

Palmer Township

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2022, 6:30PM at Palmer Township Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

- a. The meeting was called to order at 6:33PM.
- b. Present: Bill Ruch, Bill Hartin, Ginny Sciorra, Tom Dittmar, Paige Strasko, and Joseph Armato. Zane Rice and Rob Reese attended from the public.
- c. Absent: Tom Grube and Diane Halasz

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 27, 2022

- a. There was a motion for approval from Tom Dittmar. The motion was seconded by Bill Hartin. The motion was passed with a unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Updated Bylaws

- i. Ruch discussed that the committee needed to start going over bylaws to prepare them for submission to Armato and Township Manager Bob Williams. He stated that since committee members Halasz and Grube were not present the committee should not start reviewing bylaws yet. Sciorra noted that Halasz did a large portion of the work on the new bylaws.
- ii. Strasko told the committee about comments from assistant township manager Brenda DeGerolamo for accuracy. The items included changing article 4 under membership to make it clear that Board of Supervisors (BoS) members appoint and confirm committee members. Hartin asked if the ESC can make recommendations on members and Armato explained interested individuals would come to BoS and himself and Jeff Young would interview potential committee members before appointing them to that committee. Strasko also mentioned under article 5 points 2 and 3 for holiday conflicts the bylaws stated there would be 2 weeks' notice for meeting date changes, but the Sunshine Act only requires 24-hour notice. Strasko also stated under Article 5 point 6 minutes are added to the township document management software to be stored digitally. Ruch stated updates would be made and shared with Halasz when she returns. No other questions were presented.

b. E-cycling event

- i. Dittmar and Strasko discussed the safety meeting that occurred with Palmer Township police chief, fire commissioner and the finance director on August 17th. Dittmar discussed traffic flow for the event, and Strasko explained the committee will be assisted by one patrol officer to block traffic from entering at the exit on William Penn Highway.
- ii. Ruch asked about money collection and Strasko explained the company Clean Earth has employees to collect cash/checks for electronics as well as employees to load electronics onto trucks, but the committee needs

volunteers for traffic control, ID checking and raffle tickets if the committee is still planning on having the raffle that day. Strasko had a signup sheet for committee members to sign up for various positions at the event.

- iii. Armato asked if raffle tickets were needed but Strasko stated she found tickets in the Public Works Building along with many other supplies such as pamphlets and vests.
- iv. Ruch and Dittmar discussed logistics of where to place volunteers and how many people would be needed for traffic control. Strasko also stated that Steve Gallagher was obtaining 100 traffic cones to direct traffic through the parking lots. The committee discussed number of people needed to volunteer, bathrooms, box lunches, and other supplies needed for the event.

4. New Business

a. Welcome Bill Hartin

- i. Ruch introduced Hartin to members of the public and explained he added this agenda item to welcome Hartin as a committee and take the time to discuss what the committee is looking to do moving forward. Ruch described past events such as the Earth Day cleanup at Penn Pump and starting the ESC Facebook page. Ruch also discussed how the committee has been getting more involved with the MS4 program to help Palmer keep up with permit requirements. No other committee members had any comments.

b. Earth Day Plans 2023

- i. **Establish a subcommittee**
- ii. Ruch stated the committee would like to start planning next year's earth day event early to develop different stations around the township and continue to grow it every year. One of Ruch's suggestions was a teaching station to educate residents about green tools, earth day, invasive plants, or other environmental topics. Ruch stated that the committee should establish a subcommittee to start working on planning sessions for earth day event activities. Ruch also stated that Tom Grube had expressed interest in joining the subcommittee at the July meeting. Ruch opened the floor to other members to see if anyone was interested in joining the subcommittee. Hartin stated he would like to join the subcommittee as well as Ruch.
- iii. Dittmar discussed other environmental factors that the committee should think about as well such as teaching residents about recycling, composting, food waste and enforcement of programs. Dittmar also wanted to focus on helping businesses and doing waste audits.
- iv. Rob Reese had a question about if the committee has investigated updating the recycling totals on the website and converting them into per capita units to compare to state/federal standards and numbers. He

described that he bikes around the township and sees trash violations that the hauler picks up anyway and that if there was a comparison on the website it could show residents that we can do better as a township. Ruch agreed with Reese and stated that it would be a good approach to go in a different direction to show residents and educate them on why they need to follow the regulations. Dittmar stated the committee should get the kids involved as well to help them teach their parents. Ruch discussed how important it was to show the residents to help them understand how items are recycled. Armato thought a recycling article for the next newsletter around the holidays would be a great edition from the committee.

