

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

**August 23, 2023, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room**

**1. Roll call**

- a. Present: Marc Singley, Karen Adams, Zane Rice, and Secretary Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Bill Hartin and Michael Brett.
- c. Members of the public: John Marks, Ken Starace, Rob Reese, and Tom Dittmar.
- d. The meeting was called to order at 6:37PM.

**2. Approval of meeting minutes from July 26, 2023**

- a. Adams made a motion to approve the minutes and Rice seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

**3. Old Business**

**a. Earth Day (outreach and program planning)**

- i. Singley discussed that members gathered ideas for programming at the last meeting and now they need to make decisions on what programs they want to pursue and start scheduling. Members also confirmed that April 20, 2024, was the agreed upon date for the event. Singley also noted that there are only two committee meetings before the end of the year, and they should have a draft in place before the end of the year. Adams and Singley discussed having a finished draft for programs in October, then use the next few months to coordinate with others and schedule events.
- ii. Singley, Adams and Strasko reviewed the list of topics that were generated: bees, cleanup, storm drain labeling, and waste reduction. Committee members and Strasko also discussed solar education as a program, and where the committee was in the process previously for solar education at last year's event. Singley and members of the public discussed utility companies educating on solar, having a neutral conversation about the technology, and Penn State programs that could be utilized.
- iii. Adams and Singley discussed what the deciding factors will be for putting together the event program, considering public input first and foremost, developing a survey for public input, and that there will not be enough time for the survey to be used for Earth Day programming this year. Members also discussed building on last year's programs, priorities for committee members and the Board of Supervisors, such as waste reduction.
- iv. Committee members also discussed with members of the public, utilizing, and educating residents on other forms of renewable energy, such as wind and electric-powered or battery-powered equipment. Strasko stated that she did research into an electric vehicle grant for fleet vehicles for the Township but needed an engineer's help to complete the grant.

- v. Members of the public and committee members discussed with Strasko utilizing data for Earth Day education from the Local Climate Action Plan (LCAP) program. Strasko discussed the student Palmer Township was assigned.
- vi. Committee members discussed other topics that they are interested in for an Earth Day program. Adams asked if they were deciding on programs now and Singley and Rice agreed.
- vii. Rice discussed his idea for partnering with the company Beyond Meat that analyzes how the meat industry affects the environment. Rice also described that they provide food and partner with a company that offers compostable utensils and plates for events. Adams and Rice discussed how they could be involved with the ESC's Earth Day event, including education, tie in with other topics, and getting a larger turnout by offering food. Rice described an event he attended where Beyond Meat was working and stated he had already reached out to them to see if they were interested.
- viii. Adams discussed waste reduction as a topic, and how to work with Waste Management to make it interesting for residents.
- ix. Members of the public also discussed the Township using compostable cups and utensils at Palmer Days in the future, the cost and true cost of plastics, food waste, composting, environmentally friendly Township practices, having a food waste demonstration, nuisance weed ordinances needing updating, topics for the ESC education program, and how can homeowners reduce mowing and plant natives.
- x. Singley summarized by stating that Adams would work on the waste reduction topic, Rice would work with Beyond Meat, Hartin would most likely work with bees, and Singley would work with Strasko on Township specific topics, such as any projects the Township is working on that should be highlighted.
- xi. Committee members and members of the public also discussed incentivizing residents to attend, kid friendly activities, advertising the event, offering bike repair with local repair shops, and planning logistics such as location and timing. Singley stated the committee will plan event logistics in September.

**b. E-cycle event**

- i. Singley stated the committee was still set for September 23 and that Strasko met with Clean Earth on site for a walk through of the area, and that Clean Earth has the clearance from the school to set up trailers the night before the event. Singley discussed with Dittmar that they are not limiting attendees by checking drivers' licenses and that the event was advertised in the Palmer quarterly newsletter and posted on social media. Dittmar and Strasko discussed trailer placement, other events at the school, and traffic flow for the event. Strasko discussed that Clean Earth

will have a weigh station set up to keep the line moving for those that do not have weighted items such as batteries or lightbulbs.

