

**PALMER TOWNSHIP  
ENVIRONMENTAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
October 27, 2021, 6:30 PM at Palmer Township Public Library  
Minutes**

**1. ROLL CALL**

- A. The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm by the vice-chairperson, Ginny Sciorra.
- B. Present: Ann-Marie Panella, Ginny Sciorra, Diane Halasz, Josh Kasenga, Deanne Werkheiser.
- C. Absent: Nancy Nicholas, Doreen Shaffer.
- D. Guests: Tom Dittmar, John Marks, both Palmer Township residents and members of the group Earth Stewards of Palmer.

**2. APPROVAL OF September 22, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

- A. Two changes were noted for page 5: eliminate the T-shirts from the budget itemized list and change the word Action to Account in the definition of LSA.
- B. Motion to approve minutes with the two changes listed above was made by Halasz and seconded by Werkheiser. Motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

**3. OLD BUSINESS.**

- A. MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System).
  - a. Sciorra stated that MS4 was removed from the agenda for this meeting because it was too big an issue for the ESC and was already being handled by the township. Palmer has had a good report so far. A company has been hired to look into stormwater lines. We can expect action on this area in 2022.
  - b. Sciorra also stated that Bethlehem Township is having a Zoom meeting 10/28 at 3pm and 6pm to discuss the proposed fee on impervious surfaces in order to pay for implementing the MS4 regulations.
  - c. John Marks stated that the city of Easton was fined \$4 million by the federal EPA for litter and silt that made their way into the river.
  - d. Panella made a suggestion that the land along the Schoeneck Creek be turned into a greenway.
  - e. It was noted that it looks like Palmer will approve high-density development in the flood plain. A question was raised as to what the comprehensive plan allows and that the ESC needs to be familiar with the plan's contents.
- B. 2022 budget. Werkheiser restated that we should request \$2500 for the 2022 budget. A question was raised as to whether it was too much. John Marks remarked that the metal recycling dumpster brings in \$3000 per year. It was

decided to change the budget request to \$3000. This would include money for an electric mower to give away at the 2022 Community Weekend or T-shirts for the group.

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Reorganizing the ESC going forward.**

- a. New officers. Since chairperson Anita Forrester resigned the ESC has been without a chairperson, with vice-chairperson Ginny Sciorra filling in. There has also been no official secretary since Cindy Oatis, the Recycling Coordinator, left the committee. Since then, various people have filled in. Werkheiser made a motion that Ginny Sciorra be elected the ESC chairperson and Diane Halasz the ESC secretary for the remainder of 2021. Halasz seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by voice vote.
- b. We discussed changing the 2022 meeting dates from the fourth Wednesday to the third Wednesday of the month. This was considered to allow for fuller attendance by members but was found to be unnecessary. The meeting dates will remain the fourth Wednesday of the month.
- c. ESC Bylaws. The 2017 version of the ESC Bylaws are the most recent version. Motion was made by Halasz and seconded by Sciorra to form a subcommittee to update the bylaws and present them to the ESC at the January meeting, at which time a vote would be taken to approve the bylaws. Motion was unanimously approved by voice vote. Updates are to reflect the current committee and to position us to conform to Environmental Action Committee requirements should the ESC vote to become an EAC in 2022. Some EAC points:
  1. Member terms would need to change from five to three years.
  2. Add a section governing the operation of subcommittees.  
Subcommittees would be necessary to accomplish projects since there are only 10 ESC meetings in a year. Subcommittees would need to report back to the main committee at meetings. A starting point will be the old text on subcommittees which was in the 2016 version and removed from the 2017 version.
  3. Update the section on Recycling Coordinator to reflect a scaled-back role.
  4. The Board of Supervisors would need to appoint the chairperson. Panella stated that we could suggest a chairperson and have the BoS approve it.
  5. We would not add a section allowing for associate members.  
When the ESC membership reaches the maximum allowed we can make another update allowing for associate members, which could

be local college or high school students and not necessarily residents of Palmer Township.

6. Add procedures for monitoring the ESC mailbox.

- B. Managing the ESC mailbox, [ESC.Palmer@gmail.com](mailto:ESC.Palmer@gmail.com).
  - a. This mailbox will be monitored by the ESC secretary with the vice-chairperson as back-up should the secretary be unavailable.
  - b. Response to emails should be made by the next day. If a question is asked or comment is made that cannot be responded to by the next day, an email acknowledging receipt will be sent indicating that the committee will discuss it at the next meeting and get back to the sender.
  - c. Bylaws shall be updated with the procedures to manage the mailbox.

