

Palmer Township

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

May 25, 2022, 6:30PM, at Palmer Township Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

- a. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Ruch at 6:39PM.
- b. Present: Bill Ruch, Tom Grube, Tom Dittmar, Joseph Armato and Paige Strasko. Ginny Sciorra came in late at 6:47PM.
- c. Absent: Diane Halasz. Deanne Werkheiser gave her official resignation to township staff before the meeting.
- d. Members of the public attending were Bill Hartin and Yvonne Schaeffer.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 23, 2022, and April 27, 2022

- a. Dittmar made a motion to approve both meeting minutes and Grube seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

3. Old Business

- a. Earth Day Event summary
 - i. Ruch and Grube described how the committee's Earth Day event went on April 23rd, 2022. They described the quantity of waste collected by members and volunteers, and how the committee and the volunteers had a plan and spread out around Penn Pump Park. Grube described his interactions with Township employees and how helpful everyone was with getting supplies. Grube also described how he had reached out to Keep PA Beautiful and ordered free supplies through their program, but nothing was delivered, and no one got back to him from the organization before the event. Dittmar mentioned they used to get supplies from PennDOT.
 - ii. Ruch suggested for future events setting up paper bag stations instead of using plastic garbage bags. Then volunteers can utilize buckets for cleaning areas than carrying plastic bags.
 - iii. Ruch also suggested starting to plan next year's Earth Day event at the next meeting (June 22nd). He is looking to get more community involvement, more advertising, and more planning for other areas of the township and setting up a central location for volunteers to meet. Dittmar described how the committee used to run their Earth Day events having people check-in at the municipal building and there would be different stations around the township where volunteers could go while committee members would go around and check various locations to make sure volunteers did not need any supplies. Grube mentioned Halasz shared maps made of different areas of the township that volunteers could use for an event. Armato did mention that it was a significant effort to get re-organized.
 - iv. Ruch mentioned having other clean-up events on weekends because there is a great deal more to clean around the township. Ruch mentioned areas

of 25th street, areas of Route 22 and Route 33 between Palmer Township and Tatamy interchanges. Despite letters sent to PennDOT nothing has happened to clean up the litter on the highways due to short staff and too many other road projects. Ruch was hoping to work with Earth Stewards to map out more places that need attention.

- v. Armato also said if the committee gives him a specific location, between two- or three-mile markers on the highway then he can get a faster response than the ESC or Earth Stewards sending letters. Armato mentioned a section of 25th street by the Palmer Park Mall, after the BoS had called PennDOT about three weeks later PennDOT cleaned up.

b. E-cycle Event

- i. Dittmar spoke with Clean Earth, formerly AERC, and his contact Karen had said she sent another township employee Cindy Oatis the paperwork for the event. Township staff was able to secure September 17th at Easton High School to have the E-cycling event. Dittmar stated he gave Strasko the information to contact Clean Earth to get the paperwork necessary to book the event with them as well.
- ii. Dittmar said the next thing to do is get advertisements out to the public for the event. Dittmar also gave Strasko a print-out for the fees of different electronics residents can bring to the event. Armato asked about a flyer to add in when bills are mailed out and Dittmar said the fee sheet would be good to add with the bills.
- iii. Armato stated the school seemed to want to be involved in the event and help how they could. Armato also stated people from the community will be willing to help, especially being able to advertise months in advance. Dittmar thought the biggest thing would be traffic control. Using his experience from past events he described how things should be set up to be able to control traffic safely and efficiently. Ruch asked about where to park the trucks from Clean Earth and Dittmar described the flow of traffic having Clean Earth trucks in the upper parking lot of the high school. Armato also stated he would talk to the police chief for traffic control at the event. Dittmar mentioned in the past they would usually ask an officer to direct traffic at the entrance and they used to get a firefighter to direct traffic at the exit so they have eyes on traffic both ways and can have control if anything were to happen. Dittmar also stated that they never had a problem at any event in the past.
- iv. Ruch stated the date again September 17th, Armato stated they have the school 8am-4pm. Ruch also asked what the township needs to help complete the event. Dittmar said they will need volunteers to help, water, and a shady spot for people to rest. Armato stated they can do box lunches from the township based on a list of volunteers.
- v. Ruch asked about making Strasko a contact for people looking to volunteer for the e-cycle event or about putting something out on the ESC

Facebook page. Armato stated it would be better to do it on Facebook and Strasko re-iterated she is a part time township employee and only the secretary of the committee. Dittmar mentioned having Earth Stewards to help move the line along at the event. Grube asked about the timing of the event and Dittmar confirmed from 9am-1pm. Dittmar wanted to opt for the longer event because historically they have had many cars come through the event.

