

Palmer Township

Environmental Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2022, 6:30PM at Palmer Township Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

- a. The meeting called to order at 6:32PM
- b. Present: Bill Ruch, Tom Grube, Tom Dittmar, Paige Strasko. Member of the public Zane Rice.
- c. Absent: Ginny Sciorra, Diane Halasz, Bill Hartin, and Joseph Armato.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 24, 2022

- a. No additions or corrections were presented from the committee.
- b. Dittmar made a motion to approve the minutes and Grube seconded. The minutes from August were unanimously approved by voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Updated Bylaws

- i. Ruch stated there were not enough committee members present to review the updated bylaws and stated there was interest in filling the open seats on the committee. Ruch stated Armato and Young were in the process of interviewing new members, one was Zane Rice seated in the audience and another was Ruch's neighbor Mark that volunteered at the Earth Day event and the E-cycling event. Ruch stated that the Bylaws would be moved forward to the next meeting and that they need to be discussed so if there are any changes, they can be made over the holiday season.

b. E-cycling Event Summary

- i. Ruch thanked the Township supervisors, police, fire, public works, and the Earth Stewards of Palmer (ESP) for their help in making the e-cycling event successful. Ruch stated he thought the event was a success considering that the event was not held in a few years, and it was for Palmer residents only.
- ii. Dittmar stated there were aspects of the event that were disappointing for him including the amount of people that attended, he stated there were a maximum of about 260 cars that came were in the past they would have an average of 650 cars come through. Dittmar also explained how ESP members were well versed in traffic control and how much they helped with the event in September as well as past events. Dittmar also discussed timing issues, traffic problems and set up delays that were upsetting for him. Ruch stated his only complaint was how long residents were waiting in line to drop off electronics and that in the future they should have cars divided by what they are recycling so that those with fewer items can move through the line faster.
- iii. Grube asked if there was someone checking licenses since he was not able to attend the event. Ruch and Dittmar explained the logistics and flow to

Grube and Ruch also mentioned his other biggest problem with the event was that residents did not have their checks filled out ahead of time. Ruch explained an instance of a resident holding up the line because he needed to sign his check on the windshield of his car and how that could be avoided in the future.

- iv. Ruch stated there will always be negative aspects of any planned event, but he chooses to look at the negatives as a learning curve and things to improve on for the future. Dittmar also stated problems with having enough man-power since COVID and how Clean Earth, formerly AERC, are well equipped to handle all the different types of materials to recycle like lightbulbs. Ruch, Dittmar and Grube discussed past events with other recycling centers. Ruch reiterated that the committee wanted to thank all the Township staff and departments that helped with the event and to thank the Earth Stewards.
- v. Ruch stated overall he thought the event went well and Strasko, Ruch and Dittmar discussed the prices for the electronics at the event and how to ensure that all residents are aware of the price list in the future. Ruch asked if the Township could absorb some of the cost of e-cycling and Strasko discussed with the committee about having an e-cycle drop off location at the recycling center once it is fully updated. Dittmar, Ruch and Strasko discussed having a drop off location for various recycling materials and hazardous waste in the future. Ruch mentioned having Clean Earth come to a meeting to discuss changing pricing for residents in the future. Ruch also stated he would work on a thank you message that Strasko could edit and send to ESP members.

4. New Business

a. Earth Day Plans

- i. Ruch stated a subcommittee was established at the last meeting that consisted of himself, Hartin and Grube. Ruch and Grube discussed establishing ideas and plans. Strasko asked if Ruch wanted to shift the agenda item to reports so that the subcommittee can report on their progress and ideas they have. Ruch agreed and Grube stated that the subcommittee members could meet outside of regular meeting times to plan for the upcoming Earth Day event since the ESC does not meet in November or December.

b. Canvas Bags

- i. Ruch stated that he has not been able to find any lower prices for canvas bags with logos, but Armato had asked him previously for the prices. Ruch also mentioned that Wegmans has stopped providing plastic bags and that was the reason behind the committee wanting to provide residents with reusable bags. Grube and Ruch discussed New Jersey's changing regulations and the sanitary nature of some reusable bags. Dittmar stated that they are taking the wrong approach to plastic bags and stated that if

people are charged to use plastic bags, they will be encouraged to recycle them properly. Strasko mentioned that Palmer's current recycling program accepts plastic grocery bags and some plastic food bags like chip bags. Dittmar also discussed the amount of energy needed to make a plastic versus a paper bag and that paper bags take a lot more than plastic. Ruch stated he would like to keep canvas bags on the agenda to discuss further with Armato.

c. Future Events

- i. Ruch stated he had a new business item for the committee and wanted the committee to work on some type of event for every quarter. He mentioned the e-cycle event and that for the first quarter of the next year he would like to have some sort of educational event. Ruch also mentioned that the committee can work on storm drain relabeling in spring and summer of 2023. Dittmar and Ruch mentioned working with the library or the community center in springtime to educate residents on plants/new growth or any other ideas the committee might have.

