome to attend. Their program seems to be effective.
- The group discussed that cutting down use should probably be our first approach; pushing recycling of some of these products should perhaps wait since there are issues with recycling. David K. noted that the supermarkets’ concern about having a level playing field suggests one direction could be to encourage markets to use recycleable materials. The group agreed that while our overall goal should be to use less, we should address recycling too – they complement each other.
- The group discussed that a fee might be more effective than a ban, but charging a fee to retailers might not be possible. If consumers are charged for plastic bags, the retailer makes

some money, but this brings up the competition issue previously discussed. The Narberth program has retailers charge for bags.

- It would be beneficial to do an education program for the community before we institute anything. We should also talk to other local municipalities to see what they are doing. While we are phasing it in we can do our education, although many in the group felt that education should be done first before a program or ordinance is put into place. A survey could be a very useful part of the education process; the borough has used surveys in the past with good results. Wendy M. noted that we should have a plan for what we want to do before we do education or a survey. Education must be included with the survey. If, with education, the survey response is negative, then we need to change our approach. We can look at the borough surveys for models. One issue with surveys could be that the sample of respondents is self-selected (people who are not interested in the program might not respond). Mayor Strouse suggested that part of our education process should be a marketing plan. There are multiple venues for marketing like D-mail and the newsletter. Kris B. noted it might be important to put out multiple surveys along with education over the course of a year to gain the information we need.
- Joe F. suggested we give the public a year to respond to the program before it goes permanently into effect. The program could be voted on at the end of the year, and if there is overwhelming disagreement it wouldn't pass anyway.
- We could approach some corporations in town to see how they could help us. Do stores like Acme, CVS, and Staples offer some sort of program in other towns that they'd be willing to offer here?
- Another area to address is the arts festival, the farmers market, and other types of events that are using single use plastic bags; what is happening in these venues?
- Karyn H. and Wendy M. will let everyone know when the Narberth meeting will be. We should continue to research what other towns are doing. Lambertville is in NJ and has a different legal structure, but it is still worth looking at. There is nothing else in PA besides Narberth. We need to find out from them if they have chains they've worked with.
- Karyn H. suggested we could have plastic bag recycling bins around town. There is a Trex program for this – they make benches from the bags. It's better to reduce plastic bag use, but at least this is recycling.
- Mike M. proposed that we focus first on Narberth, then we start breaking down exactly what we want to do. After that we can start putting together education and surveys.
- Steve R. noted that plastic bottles are a big issue. They are recycleable, but it would still be beneficial to the environment to reduce their use. Plastic bottles could be one of the next things to focus on after we look at these other items.

4) Adjournment: George M. moved to adjourn the meeting, and David K. seconded that motion. The meeting was adjourned by common consent at 8:54 pm.

5) Next Meeting: The next EAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2019 at 7:30 pm in the Doylestown Borough Hall.