- ii. Adams asked if there will be enough volunteers for the event. Strasko discussed committee members that will be present, Bill Ruch stated at the previous meeting he will still volunteer and work on bringing some Planning Commission members if possible, and the group discussed how many Earth Stewards would be present for traffic control. Starace stated that a few more would be present, and Dittmar agreed to bring his e-cycle signs.
- iii. Members of the public and committee members discussed including other municipalities, cost sharing, and logistics planning for next year.
- iv. Singley and Strasko discussed supplies for the event and Strasko stated she was scheduling a meeting with Public Works, Police, and the Fire Commissioner. Strasko also stated that Ruch gave her safety vests from last year that she will bring to hand out to anyone that needs one.
- v. Rob Reese asked what time volunteers should get to the high school on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the committee agreed on 7:30AM or 8AM.
- vi. Strasko stated that she wanted to discuss signage for e-cycle stating who to make checks out to and to have them ready. Starace suggested having a two-way radio to communicate resident questions to staff at the collection point of the line. Strasko stated she would discuss with the Police Chief to see if they had any radios they could use for the event.
- vii. Strasko also stated that if Clean Earth does not bring signs for who to make checks out to, she will have two signs made for the line reminding attendees to have checks ready.

**c. Storm drain labeling**

- i. Singley asked Strasko about opening storm drain labeling to volunteers. Strasko stated that at the last meeting, Ruch explained that he listed the storm drain labeling volunteer opportunity with the School District and she was waiting for phone calls from interested students. Singley, Adams and Strasko discussed getting high schoolers interested and involved, and planning a more organized volunteer effort in the spring when conditions for labeling were ideal.
- ii. Strasko discussed keeping the agenda item on till the spring when there would be more time to plan a volunteer effort and outreach.

**d. ESC Education/Information/Newsletter Topics**

- 1. Singley asked if the committee wanted to discuss the Penn State student that was assigned with the LCAP program. Strasko described the meeting that she had with the student Sean Nichols, gave a bit of background about him such as he is in the school of Earth and Mineral Sciences and his major is in Energy, Sustainability and Policy. Strasko also stated that the meeting was

a brief introduction and an overview of how the semester will go for the LCAP, and establishing a meeting schedule with Nichols.

2. Strasko asked how the committee wanted her to handle communication with Nichols and Singley stated that he would participate in their meetings.
3. Strasko and committee members discussed the outline of the program for the semester, where data will come from, and regular updates on the program.

## **ii. Survey**

1. Singley stated the purpose of the survey is to get a baseline of resident ideas and concerns surrounding environmental issues. Adams asked if Hartin stated he would outline survey questions at the last meeting, and Strasko confirmed.
2. Singley stated that he found surveys from other organizations and Townships that he thought would be a good starting point. Adams discussed what platform would be used and who would manage it. Singley discussed survey monkey, Adams discussed sending it directly to resident emails, and Strasko discussed the service the Township uses called Nixel that residents can sign up for to receive Township notices using a phone number or email address.
3. Adams asked about using utility emails for communication. Singley discussed starting with Nixel and posting the survey on social media with the headline win a free lawnmower or free raffle entry to incentivize people to participate.
4. Adams also asked if the committee would be happy with a sample of residents, and Strasko discussed having the survey ready for the e-cycle event, using a QR code and other ideas of how to reach more residents. Adams, Singley, and Strasko discussed the management of the survey, timing of the survey, questions to include, and who will be drafting questions. Singley stated he would discuss with Hartin and develop some draft questions, but it would most likely not be ready for the e-cycle event.
5. Members of the public suggested putting the survey in the Palmer newsletter and the timing required to meet the newsletter deadline.

## **iii. Trash/Recycling/Waste**

1. Rob Reese asked when information would be shared for recyclables collected per capita in the Township and discussed tonnages compared to Pennsylvania residents and educating and incentivizing people to change their attitude about trash and recycling. Singley asked if that information was available and Strasko stated that she would talk to the Trash and Recycling Coordinator. Dittmar discussed with committee members what

should be included in the monthly reports from Waste Management and Total Recycle.

#### **4. New Business**

##### **a. Reorganization**

- i.** Singley stated that the committee needed a Vice Chairman.
- ii.** Adams stated that she would be willing to volunteer for Vice Chair. Singley asked for a motion to appoint Adams as Vice Chair. Rice made the motion, and Singley seconded.
- iii.** Adams asked about an update on new members. Singley stated there has been at least one interview, and Strasko clarified that the resident Tony Rose who attended meetings recently would be interviewed prior to the Board of Supervisor's (BoS) meeting the following week. Strasko stated she has not heard about other interested members, but she had information available at Palmer Days for residents to read about the committee vacancies. Strasko also stated that there were some new residents looking to get involved with the Township and she shared the vacancies with them but has not received any updates.