- vi.** Strasko asked Dittmar about using the fee sheet as the advertisement that can go out with residential bills. Dittmar said yes. Armato wanted to add that photo ID required because the E-cycle will only be for Palmer township residents.
- vii.** Grube asked about a newsletter coming out before the e-cycle event. Strasko mentioned the due date for the newsletter is coming up fast. Armato described the type of information that will be with the bills mailed out to residents. Ruch confirmed they will be sending out advertisements in the newsletter, on Facebook, as well as with resident bills. Ruch asked if anyone would be interested in writing up a little blurb about the date, time, what the event is, and ID required.
- viii.** Grube asked about how payment works and Dittmar said everything is managed by the company Clean Earth, all the committee and volunteers need to do is traffic control.

c. Warehousing

- i.** Strasko brought Ruch up to speed on what happened at the March meeting with warehousing and how Sciorra had wanted to discuss a letter received by Palmer Township and how Palmer can lessen the impact from warehousing.
- ii.** Armato stated they are hoping to finalize plans for warehouses in August or September but there will be public input before then. Armato discussed the ordinances that he and Brett wanted to implement for new warehouses such as solar energy, a place for truck drivers to rest or sleep, no trucks idling in the road there are dedicated spaces to park trucks, and that the companies add to emergency services in the township. Armato encouraged the committee to come to meetings and ask the builders questions.
- iii.** Ruch commented that he had taken that approach, he had come to the podium with concerns and Ruch stated he feels the committee was too late to have an impact. Ruch also stated that they told him they already went through LVPC. Armato stated once it has been filed it can be shared. Armato stated Cindy Kramer shares all the plans publicly once filed and going to planning commission for review.
- iv.** Ruch asked why can't the ESC get the plans and sit with the planning commission before they have their public meeting to discuss environmental impacts? Armato stated they cannot do that because the committee members do not have the credentials and are not qualified to do

so. Armato described how they have court reporters now at the BoS meetings and that everyone is sworn in under oath, they must list their degrees, backgrounds, job experience and then they are certified to speak to the board on behalf of the developer. Armato stated they can ask questions about what the builder will do for the buffer, how far away is X from Y, what are you going to plant etc., but when they get into specifics, they are not qualified.

- v. Ruch stated he was just putting the idea out there and that if they are not qualified to be included in that conversation Ruch would like to see the qualifications to be on the ESC. Armato was describing people with master's in engineering and a masters in horticulture degrees like that.
- vi. Grube described his time on the planning commission and the procedure of how plans distributed and his personal experience discussing sketch plans he used to receive before the meeting and how he would look over what the township had sent him. Armato described a small bound book that was distributed like what Grube was describing that was just for one warehouse.
- vii. Ruch stated this whole discussion stems back to the Bloom energy building. Ruch also stated how he had voiced environmental concerns to Cyndie Kramer, and she had sent back they already spoke to LVPC about it and there was nothing to worry about. Armato understood the frustration from the committee and understands that they want more input. Ruch was stating his concern in that the committee is always a stage too late to give valid and helpful input. Armato described how he had his questions answered in person on site by Bloom energy and that sometimes we really need to see it in person first to understand what they are building.
- viii. Ruch also described how he would like to develop a punch list of questions with Armato as liaison and supervisor for builders from the ESC to get environmental questions answered. Ruch then stated they just need to be included in earlier stages of planning to be able to voice concerns. Armato stated Kramer is the one to go through. If the plans have gone through the process with the Township Cyndie Kramer will be able to make it available to them.

4. New Business

a. Updated Bylaws

- i. Ruch and Grube stated that this item was discussed in March and that this item would take time to review. Grube also stated the committee may have discussed putting together a subcommittee for review of the bylaws.
- ii. Ruch asked that the bylaws be moved to the next meeting and that Strasko has copies ready of both versions in question so that the committee can discuss and workshop them together if necessary. Strasko asked for clarification on what needed to be printed since Halasz had sent previous bylaws as well as an updated version that Halasz and Sciorra had worked

on together. Ruch asked Sciorra when the last time was, they had worked on these bylaws and Sciorra stated sometime in February.

- iii. Sciorra also asked if the committee can call an executive meeting to discuss the bylaws since they are time consuming. Sciorra also mentioned Halasz did a great deal of the work and that Sciorra's thinking was the public would not be interested in updating the bylaws. Ruch asked for Strasko to bring both copies since the new bylaws are not approved and voted in. Ruch stated at the next meeting they will not discuss in detail about the bylaws but just to have them in hard copy and the committee members can look at their schedules and plan a workstation day just to discuss bylaws and get them finished. Dittmar asked Strasko to send PDF versions of the bylaws to him before-hand.