## **5. POTENTIAL INITIATIVES IN 2022**

- A. Panella suggested that the ESC should work to expand their presence to the BoS by giving five-minute presentations on what the ESC is doing. This could be done at BoS meetings on either the first or second Monday of the month. There is also a BoS meeting on the fourth Tuesday but that is reserved for township planning and there would not be time. Some examples of presentations are: electric lawnmower for the township, photos of the flooding on the Schoeneck Creek, the Green Guide. Sciorra showed Panella some photos of the flooding.
- B. ESC landing page/Green Guide.
  - a. Halasz reported that sample articles for the Green Guide, the ESC department web image, and miscellaneous changes were sent Brenda DeGerolamo as a heads-up.
  - b. Over the next two months, Halasz will convert the old green guides to the new format and send them out for comment to ESC members. The goal is to have a critical mass ready for approval at the January ESC meeting and begin implementation.
  - c. Halasz also suggested that a Green Guide subcommittee be formed with at least two members. Werkheiser stated that she would need to start her new job and see what time she has available first. No action was taken on this.
  - d. Halasz stated that she has started on a Green Guide article on climate change. She also suggested that we create an article on single-use plastics and public transportation. A discussion on LANTA (Lehigh and Northampton Transit Authority) schedules and how confusing they were on the website ensued. Kasenga stated that there is an app which will tell you when the next bus would arrive. Panella stated that bus schedules had been in the library in the past.
- C. Commercial electric mower for the Township.
  - a. Sciorra reported that she went to an equipment trade show and was speaking to a representative about Greenworks commercial

lawnmowers; she brought a brochure back for Kasenga. An electric commercial lawnmower with battery and charger would cost about \$14,000, which is not that much more than the cost of a gasoline-powered one at about \$12,000. The rep also stated that the battery would outlast the lawnmower, which has an expected life of 10 years. A Greenworks representative could do a demo. Any lawnmower would need to run sufficiently long on one charge so that a day's work could be done. The brochure listed a five-hour run time on some models, stating that it was sufficient to mow 14 acres.

- b. Kasenga reported that gasoline-powered blowers are very noisy and the pollution they create is equivalent to driving a car 1000 miles.
- c. Kasenga also reported that it has sometimes been difficult finding equipment prices posted.
- d. Panella will ask Scott Kistler to ask Cindy Oatis, the recycling coordinator, if any grant money is available for a purchase.
- e. Kasenga will write up a recommendation prepare for a presentation to the BoS in February 2022.

D. Native gardens and planting initiative. Deferred to 2022.

E. Palmer Climate Action Plan. Deferred to 2022.

F. Revisit single-use plastics ban. Deferred to 2022.

G. Building connections with local groups. Deferred to 2022.

H. ESC vs EAC. All ESC members should read the EAC Handbook and be prepared to vote on becoming an EAC at the January ESC meeting. Panella favors becoming an EAC. Some comments:

- a. Being an EAC requires more from the committee members. It means becoming familiar with how municipal government works, including the Planning Commission, zoning ordinances, Parks and Recreation, and the Comprehensive Plan.
- b. EAC Handbook recommends that a member of the Planning Commission should be a member of the EAC.
- c. Terms of EAC members are three years for an EAC; ESC currently has five-year terms.
- d. Unspent money in EAC budgets carry over to the next year and should be placed in an interest-bearing account.
- e. Regulations governing EACs allow for subcommittees and associate members.
- f. EAC Handbook states that it is better to do a few project very well than to tackle too many projects and not do a good job on any of them.
- g. The EAC Handbook has good examples of what other EACs have done, such as Ready for 100 (climate change) and single-use plastic bans. The EAC Network can provide us with a lot of help on what worked and the problems they encountered.

- I. Educate residents on global warming/clean energy/electric vehicles. Deferred to 2022.
- J. At the January 2022 meeting we will plan the committee efforts for 2022.

## **6. REPORTS**

- A. Supervisor Report – Panella. Nothing to report from the BoS.

## **7. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER/Residents time to speak**

- A. Facebook page. Werkheiser brought up the need for a Facebook page to distribute information to the public, such as acceptable items for the county recycling programs. The BoS has previously stated that a Facebook page would not be allowed because comments might be unwelcome. It was reiterated that a Facebook group can be set up so that comments are not allowed. Kasenga stated that Instagram is more popular but as that is focused on photographs, it would probably not be a good venue for the ESC. Halasz suggested Twitter. We will take this up again in 2022.
- B. Sciorra reported that Doreen Shaffer will not be renewing her membership in 2022. Her term expires at the end of 2021.
- C. Year End Report.
  - a. Halasz suggested that we create a year-end report for 2021 accomplishments, as has been the custom in the past.
  - b. Some items that could be added to the report are restarting the Green Guide, deciding on the header format for the Green Guide, selecting a new Department page web image, updating the bylaws, researching electric commercial lawnmowers.
  - c. John Marks suggested that we make it a page in length.
  - d. Panella stated that she will get it inserted into the BoS meeting packet for 2022.
  - e. Sciorra will create the document and route it to members for comment; approval by the full committee is not necessary. The report should be finished before the end of December. Halasz will send the 2016 Year End Report to Sciorra as an example to follow.

## **8. NEXT MEETING - January 26, 2022, 6:30pm**

- A. Halasz noted that she would not be able to attend the January 2022 meeting.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT.**

- A. A motion to adjourn was made by Halasz and seconded by Kasenga. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote and the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.