d. Lawnmower Raffle

- i. Ruch also stated that he would like to raffle off the electric mower at the tree lighting and start planning how that would work for the tree lighting event, or if there would be another time to raffle it off. Strasko stated it might be better to wait and raffle the lawnmower at the event the committee plans for the springtime so that residents can use the mower instead of winning it and having to wait three months to use their prize. Ruch stated he wanted to include Armato in the conversation because Armato had wanted to raffle the mower at the tree lighting as well.
- ii. Dittmar explained how the ESC could educate residents with the mulching mower in the spring and explain to residents the importance of mulching leaves rather than paying to pick them up and take them to the yard waste center. Ruch stated they will discuss further at the next meeting on what the committee will do with the lawnmower.
- iii. Dittmar mentioned food waste composting and the old programs that the ESC and ESP would do for Township residents but also explained budget problems that they have run into. Strasko stated she thought a food waste seminar would be perfect for the holidays since that is usually the time when people make too much food and have a lot left over.

e. Tree removal

- i. Ruch also mentioned that the Township is going around removing dead trees and what his understanding of the process is. Strasko explained that the Shade Tree Commission has sent letters to residents explaining what was happening, why trees are being removed and asking residents to steward any new trees that are planted. Dittmar stated he believed the STC got that information from the Tree Vitalization program that he helped run a few years ago that planted 100 trees at the community center.

f. Adopt a Storm Drain

- i. Ruch also mentioned that he has noticed how full of leaves and grass clippings that the storm drains have been since leaves have started falling and how his neighbors leave grass clippings in the road to be washed down the storm drains. Ruch mentioned how important adopting a storm drain is to keep them clean and help the MS4 program. Strasko stated she sent Armato the information for the site but is waiting to hear back on how the Township can move forward with the program. Ruch reiterated he wanted to focus on having an event or educational program every quarter next year and continuing the same events forward like the Earth Day event and e-cycle event.
- ii. Dittmar brought up educating residents on keeping yard waste out of the garbage collection and that yard waste should not be entering the landfill. Ruch mentioned contacting Waste Management about updating the cards with bulk pick up dates to inform residents about what not to put in their trash and Dittmar also stated the committee should discuss having Waste Management drivers keep a record of houses with yard waste and flagging it and writing it up so that it is not picked up and taken to the dump.
- iii. Grube, Ruch and Dittmar discussed trash pickup procedures, recycling procedures and how to improve items that are collected in trash pickup. Ruch stated that education was important for all these aspects and that perhaps the committee could make a “do” and “don’t” letter to residents. Ruch asked Strasko to find a contact for Waste Management so the committee could have a meeting with them.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Armato was absent and could not report for Board of Supervisors.
- ii. Ruch also mentioned that Cindy Kramer had sent the committee upcoming plans for the Township and wanted to make sure the committee dedicated time to review the plans that were sent during the meetings. Ruch asked Strasko to set up the tv for the next meeting so the committee can review the plans together on a big screen. Strasko stated she would need to figure out the sizing for the tv so the committee can see the entire plan. Ruch then stated that the committee would then respond to Kramer with any recommendations for changes etc. Committee members discussed electric charging stations and the importance of making developers install charging stations and other features to reduce the cost for the Township in the future.

b. MS4

i. Storm Drain Labeling Update

1. Ruch asked if the Township had received the new emblems yet and Strasko stated that as far as she knows they have not received the shipment yet. Ruch asked if all the inlets were inventoried yet or

not and Strasko stated that she had completed the South end of the Township.

ii. Adopt a Storm Drain

1. Strasko also stated she would need to check with Armato if he investigated the adopt a storm drain program yet.

6. For the Good of the Order

- a. Grube mentioned that he received an email from Keep PA Beautiful that summarized the amount of trash and debris that was collected in 2022 so far, how many people volunteered, and how many trees and flowers were planted across PA. Grube explained that he had reached out to them for supplies for the Earth Day event but they did not receive the supplies in time and how Michelle Dunn, who contacted him, stated the committee will get supplies they need next year. Dittmar stated the committee should talk with Tom Ganselle on how much the ESP collects because he is the one that keeps track of their numbers. Committee members discussed supplies that the committee already has. Dittmar also discussed demonstrations the committee used to do and the cleanup events the ESP have done.
- b. Ruch also stated that Deanne Werkheiser sent an email for the sustainability summit to the committee and Strasko mentioned that it was a two-part lecture, and the first part happened the previous week.
- c. Dittmar asked Strasko if the township was still involved with PROP-Pennsylvania Recycling Organization and Strasko stated she would need to ask Cindy Oatis if they are or not.
- d. Ruch discussed the raffle from the e-cycle event and that they were going to pick the winner then. Ruch asked Zane Rice to choose a raffle ticket winner. Rice chose the winning ticket number of 727470 for Kim Abbood from Camelot Drive. Ruch stated he would call Kim to give her the electric weed whacker.

7. NEXT MEETING: October 26, 2022- last for the year

8. Adjournment

- a. Grube made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dittmar seconded. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 7:40PM