b. Budget/Spending

- i. Strasko stated that she added this to the agenda to answer committee member questions about budget and how to spend money allocated to the ESC in the township budget. Strasko stated Jim Farley is the financial director for the township, committee members can reach out to him. Armato also stated that committee members can send him an email with what they need, and he will take care of it.
- ii. Ruch asked about sending invoices to Armato as well. Armato stated he will accept invoices and pass them along to the township manager.
- iii. Grube asked about spending to understand the funds the committee has left for the year. After Grube and Armato discussed expenses for the Earth Day event, Armato reassured the committee they barely made a dent in the budget since all they purchased were t-shirts, coffee, and donuts for the day of the event. Armato stated they spent about 3% of the budget.
- iv. Ruch wanted to add a new agenda item about plastic bag ban in New Jersey. One of the biggest things in municipalities in New Jersey is their environmental committees purchased canvas bags for residents since plastic bags are no longer available in New Jersey grocery stores etc. Ruch stated they advertise in their newsletters for residents to get canvas bags.
- v. Armato asked for a quantity of bags, and he can get a proposal to the BoS so the committee can hand out canvas bags at Palmer Days/Community Weekend.
- vi. Ruch asked about a plastic bag ban coming to PA but none of the committee members have heard anything about a ban coming to PA. Armato seemed confident that even without a ban residents would utilize a cloth or canvas bag over plastic. Sciorra mentioned that Wegmans announced they are to stop giving out plastic bags in PA since their headquarters is in New York and there has been a plastic bag ban there for a few years. Sciorra also mentioned Shop Rite may do the same thing. Sciorra asked about a law to make Giant or Weis consider banning plastic bags since both are headquartered in PA. Armato stated perhaps a few

professionally written letters to corporate centers would grab attention with the proper letter head. Armato also explained that the same family owns Shop Rite's in the Palmer area privately. Weis and Giant are corporate, but Shop Rite is privately owned under the corporate entity.

- vii.** Dittmar started discussing how plastic bags can have a benefit and that park benches in the area were made from plastic bags but not too many people do that same kind of work anymore. Armato started discussing a start-up company making shoes out of recycled plastic bags in other parts of the world. Grube stated his son in law who is a pastor collects bags through their church and there is a company that cuts the bags into strips to weave blankets for homeless people. Armato mentioned having bags with raffle items for Palmer Days.
- viii.** Armato asked about plans for Palmer Days, if the committee wants a booth and raffle off electric lawnmowers, they need to let him know. Ruch thought they should do a complete set of electric lawn equipment.
- ix.** Ruch asked if there was any other new business that members wanted to discuss. Sciorra asked for clarification on the difference between commenting now and during the good of the order. Armato explained Ruch is asking if anyone has an added item, they wish to discuss whereas the good of the order is when committee members can further comment on business that was already brought up in the meeting. Armato added that his new business was on his comments about Palmer Days and getting a booth and a raffle together. Armato also added he thought the cloth bags would be a promising idea for Palmer Days. Dittmar asked about having a site for Palmer Days and Armato stated that is what he is asking the committee if they want to do. Dittmar states that years ago they stopped having a booth at Palmer Days. Armato and the committee discussed having raffle tickets with electric lawn equipment as prizes and budgeting for raffle tickets if there is a set amount that the committee decides on.
- x.** Sciorra asked about community funds from the state for electric infrastructure, but Armato stated he knows there are multiple grants coming down, but he is not directly involved with some of the grant money from that and suggested Sciorra contact Bob Williams for more information. Armato stated there are many different people within the township that manages grants, and Williams will be the best person to direct Sciorra to who she needs to discuss.
- xi.** Ruch stated that when he investigated the same topic a few months ago he found that most of the money is going to go to major highways to support traffic there before it moves out to townships and smaller governments. Ruch re-iterated that this should be another aspect of planning that the ESC should be involved in so that the township can make new developments or warehouses responsible for adding charging stations on their property. Armato encouraged Ruch to join the public meetings in the

coming weeks when the BoS would be going over ordinances with new zoning.

