

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2023, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Karen Adams, Zane Rice, Tony Rose, and Bill Hartin. Also present: Paige Strasko, John Marks, and Tom Dittmar.
- b. Absent: Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 27, 2023

- a. Adams asked if anyone had any corrections or comments on the minutes. Hearing none, Rice made a motion to approve the minutes and Rose seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Earth Day (outreach and program planning)

i. Committee member updates on status of their topic

- 1. Rose updated the group that he will be working on sending an outline of his topic to include a rain barrel presentation and information about rain gardens and stormwater runoff. Rose also discussed his participation with Bushkill Stream Conservancy (BSC) for another rain barrel seminar in June at Mill Race Park. Adams stated that she would share rain barrel information with Rose for his presentation.
- 2. Committee members also discussed holding the Earth Day event at Fairview Park and the facilities available at the park, a centralized location, park rentals and communication with other Township departments to reserve the space.
- 3. Adams also discussed a small grant she heard about through the County for conservation activities that she will research further to apply for in January.
- 4. Hartin and committee members discussed a recent meeting with a beekeeper, how to narrow his bee presentation, landscaping with native plants, other organizations in the state that might be able to assist in a bee awareness (Bee Aware) program, how to drive interest in the topic, methods of advertising, and having refreshments available on Earth Day.
- 5. Marks suggested sharing an Earth Day flyer with the Business Industrial Professional (BIP) Association for advertising.
- 6. Adams updated the group on her progress with Waste Management and Strasko stated that she met with a Waste Management representative that morning and discussed educational materials

from Waste Management and having a landfill tour for ESC members and township staff on November 15, 2023, at 10am.

7. Rice discussed his communication with the National Honor Society at Easton Area High School and their interest in volunteer hours for Earth Day, they just need to know how many volunteers are needed and timing for the event. Rice also discussed the lack of a response from the company Beyond Meat and his shift in focus for his Earth Day topic. Marks suggested some local farms that could cater the event. Committee members discussed how to incorporate a farm in the Earth Day event and the possibility of including a hydroponics discussion that could tie in with pesticide reduction or focus on organic farming.
8. Adams asked Dittmar and Marks if they would be interested or available in doing a composting seminar on Earth Day, but Dittmar stated he may already have a prior commitment. Adams asked committee members if they would like to include a composting seminar for Earth Day and all agreed.
9. Adams also asked Marks if the Earth Stewards were holding a cleanup event that weekend and Marks stated that they have enough members to help Dittmar and the ESC on Earth Day, and their typical cleanups on Earth Day are with Trout Unlimited. Committee members discussed timing for a cleanup event, adding it to the end of the Earth Day schedule, and how to make it educational. Strasko stated that she can get clean up materials from the Public Works Department like bags, grabbers, and gloves.

ii. Anticipated need for support/funds

b. Storm drain labeling

- i. Committee members and Strasko discussed planning dates, times and locations for volunteer relabeling efforts, including Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, National Honor Society volunteers, photographing educational presentations for use in the Township newsletter, having a relabeling program separate from Earth Day events, waivers for volunteers to sign, and grouping neighborhoods or developments for relabeling.

c. ESC Education/Information/Newsletter topics

i. Survey

1. Hartin updated the group that there was nothing new for the survey yet and committee members discussed resources that were shared of other environmental surveys, how to structure the survey, using the survey at Earth Days or Palmer Days, and developing the educational purpose of a presence at Palmer Days.

ii. Trash/Recycling/Waste and Food Waste

1. Strasko and committee members further discussed the landfill tour and what educational materials Waste Management would have available for review and use in the Township.
2. Dittmar suggested that committee members research riding with the trash haulers to better understand the waste collection process, performing a visual waste audit with the trash haulers, what is accepted in solid waste collection, the Township yard waste centers, and other annual Township collections.

4. New Business

a. Plastic Bag Ban Study

- i. Adams discussed further research she has completed on the plastic bag reduction topic and a memo she wrote to the Board of Supervisors (BoS) and asked if the group was comfortable with giving it to the BoS. Strasko stated she would send corrections to Adams and that the document should include the committee's recommendations for the next steps. Adams asked that all members review the document and send her comments or questions.
- ii. Members of the public and committee members discussed plastic recycling, continuous resident education on recycling programs, structures of ordinances, reducing plastic use, microplastics as an issue, plastic and Styrofoam degradation time, freedom of choice in using plastics or not, if plastic bags cause issues in recycling machinery, sharing information on plastics with BoS and the community, and the concept of plastic reduction.
- iii. Adams stated that she would discuss with Wegman's on their process and other nationwide stores that have stopped providing plastic bags.

b. Committee Membership

- i. Committee members discussed the three open seats on the committee, how to be more proactive in recruiting members, attempts to recruit members, why those attempts have failed, and skills that would be helpful for new members to have. Strasko stated that she was working on a Facebook post for the open seats, discussed committee membership requirements, and where committee openings are posted on the Township website. Strasko stated that she would share the post with the committee to share in other places to advertise for the open seats.

c. Alternative Meeting Dates

- i. Committee members discussed having meetings on different days to be able to have meetings in November and December. Strasko stated that the Stormwater Authority regular meeting dates would be the third Wednesday of every month and that the committee can advertise separately for meetings in November and December.

- ii. Committee members decided to keep the regular meeting dates of the fourth Wednesday for 2024 and will consider advertising a meeting after Thanksgiving on November 29, 2023.

d. Setting a committee agenda

- i. Adams stated she added this item for members to brainstorm January agenda items to focus on in 2024 such as stormwater mitigation.
- ii. Committee members and members of the public discussed other topics for focus including further Styrofoam research and education, advocating for a densifier at the Palmer Township recycling center, ordinance updates that consider stormwater runoff and converting lawns with native plants, and the BSC holding an environmental fair.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Strasko stated that she had nothing from the Supervisors.

b. MS4

- i. Strasko said she is always working on the MS4 educational program and there was nothing new to report on. Adams asked about the new Stormwater Management Ordinance and Strasko clarified that it is separate from the MS4 program. Adams also asked about the Annual Report Update and Strasko stated that she was still finalizing the PowerPoint summary for the website and to present it to the BoS.

6. Public Comment

- a. There was nothing for Public Comment.

7. For the Good of the Order

- a. There were no comments for the good of the order.

8. Next meeting: January 24, 2024

9. Adjournment

- a. Hartin made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Rice seconded. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 8:23PM.