c. ESC Canvas Bags

- i. Ruch stated he found prices for canvas bags but was still looking for another company to get a better price. Ruch reiterated this idea came after discussion of the plastic bag ban in New Jersey that the committee wants to prepare in case Pennsylvania decides to follow suit, Palmer residents will have bags to use with the ESC logo on them. Armato stated if the committee can have these bags ready in time, they would be great to give out at the tree lighting for the holidays.
- ii. Dittmar discussed that plastic bags are not bad and how they can be recycled. Ruch and Dittmar discussed the updates in recycling technology over the years. Ruch stated that the committee will continue to work on getting numbers together and possibly reducing the number of bags they order.
- iii. Reese asked what the purpose of the canvas bags were, if they were meant to be used for shopping and Armato explained they were for residents to use in place of plastic bags. Reese asked if they could have someone act as a sponsor to pay for the bags and Ruch stated that the committee can do some research into the topic and discussed how Home Depot was willing to donate some electric lawn equipment. Reese discussed when his high school students had supplies donated to clean up the Kunkle track. Ruch discussed the possibility of businesses donating them but starting with a minimum and seeing how well the residents respond to start. Armato discussed future possibilities but that ultimately, they were looking to get something ready for the holidays. Ruch mentioned drafting a letter for a sponsor or a donation.
- iv. Hartin asked about conflicts of interest with sponsorships and about restrictions on reaching out to manufacturers who want to be seen as “green.” Reese also mentioned asking utility companies in the township and creating another educational opportunity with power and water for residents. Armato stated if the companies wanted to donate the bags that would be fine but as far as sponsorship, he would have to discuss with the solicitor, but the township is not a charity or 5013c and cannot accept sponsors.

- v. Hartin asked some clarifying questions and Armato explained that the township still needs to pay, and committees cannot accept money. Ruch stated there are always people out there that want to help the township and described his interaction with Home Depot again.

d. Community Planning Grant for Parks & Open Space Master Design Plan

- i. Strasko stated that Cindy Kramer applied for a master planning grant for parks and open space design, the narrative was attached to committee members' agendas and Strasko would update the committee with progress of the grant's acceptance. Ruch explained the grant more to the committee and members of the public present stating that Palmer was applying for \$50,000 grant for parks and open space. He discussed that landscapers could come give their assessments on Palmer's open space and their recommendations for improvements.
- ii. Reese asked a question if this was taking place of an update for the open space plan since the comprehensive plan was recently updated and Strasko explained that the committee was only looking at a grant narrative and it was not the open space plan.
- iii. Reese asked again about the comprehensive plan update and when the open space plan would be updated. Strasko stated she did not have the answer to that. Reese questioned why there was not a parks and open space plan done at the same time as the comprehensive plan and what the progress on an update was and Armato stated they just introduced this grant, and it would include landscape architects giving their recommendations on updates to parks and open spaces.
- iv. Ruch read some introductory paragraphs from the grant narrative and explained they will review the plans out there and develop a plan and design for improvements not only for open space and parks, but also for catch basins and swales for MS4.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Armato stated he wanted to get together the week before the e-cycle event to touch base and make sure everything was ready. Ruch asked Strasko to email the committee and John Marks from the Earth Stewards for a meeting at the high school and discuss the site. Armato then discussed the warehouse proposal and how the BoS is now more interested in green space and that the developers will be coming back with revisions.

b. MS4

i. Storm Drain Labeling Updates

- ii. Strasko described the pamphlets she put together for Palmer Days and the display board she made with an article describing why our waters are polluted and what homeowners and residents can do to reduce their stormwater waste. Strasko also stated that she was continuing to survey inlets in the South end of the township and that they are still waiting for

new emblems to be delivered. When new inlet emblems are delivered Strasko will alert committee members to set dates for volunteers to reattach them. Strasko concluded by stating the township is currently working on completing the MS4 annual report that is due in the end of September.