- xii.** Sciorra stated the charging stations, to her understanding, had to be five miles apart and no more than a mile from the highway and that businesses can function as places for these charging stations as well. Sciorra asked whose property that would be or if it would be township property to install charging stations, but Ruch clarified that it would be private property if businesses installed charging stations. Ruch explained to Sciorra that changes cannot be mandated since they are on private property. Armato explained when builders come in for a conditional hearing that is when the township can make points like charging stations part of the condition's builders have to follow. Armato clarified for Sciorra that when the township adds conditions it is now on the builder to complete those aspects of the project. Armato gave an example with a recent church approved for construction saying that part of their conditions for building were signage had to be in a certain place. Sciorra also asked about grant money coming to communities in the fall, but other committee members were not aware of this and not able to answer her question. Ruch suggested keeping BoS informed on any current information about grant money and keeping a bulletin to keep everyone informed on possible projects the committee could work on with future grant money. Sciorra also mentioned there is an organization willing to sit down one on one with townships to get grant money because the process is extremely complicated. Armato again told Sciorra to contact Bob Williams for more information on what grants the township has applied for or what is on their radar.
- xiii.** Sciorra's second question was about LVPC grants for walking and biking paths. Sciorra had heard about Bethlehem Township and Forks Township receiving grant money to connect their biking/walking trails together and Palmer did not receive any grants. Ruch and Grube had mentioned that the trails in Palmer are completed, Palmer is connecting their trails to Tatamy, Stocker town, Bangor, and Allentown/Bethlehem area as well.
- xiv.** Hartin had a question regarding workshops available for people to attend for more information about environmental issues like LVPC workshops. Grube described state programs for MS4 that he participated in and described that on the PA DEP website they have an educational tab. Hartin was also asking about more knowledge and resources on how to deal with environmental issues and how to solve or address them with the township. Dittmar mentioned Penn State's and Rutgers's programs for environmental impacts that used to look at environmental aspects, removing trees, air quality tests. Dittmar did not know if these programs still run but from what he remembered they used to run efficiently. Hartin mentioned he wanted to see the ESC gain more traction with the township.

Sciorra mentioned NACC used to have an environmental program and may still have them available. Ruch also told Hartin he found workshops on LVPC website that give minimum acceptable level for environmental aspects of construction.

- xv. Schaffer had two questions; one was about why the yard waste recycling was so late in the season in June. Armato answered her and stated there are multiple times during the year for yard waste pick up and that she can call the municipal building for answers to those questions. Dittmar also mentioned if residents have small quantities of yard waste in the spring, they can bring it to the recycling center and they can take larger loads to Berks Street for \$12. Her second question was regarding if builders/developers have a list of trees they need to plant and why there are pear trees planted in her development. Armato answered again stating that the Shade Tree Commission will be responsible for species of trees planted in the township, and any trees in public spaces.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Armato had nothing to report, he requested the committee send him what they want to do for Palmer Days, and he will set it up with the BoS.

b. MS4

- i. Strasko reported she has been working on inspecting outfalls around the township. She stated that the permit term for the year will end, and she must inspect 10-12 more outfalls to keep the township up to date with their MS4 records. Ruch asked if Strasko uses an inspection sheet for this process and Strasko replied yes. Strasko also explained that the PA DEP website has all their forms and requirements for MS4 posted online if Ruch was interested in looking at them.
- ii. Ruch also stated that another area that he wants the committee more involved in is the MS4 program and that if the township does not follow the requirements, they will get fined. Ruch wanted to clarify what the committee can do for the MS4 program by learning what was completed and what needs to be done still. Strasko clarified that in the upcoming future there will be a separate committee just for MS4 related topics and that the township is currently hiring a consultant to better direct the township and future committee. This consultant would help the MS4 committee with the decisions they will need to make similar to engineers, lawyers, and arborists for other committees. Strasko did mention if the ESC formed a subcommittee, they would be able to help organize events or give ideas for the public education aspect of the MS4 program. Armato discussed there was money set aside in the budget for education.

c. Facebook Updates

- i. Halasz was absent so Ruch asked if anyone has noticed anything they wanted to discuss. Grube jumped in and said the Facebook page looked

great to him and with Kramer posting as well Grube is always getting more information when he goes back to the page. Armato agreed it was highly informative. Ruch clarified that Kramer will take over posting on the ESC Facebook page and that he originally thought DeGerolamo and Strasko would be approving posts. Strasko clarified that Kramer is currently the social media coordinator and Armato jumped in stating the township is starting to move towards having a staff member dedicated to running social media for various township departments and committees.

d. Subcommittees

- i.** Strasko mentioned that Halasz was looking for another member to join the *Green Guide* subcommittee since Kasenga had given his resignation. Sciorra asked what the subcommittee does and Strasko explained that so far, the subcommittee have reviewed the articles for clarity, spelling, and grammar and that they have made a recommendation to the ESC for an article to approve to publish in the newsletter. Ruch asked if the articles will be posted on the township website once completed and Strasko stated she talked to DeGerolamo about adding them to the website, but it would take DeGerolamo time to add all the articles. Strasko explained that Halasz wanted a separate landing page for the articles and DeGerolamo would have to design a web page for them if that was how the articles would be posted.
- ii.** Ruch asked if anyone wanted to volunteer to be on the subcommittee with Halasz and Strasko and no one responded. Grube stated he wanted to focus on the MS4 program and Ruch asked Strasko if she and Halasz could continue with the articles as best they can.

6. Good of the Order

- a.** No one had anything for the good of the order.

7. NEXT MEETING: June 22, 2022

8. Adjournment

- a.** Grube made a motion to adjourn and Dittmar seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 7:58pm.