##### **b. Roles and Responsibilities**

- i.** Adams stated that Strasko sent them out, and they looked alright to her and if the committee wanted to approve it.
- ii.** Rice made a motion to approve the Roles and Responsibilities, and Adams seconded. Singley stated that the Roles and Responsibilities were adopted as drafted.

##### **c. Plastic Bag Ban Study**

- i.** Singley shared that the Township is interested in possibly enacting a plastic bag ban and the committee was asked to do research and provide information on cost and enforcement of a plastic bag ban. Singley also stated that he shared some resources with the committee from an organization that has worked with multiple municipalities to enact a plastic bag ban and did more research into the process other Townships have followed.
- ii.** Singley asked if the committee would need to put together a presentation and Strasko confirmed and stated perhaps an outline of the process would be helpful. Strasko also shared that one of the main concerns is the cost of enforcement such as would the Township need more staff to enforce a plastic bag ban ordinance.
- iii.** Members of the public asked clarifying questions about the type of plastic bags. Strasko stated that she understood it as single-use plastic bags.
- iv.** Adams asked if there was any background information, and listed other areas and states that have plastic bag bans. Strasko stated the initiative came from one of the Supervisors. Members of the public discussed how styrofoam causes a larger problem than plastic bags, equipment to handle waste, repurposing plastic bags as other materials, manufacturers that

accept plastic bags for recycling, collecting plastic bags, and partnering with companies that already recycle plastic bags into other materials.

- v. Adams, Singley, and Strasko discussed the options, where to start, what direction the committee should go in, and what to include in the presentation to the BoS. Adams and Singley stated that they would research topics for the plastic bag ban, logistics for it and other options of plastics or other waste to ban in the Township.
- vi. Members of the public discussed other waste they have picked up on the roadside that they have observed in bulk firsthand such as straws, to-go containers, and soda cans. Adams asked for any data that the members of the public could provide related to volumes and amount of waste collected.

**d. Palmer Days 2024**

- i. Singley stated this item was on the agenda for the committee to plan and discuss having their own booth at Palmer Days next year. Strasko discussed that she will be helping to plan Palmer Days next year and will learn the process of reserving booth space and scheduling events for the weekend. Singley discussed needing people to man the booth and how to get residents interested.
- ii. Members of the public discussed committee involvement with Palmer Days in the past and how to engage residents.
- iii. Strasko discussed meeting someone who does demonstrations on environmentally friendly toys and human powered vehicles as alternatives for battery-powered and toxic plastic toys.
- iv. Strasko stated that she would discuss with coworkers on how to reserve a booth space and what that entitles, and Singley stated the committee will work from there and keep this as an agenda item.

**5. Reports**

**a. Board of Supervisors**

- i. Brett was not present to give a BoS report. Strasko stated that she had not heard any updates other than the plastic bag ban study.

**b. MS4**

- i. Singley asked if there were any updates on MS4.
- ii. Strasko stated she shared MS4 information at Palmer Days, that morning she gave a presentation to the Kiwanis club, everyone should have gotten a flyer in the mail about the stormwater utility fee, and she is still finalizing the annual report that is due September 30.
- iii. John Marks discussed the watershed seminar that he and Strasko attended including landscaping with native plants and asked about the credit policy for the utility fee. Strasko stated that the process was not finalized, but any credit applications would likely come through her office, and she would be working with HRG and inspecting best management practices installed by homeowners for credits to their fee.

- iv. John Marks asked if there were any updates on the recycling center, and Strasko stated that the Township still had not received documents from Pidcock for Carroll Engineering to update and continue construction. Marks described houses in Bethlehem Township that vegetated a swale between their homes for credit on their stormwater utility fee. Singley discussed educating residents on what they can do and updating weed ordinances in the Township.
- v. Strasko and members of the public discussed implementing an adopt a storm drain program in the Township.

**6. Public Comment**

- a. There were no comments from the public.

**7. For the Good of the Order**

**8. Next meeting: September 27, 2023**

**9. Adjournment**

- a. Rice made a motion to adjourn, and Adams seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:42PM.