- iii. Ruch stated that he was in contact with Girl Scout and Boy Scout groups and youth organizations through his church that all need service hours and continue to ask him about when they are needed for labelling. Ruch mentioned from the last meeting about keeping volunteers in small groups, no more than 7, and ordering lime t-shirts for volunteers since they will be in the roadways for visibility. Ruch stated adults will always be nearby but to make them more visible and have high visibility vests as well. Dittmar stated they should put a sign at the end of the road where volunteers are working to alert cars before they reach the volunteers. Strasko, Dittmar and Ruch discussed vests, supplies and safety and Ruch described they need ANSI approved vests for volunteers and that they could create a buffer with cones around drains that volunteers are working on as well.
- iv. Reese added the committee should be able to get vests from PennDOT since they used to get supplies from them for litter cleanup events, and it might be a good idea to have a township truck parked to block volunteers from traffic.
- v. Armato asked if there would be multiple groups out doing this and Ruch described how Strasko had grouped inlets by development and that the committee was planning on working within one development at a time with volunteers. Armato stated that he would ask Scott Kistler to reach out to PennDOT about vests and supplies.
- vi. Reese asked about the type of decal and the skills required to attach it. He and the committee discussed that children are not allowed to use the adhesive for the emblems and Ruch explained the adults will follow the instructions and wear proper PPE while handling the adhesive. Reese also suggested leaving educational brochures or adopt a storm drain literature at the residence where volunteers reattach emblems. Ruch discussed the dead fish hazardous waste sign and educating people about properly disposing of household wastes and that these brochures are the opportunity to educate people about it.
- vii. Adopt a storm drain**
- viii. Ruch stated Strasko mentioned this idea last month for residents to adopt their storm drains, keep them clean and he thought it was a great way to help the township keep track of their storm drains and stay informed. Ruch stated he did not know how to start a program like this, he asked what the next step would be. Strasko stated she did research earlier that day and found a website for a national program that only 4 or 5 states were a part

of. Strasko stated if the committee put together a proposal, they could ask the BoS to join the program that already exists. She described that the website already has the technology for residents to describe an amount and what type of pollutants they are finding in storm drains. Strasko stated she was not sure of the process the site only said to sign up but from what she understood, the township could register and then residents would pledge to clean a drain and they keep track of what and how much they clean.

Armato stated he would add it to the BoS agenda for September. Strasko stated she would email Armato the website information. Ruch described how other local governments may adopt the same program and how Palmer can set an example.

- ix. Reese asked what the website the website was and Strasko stated the url: <https://adopt-a-drain.org>. Hartin asked how many storm drains there were in Palmer and Strasko guessed over 1,000. Reese described how all the storm drains were GPS located, and Ruch described how he helped Palmer with GIS mapping. Strasko described how she would find storm drains on the street that aren't on the map that she is given.

6. For the Good of the Order

- a. Ruch brought up pamphlets that were at the desk which Strasko had brought from the ESC supplies she had found. Ruch read off the titles of the pamphlets for the public; "naturalizing your yard", "give honeybees a helping hand", "pollinator friendly gardens." Ruch and Dittmar discussed honeybees and educational value. Sciorra stated she will not be able to make the September meeting, she is hoping for October but has a surgery coming up. Sciorra also stated that her term is up in December, and she will continue to attend meetings but not as a committee member. Ruch thanked her for her efforts and wished her well on her surgery.

7. Next meeting: September 28, 2022

8. Adjournment

- a. Dittmar made a motion to adjourn. Hartin seconded. The motion was passed by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 7:45PM.